



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

**An Exploration of Mindfulness and its Experiential Benefits:  
Taiwanese Backpackers in Australia**

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*A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at  
The University of Queensland in 2015  
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## **Abstract**

Stress in everyday life is common in our postmodern society leading some people to seek relief and fulfilment from a range of leisure and lifestyle activities such as travel experiences. Travel in itself, even adventurous or unstructured travel does not guarantee that travellers will receive positive benefits from their experiences. However, the notion of mindfulness may play an important role in producing positive consequences from different experiences. Thus, this study explores the nature and experiential benefits of ‘meditative mindful’ tourist experiences that can be experienced during travel.

Mindfulness is a mental state that may facilitate positive experiences. Understanding the importance of mindfulness is becoming a mainstream field of academic study in many therapeutic settings. However, there has been little discussion of mindfulness theory as it might be applied to tourism studies. Previous research in tourism has mainly focused on socio-cognitive mindfulness related to visitor learning rather than meditative mindfulness experiences. These include contexts such as tourist-wildlife encounters, appreciation of scenery, or through interaction with other people. The conceptual framework in this thesis is based on the Eastern notion of meditative mindfulness and has been used in Western therapeutic studies. In the past decade, evidence of the effectiveness and application of meditative mindfulness has grown dramatically due to a developing dialogue between Buddhist traditions and Western clinical psychology. There is a growing interest in whether meditative mindful experiences can occur outside of formal therapeutic settings, including travel. However, it is not clear how meditative mindful tourism experiences might be defined or whether they occur at all during travel. Furthermore, few studies have investigated the antecedents and consequences of meditative mindful experiences in tourism contexts.

This thesis presents an exploratory study of the occurrence as well as the antecedents and consequences of the meditative mindfulness phenomenon in a tourism context. A qualitative methodology based on an interpretive constructivist paradigm was adopted for the data collection. Taiwanese backpackers in Australia were selected as respondents and snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. In total, 43 semi-structured interviews were completed, and a total of 77 instances of meditative mindful experiences were identified. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Brisbane (at backpacker hostels) and at Uluru (Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park), as these two main sites provided the best opportunities to meet Taiwanese backpackers. Two interview protocols were used in screening and extended interviews for qualifying and exploring the three research objectives. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. NVivo 10 qualitative analysis software was used to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the data analysis process.

The findings indicated that meditative mindful experiences occurring in tourism contexts were characterised by three constructs of awareness ('paying attention', 'living in the present', and 'non-elaborative awareness'). An operational definition of tourist experience associated with meditative mindfulness is proposed as "*paying attention to a present moment experience, without elaboration on it*". In addition, the study clarified and contrasted three related concepts (meditative mindfulness, socio-cognitive mindfulness and flow). This thesis is the first study to empirically identify tourist experiences that have been associated with meditative mindfulness.

The findings also identified the antecedents and consequences of meditative mindful tourist experiences. The four main types of identified triggers that facilitated tourists experiencing a mindful state were labelled as travel-induced relaxation, aesthetic appreciation, atmosphere of quietness, and curiosity-developing. Natural encounters and participation in specific activities were found to foster a state of being mindful. The mental process of meditative mindfulness contributes to relaxation and tranquillity and helps to create memorable experiences. Such psychological and physical benefits were identified among backpackers.

A theoretical framework to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon and mental process of tourist meditative mindful experience is also discussed. This model is considered to be a useful tool for academics and the tourism industry to scope the mental and spiritual dimensions of tourist experiences for backpackers. An examination of how mindfulness occurs and how it can be further developed in tourism experiences is expected to be useful for tourism stakeholders. Business operators or policy makers should be aware of how to design engaging experiences and, in particular, how they can enhance affective, sensory or mental experiences through encouraging an awareness of the present moment and non-judgmental thinking during on-site visits. This may help tourism industries to better understand how to design holistic engaging experiences that benefit tourists' understanding of an alternative access to personal fulfilment. A number of areas for further research are also discussed.

## **Declaration by author**

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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## **Publications during candidature**

### **Referred Conference Publications**

- Chen, I.-L. L., Scott, N., & Benckendorff, P. (2014). Constructs of Meditative Mindfulness Experience in Tourism *Making it Count: Travel and Tourism Research in the Asia-Pacific* (pp. 49-51). Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: TTRA APac 2014 Conference: Travel and Tourism Research Association, Asia Pacific Chapter
- Chen, I.-L. L., Scott, N., & Benckendorff, P. (2014). An Exploration of Mindfulness Theories in Eastern and Western Philosophies In P. M. Chien (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 24th Council for Australasian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) Annual Conference* (pp. 164-175). Brisbane, Australia: The University of Queensland, Australia.
- Chen, I.-L. L., Scott, N., & Benckendorff, P. (2014). Tranquility from Mindful Travel Experiences in Australian Destinations *The G20 First East-West Dialogue on Tourism and the Chinese Dream Conference* (pp. 11-14). Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia: Griffith University.
- Chen, I.-L. L., Scott, N., & Benckendorff, P. (2015). Mindful or Mind Full? The Importance of Quietness in Tourist Experiences. In J. Poulston & P. Kim (Eds.), *Proceedings of 13th Asia Pacific Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (APacCHRIE) Conference in conjunction with 14th Asia Pacific Forum (APF) Conference* (pp. 745-747). Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University of Technology.
- Chen, I.-L. L., Scott, N., & Benckendorff, P. (2015). Wellbeing from Mindful Encounters with Nature *The 25th Council for Australasian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) Annual Conference* (pp. 432-435). Gold Coast, Australia Southern Cross University.

### **Awards**

- Chen, I.-L. L., Scott, N., & Benckendorff, P. (2014). An Exploration of Mindfulness Theories in Eastern and Western Philosophies. The 24th Council for Australasian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) award winner for a PhD Scholar Bursary.

### **Publications included in this thesis**

- Chen, I.-L. L., Scott, N., & Benckendorff, P. (2014). An Exploration of Mindfulness Theories in Eastern and Western Philosophies In P. M. Chien (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 24th Council for Australasian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) Annual Conference* (pp. 164-175). Brisbane, Australia: The University of Queensland.

Publication citation – Partially incorporated in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and Chapter 5.

<b>Contributor</b>	<b>Statement of contribution</b>
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**Contributions by others to the thesis**

No contributions by others.

**Statement of parts of the thesis submitted to qualify for the award of another degree**

None

## Acknowledgements

The three years of my PhD journey in Australia have inspired me to appreciate each moment, encounter and incident. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to those who contributed to this journey as well as to my life at The University of Queensland.

First and foremost, my thanks go to the 46 Taiwanese backpackers who generously shared their experiences to make this thesis possible. Also, I extend my sincere thanks to my scholarship sponsors, Ministry of Education, Republic of China (Taiwan), and the Business School, UQ, which enabled my academic pursuits in the beautiful land of research.

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to my wonderful advisors, Prof Noel Scott and Assoc. Prof Pierre Benckendorff. To Noel: you have been a tremendous mentor. You are such a unique philosopher, not only keeping me on track but also guiding me to become a mindful researcher and practitioner. To Pierre: thank you for continually challenging me in my research; this has been a priceless gift to me. I would also like to extend my thanks to my English teacher Maryann Martin, and to my spiritual teachers Chris Kang and Geshe Ngawang Gedun. To Maryann: your warmth always sustained me when I met challenges; you have been like a mother to me in Australia. To Chris and Geshe-la: you have enlightened my mindfulness study and my life. My thanks go as well to Dr Shane Pegg, Dr Sheranne Fairley, Assoc. Prof. Ian Patterson, Assoc. Prof. Jan Packer, Prof. Roy Ballantyne and Dr Andy Lee for serving as members of my thesis committee and offering comments to help me to develop my thesis. All of you have been there to support me throughout my PhD journey.

Special thanks also to my fellow RHD students, members of St Johns' College, doctors of UQ Health Service, Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation and the Taiwanese Women's Club in Brisbane for your invaluable friendship and support, particularly during my recovery from mid-candidature accidents. Words cannot express how grateful I am. To my dear friends, Julie, Joey, Kelvin, Keith, Stephen, Frank, Jie, Michael, Richard, Chris, Maya, Sari, Grace, Jenny, Mark, Irene, Nikolina, Jackson, Eddy, Don and Peter: thank you for your selfless assistance during this difficult time. To my friends in Taiwan who supported and encouraged me: I will keep you in my heart.

Lastly, my heartfelt thanks go to my beloved family—my parents, siblings, and my nephew and nieces: Leo, Kitty and Abby— for your love and support. Also, I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my father, a diligent and unpretentious man who always fully supported my goals. I know he is still with me, as a fresh wind, a bright star, beautiful sunshine; quietly and forever.

## **Keywords**

Tourist experience, meditative mindfulness, socio-cognitive mindfulness, awareness, benefit, backpacker

## **Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classifications (ANZSRC)**

ANZSRC code: 150606, Tourist Behaviour and Visitor Experience 100%

## **Fields of Research (FoR) Classification**

FoR code: 1506, Tourism (100%)



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# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

*“Travel is not really an escape from normal life, nor is it an insulated reality. Travel is a reminder of what is possible for you to experience every waking moment of your life” – Jeffrey A. Kottler (1998, p. 24)*

*“Mindful travel awakens the senses. Colours are more vibrant and electric; sound is brighter and stirs an inner song; images race across our inner screens as we sense we are part of an unfolding drama” – Jim Currie (2000, p. 133)*

## 1.1 Background of this Research

It has been argued that postmodern society is characterised by isolation, work orientation, and stress-related disorders such as depression (Giddens, 1991; Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001; Schroevers & Brandsma, 2010). Some people choose to use informal and unstructured means of travel to gain relief from everyday stress and to seek spiritual fulfilment (Currie, 2000; Kottler, 1997; Otto & Ritchie, 1996). The activities they are involved in during informal travel can include visiting natural attractions (Currie, 2000; Kottler, 1997), which can help to reduce stress and enhance mental and physical relaxation (Bishop et al., 2004; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; Hobson & Dietrich, 1995).

Travel has also been characterised as an avenue that permits an individual to switch off from their pressured daily work life (Richards, 1999). Specifically, participation in leisure-based activities is thought to stimulate mindfulness and to encourage spiritual and creative transformation (Rojek, 1997). This may occur in either planned or unplanned situations. The role of travel is important as it locates people in novel situations and may provide such benefits as widening travellers' views of the world as well as altering their attitudes and allowing them to face challenges (Kottler, 1997). Tourists can accrue experiential benefits from travel through their actions as well as by self-reflection (Rojek, 1997). Travel may encourage a mindful view of the world, and as a result lead to perceiving healing and peace as other benefits which may emerge from a journey (Kottler, 1998). Therefore, tourism is regarded as contributing to quality of life in our modern, relatively wealthy society (Bushell & Sheldon, 2009; Hobson & Dietrich, 1995).

Travel by itself, even adventurous or unstructured travel, does not guarantee that travellers will receive such benefits. However, tourists often smile when narrating or recalling the experiences and challenges that they met on their journey (Kottler, 1998). It seems that travel often embodies 'time out' and a degree of stimulation and change that may arouse positive outcomes (Kottler, 1998). This transformation can be physical or spiritual in form, and can include obtaining greater knowledge, skills and values to cultivate self-esteem, self-confidence and wellbeing (Edginton & Chen, 2008). Understandably, such encounters may not necessarily mean that travel is always deeply meaningful

and provides mental ease. However, the possible contributions of specific travel experiences that may lead to peacefulness and spiritual fulfilment have not been fully explored. If a mindful travel experience plays a role in tourism, an understanding of this phenomenon, how it works and how to make it work better is important. Perhaps travellers can be encouraged to travel more mindfully? Are mindful travellers more aware of the influence of their present experiences on their feelings and emotions? What are the experiential benefits they perceive from events on their journey? Therefore, it is argued here that further studies in this domain are required.

Tourists may be regarded as simply leisure consumers whose intention is the consumption of a tourism experience (McKercher, 1993). Tourists from contemporary affluent societies may be undertaking a quest for meaning (MacCannell, 1976). This may involve a consumer trend towards seeking insightful tourism experiences (McIntosh, 1999). This is important for tourism as it is a mixed industry where various businesses collaborate to create the tourist product (Andersson & Getz, 2009). Clearly, tourism managers need to be aware of changing consumer needs so they can design engaging experiences. This can be done through an understanding of how settings, activities, and the intangible atmosphere of a place can increase the tourist's satisfaction. Given this, perhaps industry practitioners can facilitate tourists' mindful experiences by stimulating tourists' sensations, and hence increase their awareness and openness during their on-site visit? However, few studies have discussed how tourists engage with tourism settings so as to contribute to specific psychological outcomes.

This thesis draws its inspiration from research on mental training used to help individuals to deal with personal problems or mental health issues, and in particular, a form of mental training used in clinical psychology called mindfulness-based intervention. Mindfulness-based intervention has been found to play an important role in obtaining positive consequences from personal experiences (Carlson & Shapiro, 2009; Carmody, Baer, Lykins, & Olendzki, 2009; Do, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1991; Mason & Hargreaves, 2001; McCown, Reibel, & Micozzi, 2010). The concept of meditative mindfulness, which is rooted in Eastern healing philosophies and used in Western therapeutic studies, is related to experiential benefits such as wellbeing and relaxation (Chen, Scott, & Benckendorff, 2014; Yeganeh, 2006). While the applications of meditative mindfulness are well developed in clinical psychology (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a), no prior studies have been found that have investigated the link between meditative mindfulness experiences and tourism (Chen et al., 2014).

Little attention has been given to the overlap between travelling and mindfulness, and how mindful travel may contribute to peacefulness and spiritual fulfilment. This study addresses this gap by drawing upon the concept of meditative mindfulness. This involves a review of the literature in

order to determine the theoretical underpinnings of meditative mindfulness and then applies this theory to the tourist experiences of Taiwanese backpackers in Australia. Hence, this study explores the therapeutic (meditative) mindfulness phenomenon in order to offer insights into the theoretical and empirical relationships between antecedents and consequences of mindfulness as they apply to tourist experiences. The focus of this research is to identify triggers that facilitate the formation of a mindfulness experience, as well as to determine the perceived consequences that result from meditative mindful tourism experiences. More importantly, this study will be of value to tourism operators and tourists, as it will allow them to gain a better understanding of how to design engaging experiences that contribute to personal fulfilment.

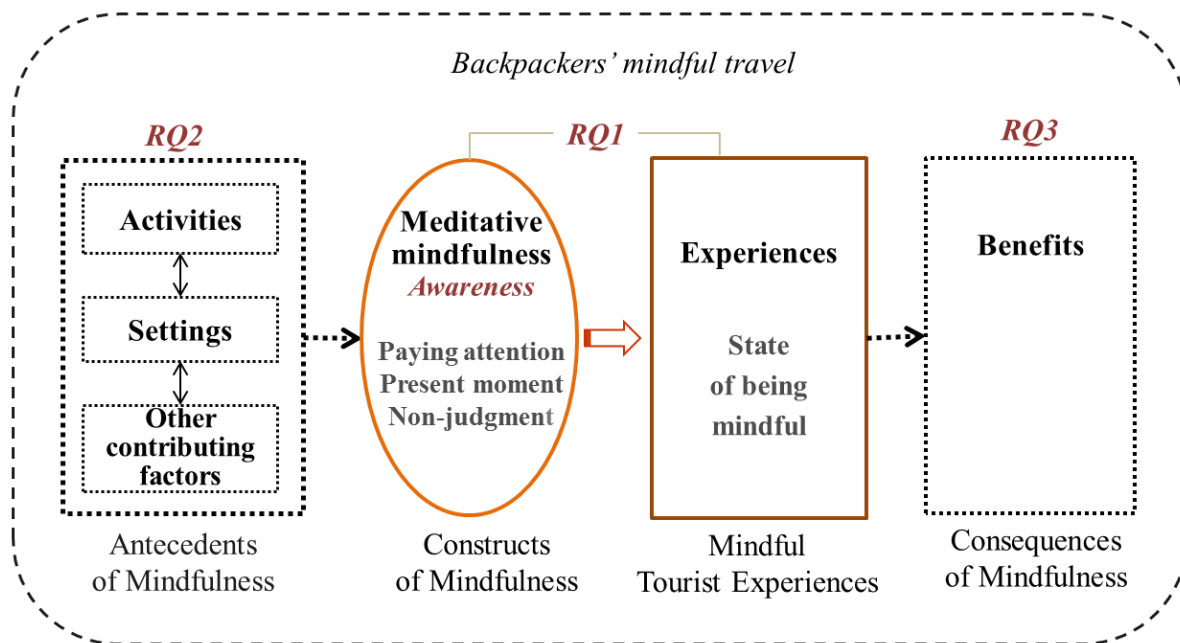
## **1.2 Theoretical Structure of this Study**

This thesis seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the theoretical relationship of the phenomena associated with the meditative mindful experiences of backpackers. Backpackers rather than mass tourists were selected as the focus of this study. Backpackers are considered to immerse themselves in seeking profound experiences and self-fulfilment during their journey (Cohen, 1979a). These backpacking experiences, in some cases, bear a relationship to meditative mindfulness. This study investigates the dimensions of the experiences that facilitate mindfulness for backpackers. In addition, this thesis will examine the benefits associated with such experiences. Thus, the theoretical structure of this study is to examine the antecedents and consequences of mindful experiences during travel.

There is a lack of research on how ‘peace of mind’ is embodied in tourist experiences and the extent to which specific experiences within tourism or travel contexts contribute to a tourists’ state of mindfulness (Chen et al., 2014). In this study, theories of mindfulness from the Buddhist tradition and Western clinical psychology have been applied to the tourism field. These have also been integrated into a framework to produce a tourist benefits model, so as to address the research gaps identified in Section 1.1 and to enable tourists’ experiences to be fully explored. To obtain a better understanding of the mental dimensions and benefits of tourist experiences, this research will analyse and explain the relationship between tourist experiences associated with meditative mindfulness and their antecedents and subsequent experiential benefits.

The theoretical framework for this study has been developed in Chapter 2 and shown in Figure 1.1. The following framework will help to guide the reader in an attempt to answer the research questions that are presented in the next chapter.





**Figure 1.1 Theoretical framework of this research**

### 1.3 Aim and Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to identify whether backpacker experiences are associated with meditative mindfulness, and to further examine the antecedents and consequences of these experiences as they relate to backpacker tourism, and to offer deeper insights into their contribution from both theoretical and practical perspectives. This will provide a greater understanding of the importance of the meditative mindfulness phenomenon as it applies to Taiwanese backpackers travelling in Australia and how the constructs of meditative mindfulness can help tourists derive positive experiences from engaging in particular activities. In doing so, it may help managers to better satisfy tourists' expectations, to enhance tourists' engagement, and to facilitate experiential marketing.

Specific research objectives for achieving this aim are as follows:

1. To identify the phenomena associated with meditative mindful tourist experiences in a tourism context.
2. To analyse the antecedents which facilitate mindful experiences of Taiwanese backpackers so as to create an awareness of the present moment through a non-judgmental acceptance of the situation.
3. To understand what are the perceived experiential benefits that can be derived from meditative mindful experiences.

These objectives will be investigated in the context of Taiwanese backpackers travelling in Australia.

## **1.4 Overview of the Method**

To achieve the research aim and objectives, this study has adopted a qualitative research method based on an interpretive constructivist paradigm which adopts the participant's perspectives (Creswell, 2009). This thesis has selected a sample of Taiwanese backpackers who were visiting Australia (interviewed in Brisbane and Uluru) as participants for the study. Taiwanese backpackers in Australia were selected as respondents since the interviewer (the author) is Taiwanese, enabling her to understand the details of the respondents' discussions. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Brisbane (backpacker hostels) and at Uluru (Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park), as these two destinations provided opportunities to meet Taiwanese backpackers.

The first step was to screen the respondents to find those who had had meditative mindful travel experiences during their trip/s. A screening interview was conducted before the subsequent formal semi-structured qualitative interviews. The screening interview questions were developed based on the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI), the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS), and the modified Four Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) which was developed by Walach et al. (2006), Baer et al. (2004) and Kang and Gretzel (2012) to suit the context of backpacker tourism. Individuals who were found to have had meditative mindfulness experiences were selected as participants. This interview process was pilot-tested before the formal qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted.

In total, 43 semi-structured interviews were completed, and a total of 77 instances of meditative mindful experiences were identified. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. NVivo 10 qualitative analysis software was applied to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the data analysis process.

## **1.5 Significance of this Study**

While mindfulness theory has been employed as an interpretative approach in previous studies of tourist experience to increase the effectiveness of communication (Moscardo, 1996, 1999, 2008; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Woods & Moscardo, 2003), this approach adopts a cognitive, dual information-processing model based on the opposed mental states of mindfulness or mindlessness from applied social psychology (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000b). This study explores alternative conceptualisations of mindfulness such as whether a tourist is engaged in the present moment, how mindfulness might be facilitated and the consequences derived by tourists.

There has been little tourism research attention focused on whether tourist experiences associated with therapeutic or meditative mindfulness produce benefits in terms of reducing negative emotions and stress, and increasing mental balance, mindful awareness and physical rest (Bishop et al., 2004; Siegel, 2009; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). It is hoped that findings from this study will help to build an understanding of the importance of mindful experiences for experience seekers, industry and policy decision makers. From a theoretical perspective, the study will contribute to the use of meditative mindfulness theory in tourism so as to help gain an understanding about how tourists derive any therapeutic benefits. From a practical point of view, it will help managers to satisfy diverse guest expectations, enhance the tourist engagement and to facilitate experiential marketing.

Based on the objectives of this study, there are three main contributions from this thesis:

1. *To address the lack of knowledge about the nature of tourist experiences associated with meditative mindfulness.*

Increasing attention has been paid to mindfulness as a tool for managing tourist experiences at a destination in the tourism studies literature (Frauman & Norman, 2004; McIntosh, 1999; Moscardo, 1996, 1999, 2008; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). However, the majority of tourism studies have adopted socio-cognitive mindfulness theory using cognitive processing models (Langer, 1991; Moscardo, 1999), or distinction-making conceptualising models (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006) that are based on the concept of dual processing of information in a cognitive, elaborative thinking process. However, this research seeks to understand the emotional states and sensations of travellers (Teasdale, 1999) from a perspective of meditative mindfulness, rather than focusing on cognitive thinking processes of socio-cognitive mindfulness.

2. *To establish a link between meditative mindful tourist experiences and its antecedents, both conceptually and empirically*

The second contribution of this study is to explore how informal mindfulness activities, settings, or other contributing factors facilitate travellers' meditative mindful experiences resulting in an awareness of the present moment, with non-judgmental acceptance. In the tourism literature, socio-cognitive mindfulness based on cognitive information processing theory has been found to be important in enhancing tourists' awareness in a specific context through learning (Frauman, 1999, 2010; Frauman & Norman, 2004; Moscardo, 1996; Moscardo, Ballantyne, & Hughes, 2007; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Pearce & Packer, 2013; Van Winkle & Backman, 2009; Woods & Moscardo, 2003). In contrast, very little research has focused on other antecedents, such as perceived sensations that can trigger tourists to engage mindfully in their experiences. Clinical psychology studies suggest that daily activities such as simple breathing can provide full attention

to immediate experiences so as to facilitate mindfulness (Gehart, 2012b). However, in the literature the focus is on formal mindfulness practices such as mindful breathing and meditation for patients or individuals rather than considering informal mindful activities in a range of travel settings. This study addresses this gap by analysing how activities, settings or other contributing factors may elicit tourists' meditative mindful experiences. Hence, this study explores the antecedents of travellers' experiences associated with meditative mindfulness from both conceptual and empirical perspectives. It is hoped that findings from this current study will reveal some triggers that lead to therapeutic benefits similar to those gained from formal mindfulness training.

### *3. To discuss the perceived experiential benefits and consequences of meditative mindfulness by adopting a cross-disciplinary perspective*

Evidence from meditative mindfulness studies in the fields of clinical psychology and Buddhism have validated the various positive outcomes for individuals who practise mindfulness, including increased creativity, physical wellbeing and psychological wellbeing (Sternberg, 2000).

Connections have also been found between the practice of mindfulness and improved mental health, wellbeing, social engagement, and behavioural regulation (Carruthers & Hood, 2011; Gethin, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a, 2003b; Nyklíček, 2011; Robins, Keng, Ekblad, & Brantley, 2012; Scheick, 2011; Siegel, Germer, & Olendzki, 2009; Spragg, 2011; Steinberg, 2011). In regard to the tourism research into meditative mindfulness, Kang and Gretzel (2012) suggested that it can enhance tourists' open and receptive attention to, and awareness of current experiences. However, studies that have examined the consequences of travellers' experiences based on meditative mindfulness are scarce and this area is yet to be fully explored.

The main aim of the study is to explore the theoretical and empirical relationships between the occurrence, antecedents and consequences of mindfulness of Taiwanese backpackers travelling around Australia. As such, this study adds to the existing body of knowledge of tourist experiences as well as backpacking travel studies. These results may provide an argument that individuals' mindful encounters during their tourism experiences trigger mental processes that precipitate emotional and cognitive balance, relaxation responses and positive wellbeing. Hence, this thesis carries implications for policy, industry and individual practice. For tourists, 'travelling mindfully' may be a way of providing intrinsic satisfaction and improving one's quality of life. For tourism policy makers and managers, a better understanding of meditative mindful tourist experiences may help to satisfy consumers' specific needs, design more effective marketing strategies, and provide meaningful experiences sought by customers in modern societies.

## 1.6 Key Definitions

A set of definitions from the literature has been selected and modified for conciseness so as to meet the scope of this study, and is listed below. A detailed explanation of how each definition was derived is addressed in Chapter 2.

**Socio-cognitive mindfulness:** Socio-cognitive mindfulness is “a state of conscious awareness in which the individual is implicitly aware of the context and content of information” (Langer, 1992, p. 289) as well as “the process of drawing novel distinctions” (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a, p. 1). In general, mindfulness is an attitude and a style of thinking that is created through analysing personal behaviour and, as a result, “learning to think about old situations in new ways, and opening up and enlarging your frame of reference” (Langer, 1990, p. 56). In particular, the mindful condition is “... both the result of, and continuing cause of, actively noticing new things” (Carson & Langer, 2006, p. 30).

**Meditative mindfulness:** Meditative mindfulness is a mental factor as well as a psychological state, and is defined in clinical psychology studies as “... the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience, moment to moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003a, p. 145).

**Dimensions/constructs of meditative mindfulness:** Based on the succinct operational definition adopted in this study, the three dimensions/constructs of the qualities of meditative mindfulness; paying attention, being in the present moment and being non-judgmental (Kabat-Zinn, 2003a) have been used to explore and explain mindful experiences that occur in backpacker’s travel.

**Awareness:** An intention to pay attention to a specific point of the present-moment experience as well as continuous self-regulated attention or being aware of awareness (Reid, 2011). In meditative mindfulness training, awareness can be enhanced by focusing on one’s breathing or a physical sensation.

**Present moment:** The term refers to meditative mindfulness as being associated with monitoring present-oriented awareness and observing moment-to-moment sensory and psychic events (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007a).

**Non-judgmental:** This is defined as an open expression of consciousness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a). To be more precise, in Buddhist and clinical applications, non-judgment involves, “adopting a particular orientation toward one’s experience that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance” (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 232). Non-judgment is one dimension of the construct of meditative mindfulness, and can facilitate people embodying with acceptance

(Siegel et al., 2009) and welcoming all experience without preconception; accepting ‘what is’ with curiosity and compassion (Gehart, 2012a).

**Experience:** Experience can also be defined as “the desired psychological result which motivates a person to participate in a recreational engagement” (Stein & Lee, 1995, p. 53) as well as “mental, spiritual and physiological outcomes resulting from on-site recreation engagements” (Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000, p. 37). According to Otto and Ritchie (1996, p. 166), the tourist experience is defined as “the subjective mental state felt by participants” to describe the meaning of various leisure and tourism activities.

**Travel experience:** The term refers to tourist experience that consists of five modes (see Section 2.2.1) ranging from the quest for mere pleasure to the search for meaningful experiences within a perspective of phenomenology. Travel experience is based on the concept of different kinds of worldview, since different relationships exist between a perceived ‘centre’ and a location where a tourist stays (Cohen, 1979a). It relates to the personal and emotive context of a visitors’ trip; tourist experiences can be considered as, “mental, spiritual and physiological outcomes resulting from on-site recreation engagements” (Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000, p. 37) and “the desired psychological result which motivates a person to participate in a recreational engagement” (Stein & Lee, 1995, p. 53).

**Benefit:** Benefit is defined as “psychological outcomes” and “the ultimate value that people place on what they believe they have gained from participation in a certain leisure activity” (Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000, p. 37). According to this concept, benefit can also be regarded as a “desirable change of state” of an individual, a group, a society, or even nonhuman organisms (Driver, Nash, & Haas, 1985, p. 295). In addition, psychological benefits include stress reduction or stimulation (Schreyer & Driver, 1989) which fits into the scope of this study.

**Backpacker travel:** Backpacker travel is defined as the sojourns that backpackers take to experience things in a meaningful way (Thatcher, 2010), to search for authenticity, to live in the moment (Giddens, 1991), to seek adventure (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995), and to have an ‘off-the-beaten track’ experience (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995).

This set of definitions from the literature has been selected and modified to be concise and to meet the scope of this study as listed below. A detailed explanation of how each definition was derived is explained in chapter 2.

## **1.7 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of five chapters. The present chapter has laid the foundations of this thesis. It has introduced the research background and research objectives, provided theoretical justifications and explained the significance of this study. The literature review is outlined in the next chapter and discusses previous research which relates to the aim and objectives of the research.

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to document a comprehensive literature review in three parts. The first part addresses the characteristics of the tourist and travel experience to demonstrate the significance and dimensions of socio-cognitive and meditative mindfulness through an overview of previous studies in different cross-disciplinary fields. In this section, backpacking is justified as an appropriate research context wherein the travellers may perceive mindful experience/s and benefits such as mental or physical health, positive wellbeing and transformation. The literature review concludes with a conceptual framework for this study.

Chapter 3 presents a discussion of the methodology for the study so as to address the research aims. The research paradigm and the corresponding research design have been discussed. A qualitative method approach based on the interpretive constructivist paradigm is used. Screening interviews and semi-structured interview prompt lists are proposed as the research strategy to identify respondents' meditative mindful travel experiences, and to explore the antecedents and consequences of meditative mindfulness. This culminates in a pilot study and the formal qualitative semi-structured interviews. The research design, research instrument, sampling method, data collection, data analysis methods and ethical considerations are all discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 expounds the results from qualitative interviews conducted with Taiwanese backpackers regarding their meditative mindful experiences in Australia. Data analysis is based on the research aim and the three objectives. Hence the chapter aims to provide an understanding of Taiwanese backpacker mindful experiences as a means to inform the tourism experience literature more generally, and to offer insights into the theoretical and empirical relationships between the antecedents and consequences of tourist experiences associated with meditative mindfulness.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the main findings of the study and its conclusion, provides a summary and presents a Model of the Meditative Mindfulness Tourist Experience (MMTE) and its components which are based on the findings of this study. The theoretical and practical contributions of this study to both academia and industry are also addressed. Delimitations and limitations of the study are acknowledged and suggestions for future research have been outlined. The chapter concludes with a number of recommendations for further research that emerge from the research findings.

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter has introduced the aim of this study by providing a background to the research and an introduction to the theoretical framework and research issues for this study. This was followed by the research aims and significance of the study. Chapter 2 will review theories relating to the three main aspects of this research: the phenomenon of mindfulness, the antecedents of mindfulness interventions, and related experiential benefits.



# CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

Central to an understanding of backpacking as a tourist experience associated with mindfulness is a need to understand what a tourist experience is, and how mindfulness theories can be applied to this study. This chapter brings together a number of streams of research related to tourist experiences, mindfulness and the backpacking movement to determine the conceptual and theoretical dimensions of the literature that are relevant to the research objectives. A review of the Eastern and Western<sup>1</sup> mindfulness literature highlights the similarities and differences between the definitions, antecedents and consequent experiential benefits of meditative and socio-cognitive mindfulness. Meditative mindfulness is adopted as the appropriate theoretical foundation and is used in this thesis as an integral part of the conceptual framework. Chapter 2 is organised into four main sections, as illustrated in Figure 2.1: tourist experience, mindfulness theories, backpacking travel, and a conceptual framework of the mindful travel experience.

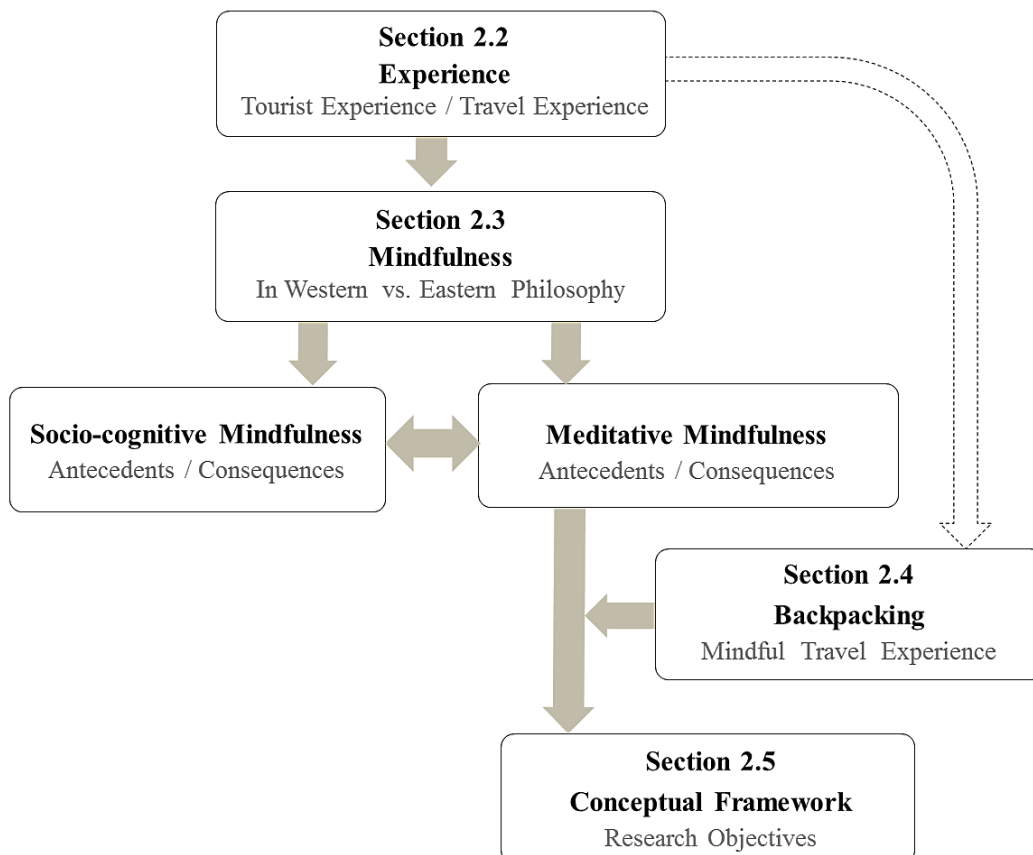


Figure 2.1 Outline of the literature review

<sup>1</sup> The use of the terms Eastern and Western is a convenience for this study.

## **2.2 What is an Experience?**

This section includes a discussion of the theoretical literature on the tourist experience and examines the mental, spiritual and physiological states that may occur during travel. A typology of these tourist experiences is then reviewed, and this includes the concepts of mindfulness, mindfulness-like experiences and flow.

### **2.2.1 The Tourist Experience**

The definition of experience has received attention from a number of different disciplines. From the perspective of psychology, experience is characterised as a concept of consciousness that is ever-present in human life (Gadamer, 1975). Chalmers (1996) identified experience as a process in exploring consciousness and how the consciousness participates within the world (Zylstra, 2014). In other words, experience is experiencing phenomena ( e.g., object, thought, and emotion) and being consciously aware of it (Jacobs, 2006). This continuous and fluid process involves psychological and neurological interactions and creates an active interaction between oneself and the received attention through the individual's bodily senses and perceptual concepts (Morse, 2014).

Accordingly, experience endows life with meaning and provides people patterns of intelligence through these encounters (Jacobs, 2006; Morse, 2014; Van Manen, 1990). Scoped from experience's temporal and spatial dimensions, it blends the past, present and future (Zylstra, 2014). The significance of those dimensions involves an individual's thoughts and reflexive awareness (Curtin, 2006; Van Manen, 1990) that allows people to remember, reflect and give them memory (Curtin, 2006).

In service marketing, Otto and Ritchie (1996) defined experience as: "the subjective mental state felt by participants" (p. 166). Further, Gupta and Vajic (2000) characterised experience as that subjective feeling that requires emotional involvement, and is related to sensations, resulting in learning. In leisure and recreation studies, an experience can also be seen as, "the desired psychological result which motivates a person to participate in a recreational engagement" (Stein & Lee, 1995, p. 53). Tourism is an industry within an 'experience economy' in which competitive advantages can be acquired by offering a unique, memorable and even a transforming experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). In tourism studies, as they relate to the personal and emotive context of a visitors' trip, experiences can be considered as, "mental, spiritual and physiological outcomes resulting from on-site recreation engagements" (Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000, p. 37). These mental journeys provide memories of having performed something special, having learned something or just having fun (Sundbo & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2008). The quality of an experience may be shaped through meaningful interaction with service providers (Tussyadiah, 2014). Accordingly, as

the definitions of tourist experience used in the tourism literature appear to be well developed, they are adopted in this study.

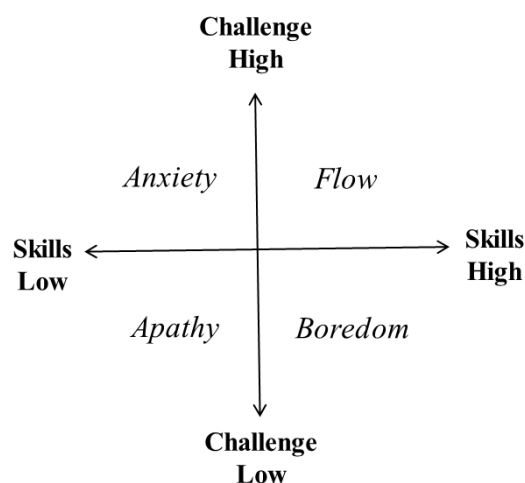
In tourism experience studies, it appears some groups of tourists pursue travel to obtain insightful, holistic or sensory experience (Bushell & Sheldon, 2009; McIntosh, 1999; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Papa, 2000). However, there has been disagreement among several researchers on this point. Boorstin (1964) observed that tourists pursue superficial experiences or what he referred to as “touristic false consciousness” through pseudo-events and suggested that tourist experiences are acts of consumption of mass tourism (Dann & Cohen, 1991, p. 161). MacCannell (1973) further argued that tourists seek real or authentic experiences just like pilgrims, and that it is the tourist establishment that presents them with ‘staged authenticity’ (Cohen, 1979b; MacCannell, 1973). However, Cohen (1979b) claimed that not all kinds of touristic experiences fit into MacCannell’s scheme and that authentic and contrived experiences are poles on a continuum of experience. Cohen (1979a) defined the nature of tourist experiences into five modes that range from the quest for mere pleasure to the search for a meaningful experience. These five modes of tourist experience have gained wide acceptance within tourism studies and include the recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential modes. He argued that the tourist experience as a socially constructed concept is not monolithic (Cohen, 1979a; Dann & Cohen, 1991), and that this typology of modes is based on the concept of different kinds of tourists desiring different modes of touristic experiences. Thus, these types of tourist experiences might also be embodied in a comprehensive concept in a resulting continuum that can reconcile and integrate the conflicting discussions arising from earlier studies (Cohen, 1979a). This suggests that the tourists’ travel experience can be conceptualised using a variety of disciplinary approaches, such as consumer behaviour, leisure, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and phenomenology.

Tourism is considered to contribute to the quality of people’s lives in modern society (Bushell & Sheldon, 2009; Hobson & Dietrich, 1995), with travel representing a possible avenue for individuals to ‘switch off’ from the pressure of their daily work and general ‘busy-ness’ (Richards, 1999). Researchers have identified trends towards novelty-seeking, attention-seeking, and spiritual fulfilment through travel experiences (Currie, 2000; Kottler, 1997; Otto & Ritchie, 1996) such as visiting natural attractions or participating in leisure and recreation activities. These opportunities provide a range of personal benefits for tourists such as reducing negative emotions and stress, and increasing mental and physical relaxation (Bishop et al., 2004; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; Hobson & Dietrich, 1995). However, research focussing on the types of tourist experiences that lead to these benefits is limited.

A number of concepts have been used to explain how experiences contribute to a tourist's subjective wellbeing. These include, in particular, positive feelings of flow and mindfulness related to complete concentration, as well as aspects of sensation and emotion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Reid, 2011). However, the extent to which specific situated experiences within tourism or travel contexts contribute to tourists' feelings of wellbeing remains unclear. In particular there appears to be limited knowledge about the psychological construct of 'peace of mind' that touristic experiences engender. Given this, the following discussion outlines the research literature on flow and mindfulness as two of the main constructs relevant to this study.

### 2.2.2 Flow Experiences

In leisure and recreation studies, the experience of flow has been used to describe an intense psychological state that is regarded as desirable (Reid, 2011), as essentially a state of arousal that can occur in a person who is totally engaged in an activity in which the level of challenge is balanced with the skills of the individual (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000a). Thus, flow is seen as an immediate conscious experience related to satisfaction gained while participating in activities at an attraction or a particular setting (Filep, 2009). This process is illustrated in Figure 2.2. Research has found that people tend to have a deep sense of happiness or enjoyment when they are completely conscious at the one moment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, 2000a, 2000b). However, an indispensable factor of a flow experience for people (such as dancers, athletes, rock climbers) is how and why performing an activity is meaningful to them (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000a). While it may occur frequently for people in some types of activities, flow can occur anywhere. During a flow state, participants feel harmony with their environment because their skills match the challenges that they encounter.



**Figure 2.2 Two-dimensional model of flow**  
Source: Reid (2011, p. 51)

Although flow theory is a useful construct for understanding visitor experiences, it is not the focus of this study for the following reasons. Firstly, flow occurs to a person undertaking a challenge in which they have skill and awareness of their actions, but are not aware of their awareness (Reid, 2011, p. 50). The current study, however, does not focus on high levels of challenge and instead pays particular attention to intense tourist experiences. Secondly, in a flow state, people are completely engaged in an activity so that they may forget their embodied being-in-the-world state altogether (Reid, 2011). Essentially, flow theory is based on the idea that people are mostly in a happy state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Reid (2011) argued that flow happens “when a person is aware of his or her actions but is not aware of his or her awareness” (Reid, 2011, p. 50). However, the current study is not only concerned with positive states that occur during backpackers’ journeys but also with the experiences during these journeys that may have aroused negative emotions. Although a state of flow would appear to support some of the attributes of attention that are central to mindfulness (i.e., psychic and physical energy), this study is not concerned with situations where individuals are so immersed in the experience that they tune out of their immediate surroundings. Rather, the study is concerned with situations where individuals are in tune with their surroundings, where they are living in the moment, and where they exhibit a high level of engagement and awareness. In contrast to the flow state, mindfulness can be viewed “not as the achievement of any particular state, but as intentional awareness of what is; being aware of awareness” (Reid, 2011, p. 50). Therefore, the flow experience will not be explored in this research; instead it will focus on mindfulness experiences among Taiwanese backpackers.

### **2.2.3 Mindfulness: An Essence of Memorable Experiences**

A number of research studies have sought to uncover the essence of experience and to discover how to create memorable experiences (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012; Ritchie, Tung, & Ritchie, 2011; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Since the mid-90s, increasing research attention has been paid to the notion of mindfulness (i.e., socio-cognitive mindfulness, see Section 2.3.1) as a tool for managing tourist experiences at destinations (Frauman & Norman, 2004; McIntosh, 1999; Moscardo, 1996, 1999, 2008; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). Tung and Ritchie (2011) explored the essence of memorable experiences based on a psychological perspective to identify the conceptual processes of memory formation and retention. Mindfulness is considered to be a trigger that can facilitate retention of knowledge in the tourist’s memory (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). That is, mindfulness, like novelty and surprise, has been suggested to provide people with greater opportunities to learn or control their actions (Langer, 1992, 1993, 2000). In contrast, mindless people will not recognise the setting as a new source of information that leads individuals to act like automatons who have been

programmed by their past behaviour rather than being in the present (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a). A majority of the tourism literature has focussed on mindfulness (i.e., socio-cognitive mindfulness) theory developed by Langer (1989, 1992), which is based on the concept of dual processing of information in a cognitive elaborative thinking process. Basically, those studies seek to focus on satisfaction from tourists' cognitive learning processes rather than affective consequences arising from the sensation-seeking of awareness.

Alternative studies linking mindfulness (i.e., meditative mindfulness (see Section 2.3.2) and memorable experiences have been discussed in contemporary Buddhism research (Bodhi, 2011; Kang & Whittingham, 2010). Mindfulness is considered as 'sati' in its Pali form or 'smṛti' in its Sanskrit which was recorded in the Buddhism Mahasatipatthana Sutta. Etymologically, 'sati' can be interpreted as 'meaning memory' (Rhys Davids, 1910). Gyatso (1992) translates 'sati' as recollective memory, although 'sati' in the context of mindfulness can be seen as awareness or discernment (Bodhi, 2011). Precisely, from an ethical point of view, this notion is related to "recollection, calling-to-mind, being-aware-of, certain specified facts" (Bodhi, 2011, p. 23) which include the repeated application of this awareness to each experience of life. In other words, the operative expression of mindfulness (i.e., meditative mindfulness) can be applied to the process of remembering or being mindful. This current study is concerned with travellers' attentions and awareness of their remembered mindful experiences. An original Eastern perspective on meditative mindfulness has been adopted in this research and is further discussed in Section 2.3.2.

## **Summary**

The tourist experience has been a core concept in tourism management research and has been used to understand consumer behaviour (Uriely, 2005). However, theoretical aspects of the experiential nature of the tourist experience have not been discussed broadly and explicitly until the last few years (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, & O'Leary, 2006). This section has defined the theoretical nature of tourist experiences; explained how tourists seek to obtain insightful, holistic or sensory experiences, differentiated the related concepts of present-moment experiences of mindfulness from flow, reviewed the relationships between memorable experience and mindfulness, and finally suggested why meditative mindfulness has been chosen for this current study. To provide a more comprehensive insight into mindfulness theory, the next section will examine the concepts of mindfulness and how it refers to the two notions of socio-cognitive and meditative mindfulness, in more detail.

## **2.3 Mindfulness Theories**

Because this study explores the tourist experience associated with mindfulness, it is essential to have a complete understanding of mindfulness theories so as to establish a theoretical foundation and to justify the use of an appropriate approach to this study. Hence, this section discusses the two main discourses related to the phenomena of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is a psychological construct (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006), or a mental factor (Kang & Whittingham, 2010) as well as a psychological state (Reid, 2011). The concept of mindfulness is a term stemming from ancient Eastern Buddhism spiritual traditions (Nhat Hanh, 1976); however, the concept has subsequently aroused wide discussion and application across a number of disciplines. The two main classic discourses of mindfulness are socio-cognitive mindfulness (Pirson, Langer, Bodner, & Zilcha, 2012) and meditative mindfulness (Yeganeh, 2006). These are different interpretations that embody both Western and Eastern philosophical perspectives. While each of the notions of mindfulness is defined differently, they are related and share some similarities (Pirson et al., 2012).

This section begins with an overview of socio-cognitive mindfulness and meditative mindfulness in terms of their definitions, applications, antecedents and consequences. This is followed by a discussion of the conceptual similarities and differences between both and their different mental processing modes (Teasdale, 1999).

### **2.3.1 Socio-cognitive Mindfulness**

Socio-cognitive mindfulness (Pirson et al., 2012) is based on dual mindfulness-mindlessness theory (Langer, 1992). Ellen Langer, a Harvard psychologist is regarded as the pioneer of the Western notion of mindfulness, with her main theoretical focus being on dual information processing (Langer, 1990; Langer & Piper, 1987). Essentially, Langer's conceptualization of mindfulness echoes a Western perspective of cognitive thinking as well as a variation of information-processing systems theory (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). Later, mindfulness duality theory was introduced into social psychology and cognitive research in fields such as health, business, education, and tourism (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a; Moscardo, 1999).

#### **2.3.1.1 Definitions of Socio-cognitive Mindfulness**

The double-edged theory of socio-cognitive mindfulness-mindlessness as proposed by Langer (1989, 1991, 1992) considered aspects of mindlessness first, then addressed its opposite state, mindfulness, and the prevalence of both these states in daily life (Langer, 1991). This duality is

used to understand how decreasing and increasing states of mindlessness can diminish certain social concerns, and bring about change in an individual's awareness (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000b).

### **Mindlessness**

Mindlessness is a psychological state that sets in, "when [people] rely too rigidly on categories and distinctions created in the past" (Langer, 1991, p. 23). Langer and Piper (1987) defined mindlessness as the, "rigid use of information during which the individual is not aware of its potentially novel aspects" (p.280). Precisely, mindlessness is characterised by an individual's tendency to be context-dependent or over-reliant on familiar patterns; as a result, he/she is oblivious to any novel or new aspects of that situation (Langer, 1992). In other words, when people are in a state of mindlessness, their acts or behaviour are governed by their past routines, occur as programmed automatons resulting in invariant patterns, and cause them to deal with information in a single way, regardless of what is happening in their current circumstances (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a; Langer & Piper, 1987).

The phenomenon of mindless acts in general, may result in a lack of, or with little attention and conscious awareness of new details (Langer & Piper, 1987). Langer (1992) suggested that the phenomenon of mindlessness may result from the single exposure to information, and is similar to concepts such as habit, functional fixedness, overlearning, and automatic information processing. In particular, certain kinds of mindless acts have been attributed to the unconscious (Langer, 1991). In this situation, it can be construed as mindless, rigid and invariant behaviour that occurs with little or no conscious awareness (Langer, 1992). The mindless state involves mechanical processing of information that leads to it being unavailable for conscious consideration (Van Winkle & Backman, 2009).

To summarise, when people are in a state of mindlessness, they act on 'auto pilot' without awareness, governed by past routines that cause them to deal with information in a single way, regardless of what is happening in their current circumstances (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a; Langer & Piper, 1987). Authors have suggested that mindlessness can be reduced by subtle hints and through learning which switches the mode of thinking from mindless to mindful (Langer, 1992; Weick & Putnam, 2006).

### **Mindfulness**

On the other hand, mindfulness is "a state of conscious awareness in which the individual is implicitly aware of the context and content of information" (Langer, 1992, p. 289) as well as "the process of drawing novel distinctions" (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a, p. 1). When an individual is



in a state of being mindful, he/she can identify distinctions in new information, and differentiate between this information in the process of creating new categories (Langer & Piper, 1987). It makes an individual, “more aware of the context and perspective of their actions than if [he/she] relies upon distinctions and categories drawn in the past” and actively draws on these distinctions to “keep [him/her] situated in the present” (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a, p. 2). In other words, mindfulness can be defined as “a rich awareness of discriminatory detail generated by organisational processes” that combines, “ongoing scrutiny of existing expectations, continuous refinement and differentiation of expectations based on newer experiences” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006, p. 516).

Accordingly, learning to switch modes of thinking is one lesson of (socio-cognitive) mindfulness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). In a psychological state of mindfulness, individuals engage in active information processing while performing their current tasks through actively analysing, categorising, and making distinctions in a range of contexts (Langer, 1997). This implies the need to notice new things that involve knowing or seeing both similarities in things thought different, and differences in things thought similar (Langer, 2005, p. 16). Essentially, mindfulness is a process of actively drawing novel distinctions, rather than simply cognition (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a). In particular, the mindful condition is “... both the result of, and continuing cause of, actively noticing new things” (Carson & Langer, 2006, p. 30).

As such, socio-cognitive mindfulness is a mindset of, “openness to novelty in which the individual actively constructs novel categories and distinctions” in a social interaction (Langer, 1992, p. 289). Langer (2000) suggested the subjective ‘feel’ of mindfulness in relation to the whole individual is one of “a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness or being in the present” (p. 2).

In summary, socio-cognitive mindfulness is an attitude and a style of thinking that is created through analysing one’s personal behaviour and, as a result, “learning to think about old situations in new ways, and opening up and enlarging your frame of reference” (Langer, 1990, p. 56). Based on Langer’s notion of mindfulness, Sternberg (2000) summarised mindfulness as having five main characteristics: openness to novelty, alertness to distinction, sensitivity to different contexts, orientation to the present, and implicit, if not explicit, awareness of multiple perspectives. Thus, there is consensus in the literature that the main constructs of (socio-cognitive) mindfulness include a state of awareness, cognitive distinctions, and active information processing of novelty. However, Langer’s discourse on the phenomena seems more concerned with practices that reduce mindlessness rather than the importance of increasing mindfulness to improve performances (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000b).

## The Dual Mindfulness-Mindlessness Theory in Tourism

In the majority of tourism studies, the mindfulness-mindlessness construct has been grounded in dual information processing theory and based on Langer's perspective of cognitive information processing (Moscardo, 2008). This suggests that mindfulness is associated with active processing of information where individuals are responsive to the creation of new categories in their surroundings (mindful), rather than being trapped by previous routines (mindless) (Van Winkle & Backman, 2009). Using this approach, Moscardo (1996) demonstrated the key features of mindfulness and mindlessness (see Figure 2.3).

MINDFULNESS	MINDLESSNESS
<p><b>Key Features:</b>            Open to learning            Attention to the setting            Development of new routines</p> <p><b>Conditions:</b>            New and different settings            Varied and changing situations            Control and choice            Personal relevance</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b>            Learning and recall            Feelings of control            Ability to deal with problems            Feeling of achievement            Feelings of satisfaction</p>	<p><b>Key Features:</b>            Use of existing routines            Little attention to the setting            No learning</p> <p><b>Conditions:</b>            Familiar settings            Repetitive situations            Little control, few choices            No personal relevance</p> <p><b>Outcomes:</b>            No learning, poor recall            Feelings of helplessness            Limited ability to deal with problems            Feeling of incompetence            Feelings of dissatisfaction</p>

**Figure 2.3 Key features of mindfulness and mindlessness**

Source: Moscardo (1999, p. 25)

The dual mindfulness-mindlessness theory has been used as cognitive interpretative themes in tourism information service contexts, such as visitor centres (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986), heritage sites (McIntosh, 1999; Moscardo, 1996) and wildlife tourism settings (Woods & Moscardo, 2003), enabling visitors to be adaptive and responsive to information from their surroundings.

A mindfulness model for communicating with visitors (see Figure 2.4) was proposed by Moscardo (1999) with mindfulness seen as a tool that facilitates effective communications between management and the tourist experience, and guides the design of interpretative themes. This suggests that the outcomes of mindfulness result from a given cognitive state, and result in more

learning, higher satisfaction and greater understanding while visiting an attraction (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). A number of tourism authors have adopted this dual mindfulness-mindlessness approach to examine how interpretation services and settings combine with visitor factors to influence the visitor's cognitive state of mindfulness versus mindlessness (Frauman & Norman, 2004; Moscardo, 1996, 1999, 2008; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Van Winkle & Backman, 2009; Woods & Moscardo, 2003). Conversely, mindlessness limits an individual's ability to recognise and process new information (Moscardo, 1999). Therefore, mindlessness results in little learning, low satisfaction, and little understanding (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). Accordingly, this implies that a lack of satisfaction with the quality of an experience by some tourists can be attributed either to the mindlessness of consumers, or to poor design and management of the experience by tourism planners.

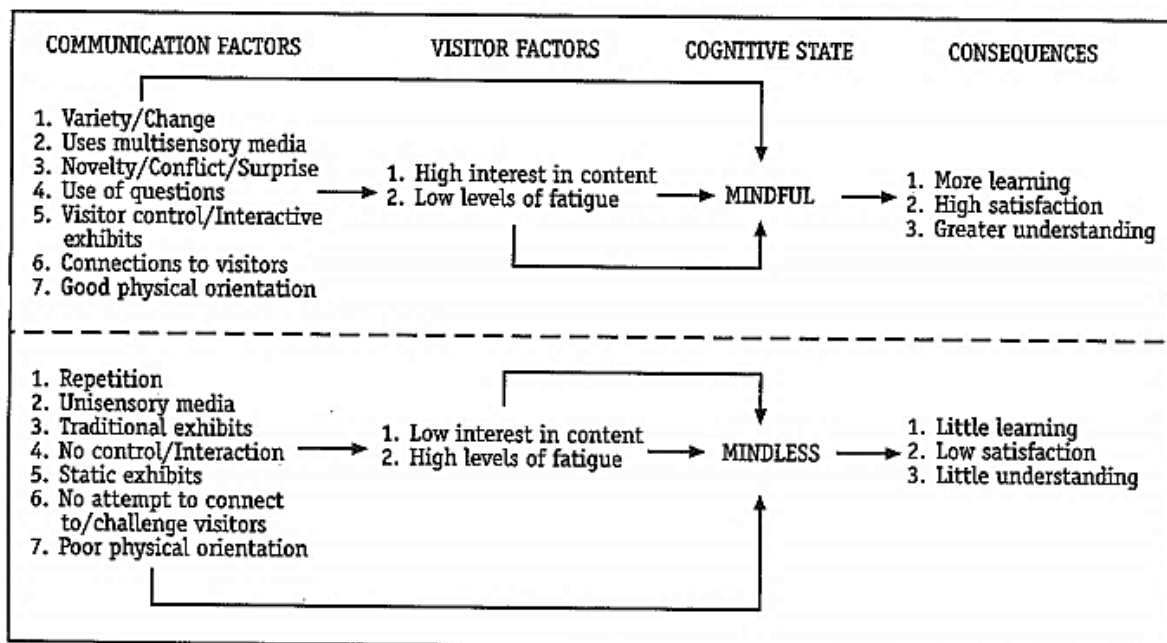


Figure 2.4 Mindfulness model for communicating with visitors

Source: Moscardo, (1999, p.27)

Both mindful and mindless states are associated with cognitive thinking but in different ways (Moscardo, 1999). For example, unlike mindless visitors, those who are mindful are sensitive to context, and question what is going on in a setting. It is said that the mindfulness concept refers to an active and “questioning cognitive state” (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986, p. 97) that can enhance effective communication between visitors and contexts (Moscardo, 1999, p. 27). This perspective builds on the psychological dual processing (mindfulness-mindlessness) model where visitors respond to external stimuli and social situations in different ways (Moscardo, 2008).

### **2.3.1.2 Applications of Socio-cognitive Mindfulness**

#### **Antecedents of Socio-cognitive Mindfulness**

As discussed in Section 2.2.1.1, the concept of socio-cognitive mindfulness has received much research attention in tourism, especially its application to examine how stimuli in visitor settings can be optimised to enhance visitor experience (Frauman & Norman, 2004; Moscardo, 1999, 2008; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Van Winkle & Backman, 2009). Most of the settings are limited to specific sites or selected destinations such as visitor centres (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986), heritage sites (McIntosh, 1999; Moscardo, 1996), zoos and national parks (Frauman & Norman, 2004; Woods & Moscardo, 2003) and festival venues (Van Winkle & Backman, 2009). However, little research attention has been given to open-ended or nonspecific sites such as events that occur during an individual's journey. While it has been argued that unplanned or pre-designed communicative cues and images of change may trigger a mindful state (Pearce, 2012a), no previous tourism studies have focused on understanding how the state of being mindful occurs in unstructured and unplanned settings. Therefore, an understanding of the antecedents of mindfulness as well as how they may lead to travellers being mindful in unexpected or unplanned situations needs to be more fully explored in future studies.

Previous tourism studies have examined factors that can be controlled or manipulated to encourage mindfulness. Empirical applications of socio-cognitive mindfulness have typically examined how visitors respond to various stimuli (such as interpretative cues) and their consequences in terms of visitor learning and satisfaction. This research focus addresses certain variables affecting visitor satisfaction and learning while processing information during on-site experiences. The principles of effective communication to enhance the conceptualisation of mindfulness include, "to help visitors find their way around, make connections to visitors and get them involved, provide variety, tell a good story that makes sense, and know and respect visitors" (Moscardo, 1999, p. 40). For example, managers may develop additional programs to meet visitor needs and to enhance learning interests in an interpretive setting (McIntosh, 1999; Moscardo, 1996; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Van Winkle & Backman, 2009).

Mindfulness has been found to be a mediator of effective interpretive techniques which have been used to examine the quality of tourist experiences at a national park (Kang & Gretzel, 2012). Kang and Gretzel (2012) discussed how tourist experiences could be improved by using information technologies such as MP3 players (audio-only media) for podcasting tours. However, the conceptualisation of mindfulness theory employed in Kang and Gretzel's (2012) study emphasised open and receptive attention and awareness (Brown & Ryan, 2003) which was based on an

alternative perspective of analytic modes of processing. Teasdale (1999) identified the alternative notion of meditative mindfulness (see Section 2.2) that contrasts with Langer and Moscardo's application of socio-cognitive mindfulness. Kang and Gretzel (2012) borrowed from the alternative perspective of the analytic modes of processing to distinguish the concept of meditative mindfulness as an open and receptive attention to, and awareness of the current experience, instead of socio-cognitive mindfulness. However, Kang and Gretzel's (2012) study did not address what factors encourage mindfulness. This gap in the literature will be discussed in Section 2.3.2.

### **Consequences of Socio-cognitive Mindfulness**

Evidence from mindfulness tourism and leisure studies have shown that there are various positive outcomes or benefits perceived at the individual level such as satisfaction, learning, excitement, escape, reflection, enjoyment, creativity (Frauman & Norman, 2004; Moscardo, 1996, 1999, 2008; Pearce, 2012b) and insightfulness (McIntosh, 1999). The information processing systems of socio-cognitive mindfulness are said to consist of embedded routines through which information is stored and enacted (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). As a result, the process of drawing novel distinctions can lead to a number of diverse consequences. It has been said that the outcomes of mindfulness will result in more learning, higher satisfaction and greater understanding from a given cognitive state (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Van Winkle & Backman, 2009). Langer and Moldoveanu (2000a) concluded that the consequences of socio-cognitive mindfulness included a greater sensitivity to one's environment, more openness to new information, the creation of new categories for structuring perception, and enhanced awareness of multiple perspectives in problem solving.

A closer examination of Langer's socio-cognitive mindfulness theory reveals that it is grounded entirely within the Western scientific perspectives, rather than Eastern philosophy. Nevertheless, Langer (1991) mentioned that some concepts and consequences of mindfulness implicit in Eastern disciplines are strikingly similar to the concepts and consequences within her own studies that were founded on Western principles. Hence, the two concepts are not incompatible and over time should lead to the same positive consequences (Langer, 1989; Yeganeh, 2006).

#### *Mindfulness and Satisfaction*

In tourism studies, there is evidence that mindfulness has been associated with a series of positive outcomes that includes communion with nature, *communitas* with people, and personal growth and renewal of self, and helps to explain overall positive satisfaction (Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

Tourism is the product of experiences (Prentice, Witt, & Hamer, 1998), with tourists' perceived experiences leading to affect and cognition (Pearce, Filep, & Ross, 2011) during the productive

process, followed by satisfaction. The linkage between satisfaction and mindfulness has been discussed by Moscardo (2009). She suggested the complex satisfaction construct is related to the concepts of mindfulness, existential authenticity, tourist moment, slow travel and slow food, aesthetic experience, mental restoration and flow (Pearce et al., 2011). A mindful experience enhances positive emotions, increases personal resources and, in turn leads to greater life satisfaction as well as the relief from stress.

### *Mindfulness and Learning*

Several scholars have highlighted learning as a significant positive outcome which has been revealed in tourism mindfulness studies. Moscardo (2009, cited in Pearce et al., 2011, p. 35) proposed a feature of mindfulness as “the processing of new information” which can enhance the creation of new meanings. Similarly, Brown and Langer (1990) believed that mindfulness is a process through which meaning is given to outcomes. Mindfulness is thus often associated with greater learning and satisfaction with the environment, and can lead to visitors being more adaptive and responsive to information. Mindfulness has also been associated with greater learning and satisfaction in recreation-based settings. For example, visitors are more satisfied with an educational experience if they are presented with information (Moscardo, 1999) and have a greater feeling of control over their behaviour (Van Winkle & Backman, 2009). In summary, mindfulness can not only facilitate the creation of meaning, but also is believed to result in more learning, higher satisfaction, greater understanding and feelings of control over behaviour (Van Winkle & Backman, 2009).

However, there are different conceptualisations of the processes of socio-cognitive and meditative mindfulness. Socio-cognitive mindfulness stresses the cognitive learning processes, whereas meditative mindfulness is similar to thought processing in alternative analytic modes (Teasdale, 1999).

### *Mindfulness and Insightfulness*

To specifically distinguish the benefits which visitors derive from cultural heritage, McIntosh (1999) revealed that visitors perceived mindful outcomes or consequence in accordance with valued insight, appreciation and meaning of life. In McIntosh’s benefits-based approach, mindfulness is associated with the psychological processes experienced by heritage visitors in cultural tourism service encounters. The psychological process includes various paths: reflective, cognitive and affective, and leads to an end state of insightfulness. This insightfulness is regarded as a, “conceptualization of the intrinsic, experiential (and potentially longer lasting) outcomes” (McIntosh, 1999, p. 45).

Because insightfulness places more stress on the personal values of each individual visitor, the experiential benefits may be longer lasting.

Visitor experiences associated with insightfulness involve a different process and need further empirical testing. While one of the processes referred to as ‘affective’ will be examined in this study, the notion of mindfulness underpinning this study differs from the notion of socio-cognitive mindfulness. This will be further examined in Section 2.3.2.

### **2.3.2 Meditative Mindfulness**

An alternative notion of mindfulness in psychological terms is based on the perspective of Eastern philosophy, particularly the Buddhist tradition. In Buddhist meditative training, mindfulness offers a path for people to follow to achieve liberation from suffering, or to achieve enlightenment (Kang & Whittingham, 2010). Thus, mindfulness as a mental factor has become a core skill to help guide people practising Buddhist meditation (Bodhi, 2011). Traditionally, the meditative approach was grounded by the need for the awareness of experiences. It involves intentionally simplifying one’s awareness with non-judgmental observation, as well as narrowing in on one aspect of inner and/or outer experience in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2002b). This secular meditative approach to mindfulness can be referred to as meditative mindfulness (Bodhi, 2011; Chen et al., 2014; Yeganeh, 2006).

From a Buddhist perspective, mindfulness is an awareness of being aware (Hirst, 2003) and this perspective has been applied widely in the field of clinical psychology over two decades. In particular, Kabat-Zinn (2003b) transposed the empirical values and meditation techniques from Eastern traditions to Western clinical psychology (Kang & Whittingham, 2010). The discussion that follows in this section further explores the dialogue between Buddhist traditions of mindfulness and their manifestation in clinical psychology, as well as the respective theoretical and empirical applications. Following this, the notion of meditative mindfulness included in this study will be proposed.

#### **2.3.2.1 Definitions of Meditative Mindfulness**

##### **Buddhist Meditative Mindfulness**

Mindfulness within Buddhist traditions has been applied over the past 2,500 years (Kang & Whittingham, 2010). The beginnings of Western mindfulness theory can be traced to 1881 when Rhys Davids translated the Buddhist term ‘sati’ (in its Pali form) or ‘smṛti’ (in its Sanskrit form) using the English word ‘mindfulness’. Through the translation, mindfulness can be seen as

awareness or discernment (Bodhi, 2011; Gethin, 2011). Based on this discourse, mindfulness is described as “the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present” (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In Buddhist meditative training, mindfulness as a concept and as the practice of a path, plays a crucial role in helping people to embody happiness, fulfilment, and wellness in everyday present moments, as well as to realise that spiritual liberation, enlightenment, and complete freedom from suffering is an ultimate goal in their life (Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). There are rich discourses that refer to the constructs of mindfulness in Buddhist contexts, such as this direct quote by Kang and Whittingham (2010),

*“...simple bare awareness of moment to moment experience, 'gatekeeping' awareness, remembering and sustaining attention on a familiar object, a process of systematically recollecting a sequence of ideas, conjoined with introspective vigilance that monitors the stability and clarity of awareness, wisely directed attention that probes into the source of experiential content, and non-dual co-emergent awareness at the subtlest level of consciousness, free from all conceptual constructs and frames”* (pp. 163-164).

Such Buddhist assertions about the value of meditative mindfulness have been tested using Western psychological methodology to develop the simultaneous qualities of relaxation, attentional stability and vividness (Baer, 2009, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2002b, 2003b; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006).

### **Western Therapeutic Mindfulness in an Eastern Notion**

Based on the original Buddhist discourses and teachings, psychologists have developed the concept of meditative mindfulness based on the following three elements: awareness, present experience, and acceptance without judgment (Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005). They are crucial and effective for the cultivation of the human mind. As used in psychotherapy, Kabat-Zinn (2003a, p. 145) offered the following definition of mindfulness as:

*... the awareness that emerges through **paying attention on purpose**, in the **present moment**, and **nonjudgmentally** to the unfolding of experience moment to moment.*

The three key elements of Kabat-Zinn’s definition of mindfulness in relation to awareness are; paying attention on purpose, being in the present moment, and being non-judgmental. Accordingly, the first basic element of mindfulness is an intention to pay attention to a specific point of the present-moment experience, such as focusing on one’s breath or a physical sensation, as well as the continuous self-regulated attention or being aware of awareness (Reid, 2011). Secondly, mindfulness can be described as being associated with monitoring present-oriented awareness and observing moment-to-moment sensory and psychic events (Brown et al., 2007a). Thirdly,



mindfulness is an open and nonjudgmental expression of consciousness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a). Obviously, these significant and unique constructs of mindfulness differ from other psychological theories such as self-awareness and self-concept (Levesque & Brown, 2007; Ryan, Brown, & Creswell, 2007 ; Scheick, 2011). Thus, Germer et al. (2005) from the Institute for Meditation and Psychotherapy defined ‘therapeutic mindfulness’ as an awareness of the present experience with acceptance. To be more precise, in clinical applications, mindfulness involves, “adopting a particular orientation toward one’s experience that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance” (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 232). Bishop et al. (2004, p. 232) defined two components of mindfulness approaches to psychological treatment: self-regulation of attention, and metacognitive processes. The mental processes involved in therapeutic mindfulness reduces emotional distress and maladaptive behaviour (Bishop et al., 2004) as discussed in the next section.

The concepts of the mindfulness construct are broad and integrative but there is little specific consensus about definitions (Schmidt, 2011). According to Siegel et al. (2009, p. 19) mindfulness can facilitate people embodying “affectionate awareness, mindful acceptance, openhearted presence, and mindful compassion”. A multifaceted definition was proposed as “Mindfulness: self-regulated, present-moment awareness that welcomes all experience without preconception or judgment, accepting ‘what is’ with curiosity and compassion” (Gehart, 2012a, p. 7)

### **A Single Continuum of Process in Meditative Mindfulness**

One of the important dimensions of meditative mindfulness is to stabilise attention to avoid distractions (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). For instance, when people pay attention to a particular object, the mindset at that moment is not floating away from the object (Bodhi, 2000). The mental process of meditative mindfulness without distraction is meant to keep “the mind as steady as a stone instead of letting it bob about like a pumpkin in water” (Bodhi, 2000, p. 371). The quality of attention can be said to have conceptual associations of total awareness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). During the analytical process, Wallace (1999) hypothesised that there exists “a continuum of awareness in which there are successive pulses of cognition and awareness, each lasting for a short period of time” (p.176). Due to the homogeneity of the mental continuum, “one moment of consciousness may recall the experience of the immediately preceding moment of consciousness” (Wallace, 1999, p. 183). Therefore, the consciousness perceived in that state is “first a sense of clarity, or implicit luminosity capable of manifesting as all manner of appearances, and secondly the quality of cognizance, or the event of knowing” (Wallace, 1999, p. 183).

As mentioned in the previous section, there are two components involved in the mental process of meditative mindfulness that facilitate psychological treatment: self-regulation of attention and

metacognitive processes (Bishop et al., 2004, p. 232). This implies that mindfulness involves intentional attention and cognition as well as the process of self-observation (i.e., introspection, reflective functioning). However, the emphasis is on self-observation more than self-knowledge only (i.e., psychological mindedness) during the process (Bishop et al., 2004).

Meditative mindfulness therefore involves a single continuum and is different from the duality embodied in socio-cognitive mindfulness, although both meditative and socio-cognitive mindfulness involves attentional engagement (Bishop et al., 2004; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). It can be said that a continuum generates the appearance of a dual-process mechanism (Hamilton, Sherman, & Maddox, 1999). One of the fundamental practices of meditative mindfulness is to attempt to balance the mind while one's wellbeing is one of mental suffering. Wallace and Shapiro (2006, p. 693) proposed a four-factor mental balance model to describe the cultivation of mental balances: conative, attentional, cognitive, and affective balances. The four components of the model attempt to encapsulate the main processes, with each balance gained in one area affecting the other three. In addition, Teasdale (1999) suggested that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy supports usefulness, which involves the methodology of the emotional processing as a way to understand the mediating processes, to prevent a relapse in healing people's disturbed emotions such as depression, and to help people relax.

An overview of the literatures shows that tourism scholars have emphasised the importance of tourists' senses and embodied activities to understand tourist experiences (Franklin, 2003); but, how these may lead to psychological treatment or therapeutic functioning still remains unclear. This current study is concerned with backpacking experiences in which the travellers prefer to immerse themselves in the very essence of their experience during the journey. Backpacking involves a long trip and slower travel than mass travel, and the individual traveller experiences dynamic settings and communication with diverse encounters. Studies have found that the backpacker experience is one that has led to greater self-awareness and cultural sensitivity (Cohen, 1979a, 2003). Therefore, the research presented in this thesis considers that mindfulness is an important mental factor and has employed the succinct operational definition of meditative mindfulness constructs in three dimensions, as defined by Kabat-Zinn (2003a): paying attention, in the present moment and non-judgmental to explore and explain these kinds of cultivated or transformative experiences occurring during backpacker's travel.

### **2.3.2.2 Applications of Meditative mindfulness**

#### **Antecedents of Meditative Mindfulness**

The previous section provided an overview of meditative mindfulness. Mindfulness skills can be practised in a range of everyday situations. In general, the antecedents of meditative mindfulness include formal mindfulness practices and informal mindfulness activities. Formal mindfulness practices tend to train participants to be conscious of awareness moment by moment by scanning the physical sensations of the body, thoughts, feelings or emotions and paying attention to one's surroundings without judgement. Examples include Buddhist mind training and mindfulness interventions in clinical psychology and therapeutic recreation (TR). Nevertheless, the alternative informal mindfulness activities also encourage the application of mindfulness to an individual's everyday life, such as pleasant leisure activities (Gehart, 2012b). The more important function of the triggers associated with meditative mindfulness is related to emotional distress (Teasdale, 1999).

#### ***Formal Practices***

For Buddhist mindfulness training, the formal mindfulness practices include mindfulness of breath exercises, body scan (mindfulness of physical sensations of the body), mindful hatha yoga, and mindful walking (Kang & Whittingham, 2010, p. 162). The number of research studies involving formal mindfulness practices has grown rapidly in recent years. This section outlines three working interventions of mindfulness including interventions of Buddhist mind training, mindfulness-based intervention programs and therapeutic recreation in various contexts.

Mindfulness skills are rooted in the ancient Eastern healing philosophies as discussed above. However, the cultivation of mindfulness is not a single procedure but rather, is embedded in a wider context of meditative training or techniques to experience a period of self-exploration (Schmidt, 2011). Meditation in the Buddhist discourse has no particular patterns and can happen in any situation. In other words, meditation can include various practices and can be practised in everyday life regardless of formality, whether sitting, walking, travelling, driving, exercising, standing or eating as long as attention is paid nonjudgmentally in the present moment. Buddhist mindfulness practices have been used for centuries but did not become a popular formal skill for the general public in Western cultures until its benefits were advocated by Kabat-Zinn (Kabat-Zinn, 1991, 2000, 2002a).

Mindfulness as a skill can be thought of as mental factors to facilitate an individual's state of being mindful (Kang & Whittingham, 2010). Buddhist traditions have also been used to cultivate one's mindfulness through the practice of meditation, beginning in the 1950s (Gethin, 2011; Kabat-Zinn,

2003a). In order to obtain the state of mindfulness, one of the most widespread Buddhist practices involves the use of breath. In Buddha's teachings, one can achieve concentration by focussing on one's breath no matter what position one's body is in (Nhat Hanh, 1976). The Sutra of Mindfulness says, "no matter what position one's body is in, the practitioner must be conscious of that position" (Nhat Hanh, 1976, p. 7). The common way of practices is meditation. Meditation, in a Buddhist discourse has no particular pattern and can occur in every situation. Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh (1976) stated that, "with practice they are able to experience the many benefits from guided meditation and consequently to experience transformation at a very fundamental level" (p.1). In particular, the concepts have been adopted by mind body medicine and clinical psychology programs such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). This will be further explained in the next section.

Mindfulness interventions have emerged in Western clinical contexts and over the past two decades have contributed profoundly to clinical psychology and allied disciplines, such as psychotherapy, behavioural health, behavioural medicine, psychosomatic medicine, and health psychology (Bishop et al., 2004; Bodhi, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a; Kang & Whittingham, 2010). Kabat-Zinn is the pioneer of mindfulness work at the Stress Reduction Clinic Centre (1979) for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society (1995) in America to promote the treatment of patients' disorder symptoms (Gehart, 2012a). This program has applied the Buddhist concept of mindfulness to Western medicine. The core concept adopted by mindfulness interventions in clinical psychology is to be aware of one's own experience as it is happening, and not to be preoccupied with the future or the past. It is paying attention to a particular way with acceptance, not in the sense of passive resignation but with active awareness. However, Kabat-Zinn (2003a) suggested that the awareness is consciously connected with experience referred to as awakening, and the concept goes beyond the religion of Buddhism or ideology.

Interestingly and fortunately, mindfulness skills can be learned and have been adapted to alleviate clinical conditions in healing a variety of physical and mental issues through teaching meditation or breathing techniques (Bodhi, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a; Kang & Whittingham, 2010). Indeed, these skills are for dealing with one's emotions and thoughts. Based on such practices, one can learn how to control the mind whatever arises in one's consciousness, and even if this involves many challenges. There are various mindfulness intervention programs but in psychotherapy applications the three dimensions or constructs of paying attention, present experience, and acceptance without judgment, are crucial and effective for mindfulness transformation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003a). In particular, therapies which have been using mindfulness training have been incorporated into several medical and mental therapeutic interventions. Mindfulness has received increased attention

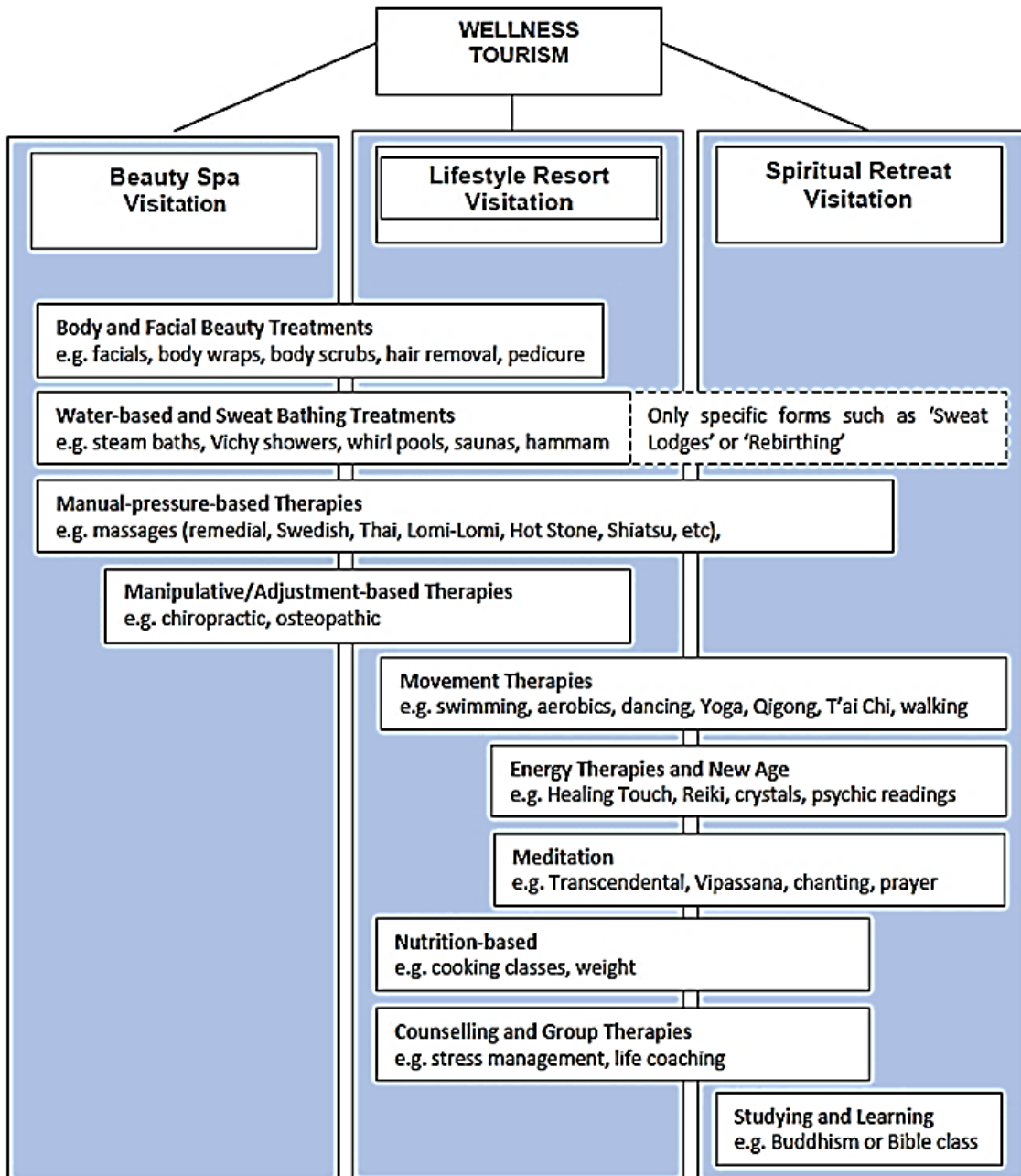
as an effective tool in the field of clinical psychology as a healing tool for a variety of disorders including stress, chronic pain, depression, anxiety, distress, and negative emotions (Baer, 2003, 2005, 2011; Carruthers & Hood, 2011; Del Re, 2011; Do, 2011; Finucane & Mercer, 2006; Kabat-Zinn, 2002a, 2003a, 2003b, 2011; Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Mason & Hargreaves, 2001).

Studies suggest that mindfulness training reduces stress (MBSR; Gehart, 2012a; Kabat-Zinn, 2003b), improves cognition (MBCT; Mason & Hargreaves, 2001) and acceptance and commitment (ACT; Flaxman & Bond, 2006). However, these concepts have been revealed in classical Buddhist texts, and are now practised in therapeutic clinics by some psychotherapists through the application of “affectionate awareness”, “mindful acceptance”, “openhearted presence”, and “mindful compassion” (Siegel et al., 2009). In addition, one further point to be mentioned is that mindfulness interventions are not based on religion and do not directly involve Buddha or God (Levine, 2000, cited in Gehart, 2012, p. 9). They can be seen as empirical practices that are broadly applied in people’s everyday lives. But is it possible to become more mindful and to obtain the benefits of mindfulness without clinical training?

Therapeutic recreation (TR) interventions have been considered as playing a potential role in improving the coping skills of resilience for clients and practitioners, as well as in enhancing positive life experiences (Carruthers & Hood, 2011; Colleen Deyell & Cynthia, 2007; Colleen Deyell & Cynthia, 2002; Cynthia & Colleen Deyell, 2007; Kenneth, 1999; Leann, 2010; Peterson & Stumbo, 2004; Robin, Fred, & Nereida, 2004; Susan, Andrea, & Douglas, 2008). Mindfulness training, as a coping skill and a meaningful form of leisure engagement, has been used as a part of therapeutic recreation (TR) interventions to help people enhance the benefits they receive from the leisure experience (Carruthers & Hood, 2011). This intervention can improve individuals’ choices from internal and external forces as well as reducing automatic thoughts, reactions, and behaviour (Carruthers & Hood, 2011). Leisure activities involved in formal mindfulness training interventions include sitting meditation, movement-based meditation including yoga, walking, Tai Chi and nature-based experiences (Carruthers & Hood, 2011; Heintzman, 2010; Leann, 2010).

These formal mindfulness practices require people to spend a long period of time on the activity with the assistance of professional therapists or psychologists. For example, the mindfulness-based training offered by wellness retreats has become an emerging market in wellness tourism. Retreats include both lifestyle resorts and spiritual retreats (Voigt et al., 2010) where tourists are offered professional information, individual care, diverse spiritual programs, and service packages (see Figure 2.5). These packages could include physical fitness, a hiking eco-tour, healthy diet, a relaxation program, and mental activities such as meditation and yoga (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). Thus, the product offered to the retreat market combines fundamental services and environmental

elements. Retreats aim to help tourists to feel more relaxed, peaceful and open-minded on their journey. Typically, lifestyle resort visitation entails a comprehensive program that focuses on lifestyle transformations, whereas spiritual retreats emphasize spiritual development or enlightenment. Spiritual retreats can be religious or non-religious but always include meditative elements. Many spiritual retreats are based on some specific teachings or philosophy and/or focus on the study of a specific activity such as yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, Reiki, or particular meditation techniques. In short, the formal practices help participants develop mindfulness.



**Figure 2.5 Wellness tourism typology and services offered**

Source: Voigt, et al (2010, p. 11)

## **Informal Leisure Activities**

Informal mindfulness activities also play a role in daily activities. Gehart (2012b) suggested that there are many ways to practise mindfulness, such as simple breathing or a task that allows one's mind to stay settled. It involves observation and labelling objects with full attention on the immediate experience where one's mind stays calm (Gehart, 2012b), and an acceptance or coming to terms with things. For instance, pleasant leisure activities are typically interesting and attractive and as a result they draw attention at that moment and provide an easier path to mindfulness. The day-to-day leisure experience can be embodied in diverse patterns of daily life, such as watching a sunrise or sunset, hiking, camping, being involved in a performance, practising Eastern martial arts (such as Tai Chi), listening to music, enjoying a meal, communicating with people or gardening which contributes to wellbeing (Gehart, 2012b; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a). Leisure and recreation has been found to contribute to dimensions of mindfulness in activities such as landscape or environment appreciation (Brown, 1984; Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992).

Clearly, some informal practices facilitate people's experiences toward achieving a mindful state and confirm that informal activities can facilitate mindfulness. Therefore, the question arises about how these day-to-day leisure activities facilitate the occurrence of mindfulness; and could mindfulness be stimulated without formal intervention or training? Could this lead to benefits similar to those gained from formal training? Few studies have explored the antecedents of informal mindfulness practices in therapeutic recreation within the contexts of leisure or tourism, despite landscapes or nature being considered likely to encourage mindfulness and its benefits (Lea, 2008; Williams, 1998). The academic literature on this phenomenon in a tourism context is unconsolidated with a number of different areas of research considered relevant.

## **Natural Settings**

The environmental literature provides evidence that leisure activities, particularly those in natural settings, can result in meaningful physiological and psychological benefits. Although this literature does not explicitly mention meditative mindfulness, there is some similarity in the discussions to the concept of meditative mindfulness. For example, Ashbaugh (1970) noted environmental interpretation encouraged a connection between visitors and their natural environment, whereby the visitor senses themselves as a component of a greater ecological whole. Furthermore, Howell (2011) identified that the experience of 'nature connectedness' is significantly correlated with mindfulness.

Environmental interpretation is one means to enrich the human mind and spirit (Howard, 1998). In this vein, nature-based experience is considered to contribute to positive psychological processes (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Accordingly, Shiota (2007) argues that nature is an elicitor of awe, thus,

being in nature may direct one's attention away from the self and toward the environment. Van Matre (1990, p. 228) writes that "enriched perception" is part of a natural area experience that helps people to immerse themselves totally in the moment and to discover themselves again. Four natural awareness skills are suggested to help individuals feel enriched perceptions: sharpening senses (paying attention to touching, tasting, hearing, smelling and feeling), seeking patterns, perceiving wholes and distilling essence (Van Matre, 1990). Sharpening affective senses (sense of wonder, place, time and beauty) leads to an enhanced relationship between oneself and with the earth. These skills have been adopted in environment education as useful tools to encourage ecological feeling (Van Matre, 1990).

The environmental education literature commonly suggests cognition is critical to create behaviour change through educational activities (Howard, 1998). Nevertheless, emotion—considered as "pre-cognitive or operate[ing] independently of cognition" (Howard, 1998, p. 66)—can deepen responses to perceptions of nature. Thus, affective environmental interpretation (Tilden, 1957) can enhance engagement in nature and enrich specific experiences. This suggests possibilities for facilitating natural awareness beyond cognitive learning and simple knowledge provision. For example, low intensity on-site interpretation coupled with a restriction of activities is suggested to contribute to a passive observational experience of nature (Hughes & Morrison-Saunders, 2005). Natural elements considered as beautiful and wondrous, enrich the human mind and spirit (Tilden, 1957).

Experiences such as swimming with whales or watching the sunset at Uluru may have a long-term effect on the individual (Howard, 1998, p. 66). However, how the process associated with environmental awareness and appreciation happens in such situations has not been specifically discussed in environment interpretation and education studies.

### **Consequences of Meditative Mindfulness**

In contemporary psychology, meditative mindfulness has been identified as having an important role in increasing awareness and responding positively to emotional distress and maladaptive behaviour (Bishop et al., 2004). The evidence from mindfulness studies has found that there are various positive outcomes that occur at the individual level such as creativity, physical wellbeing and psychological wellbeing (Sternberg, 2000, p. 11). Dramatically, there has been an increased focus on the benefits of mindfulness. Mindfulness is a psychological construct but it is beneficial for the treatment of both psychological and physical symptoms. It has been associated with improvements in mental health, wellbeing, social engagement, and behavioural regulation (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007b; Carruthers & Hood, 2011; Gethin, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a, 2003b; Nyklíček, 2011; Robins et al., 2012; Scheick, 2011; Siegel et al., 2009; Spragg, 2011; Steinberg,



2011). This is because each of the components of meditative mindfulness may contribute experiential benefits (Bishop et al., 2004).

Benefits can be considered as a “desirable change of state” of an individual, a group, a society, or even nonhuman organisms (Driver et al., 1985, p. 295). In tourism studies, benefits as psychological outcomes and are defined as, “the ultimate value that people place on what they believe that they have gained from participation in a certain leisure activity” (Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000, p. 37). In addition, the benefits can help individuals with psychological outcomes such as stress reduction or stimulation (Schreyer & Driver, 1989). From previous studies, it can be seen that the outcomes of mindfulness research are often related to positive outcomes. These are discussed in detail below.

### *Mindfulness and Liberation*

Deeper meditative practices will result in a sense of inner contentment as well as insights into fundamental truths that lead to the ultimate goal of liberation for all sentient beings (Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Schmidt, 2011). In Buddhist teaching, the therapeutic outcomes of mindfulness training are happiness, fulfilment, wellness, and complete freedom from suffering (Kang & Whittingham, 2010). The mindfulness benefit of freedom is at the core of being able to live life (Kabat-Zinn, 2003b) and has been embodied into and consistent with clinical interventions.

### *Mindfulness and Memory*

In the Buddhist tradition, the concept of mindfulness also means ‘memory’ (Wallace, 2006) and refers to “retrospective memory of the past and prospective memory of the present and future” (Kang & Whittingham, 2010, p. 165). This point has been empirically investigated in Jha’s (2010) study that military cohorts’ working memory capacity and affective experience can be improved through mind fitness training based on Buddhist mindfulness traditions.

### *Mindfulness and Therapy*

Accordingly, Kang and Whittingham (2010) concluded that the purpose of mindfulness therapy includes freedom from suffering, positive qualities of mind in a state of altruistic omniscience, happiness, fulfilment, or wellness in the present life. The various growing developments of mindfulness-based clinical interventions have been evaluated broadly to facilitate an individual’s mind/body interactions (Baer, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a; Schwartz, 2008; Shapiro et al., 2006). These therapeutic intervention programs involve a specific period of group sessions (normally eight weeks) under a therapist’s coaching. The clients participating in the program of mindfulness interventions are encouraged to practise the skills of mindfulness intervention programs in everyday

life. It could be said that mindfulness is considered as a skill to reduce people's suffering and disturbance and to attain a positive emotional state such as awareness, insight, wisdom and peace (Kabat-Zinn, 2000).

In essence, mindfulness can be seen as a skill as well as a core psychological process that can alter the conditions brought about by the existential challenges or unavoidable difficulties in life. Participants are able to alleviate or cure their symptoms or conditions through a variety of skills acquired via mindfulness training or practices. Siegel (2009) suggested that mindfulness skill training can be the foundation of specific clinical therapy protocols to improve attention span, affect regulation, attunement and empathy. Evidence shows mindfulness practices have successfully steered people toward positive and fundamental change (Baer, 2009; Carmody & Baer, 2008; Carruthers & Hood, 2011; Del Re, 2011; Do, 2011; Hede, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a, 2003b, 2011; Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Mason & Hargreaves, 2001; Rappay & Bystrisky, 2009; Spragg, 2011). They are detailed below.

#### *Physical and Psychological Benefits*

Mindfulness has also been found to be a beneficial treatment for a wide range of mental health disorders, including stress, chronic pain, depression, anxiety, distress, conduct, personality, and negative emotions. Generally speaking, the psychological benefits of mindfulness demonstrate an increase in positive emotions and overall wellbeing (Carruthers & Hood, 2011; Murphy, 2011). One of the important benefits of mindfulness is to improve attention in focusing and concentrating on particular tasks. Thus, participants are able to increase metacognitive awareness by improving their ability to understand that thoughts and feelings are transient mental events. Mindfulness has also been suggested to increase emotional regulation by managing negative and challenging emotions (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In other words, people are able to better accept difficult thoughts, emotions, or situations, and decrease rumination on the negative emotional outcomes of events or mental disorders (Baer, 2003).

Mindfulness-based interventions or practices have also been found to help people to have greater self-compassion, thus improving their psychological health (Kabat-Zinn, 2003b, 2005, 2011; Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Orzech, Shapiro, Brown, & McKay, 2009; Pakenham & Cox, 2009; Robins et al., 2012) as well as allowing people to enhance their ability to clarify values, goals, and life direction through avoiding 'automatic pilot' behaviour (Van Dam, Earleywine, & Borders, 2010). Additionally, through the treatment or practice of mindfulness interventions, participants are seen to move more easily to a physiological state of relaxation rather than perpetuate their daily experience of stress (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Carmody & Baer, 2008).

### *Relational Benefits*

A number of emerging relational benefits have also been attributed to meditative mindfulness. Gehart (2012a) pointed out that mindfulness may improve family relationships and better communication among people by developing mindful communication skills or practices. For example, it could increase marital satisfaction through cultivating one's ability to communicate emotions more effectively, as well as regulating one's anger (Robins et al., 2012). Mindfulness could also increase empathy and compassion (Pakenham & Cox, 2009). In other words, mindfulness helps people to enhance acceptance and awareness of self and others by mindfully observing their problematic interaction patterns.

Furthermore, it has been revealed that outcomes such as greater freedom, safety in relationships, greater unity and separation will emerge through the consistent practice of mindfulness (Meyers, 2010). It is also reported that individuals who practise mindfulness learn how to lower their defences, reveal more of themselves, and experience a deep spiritual sense of being a separate and independent entity (Gehart, 2012a). In turn, this could be translated into a holistic experience of independence and intimate relationships among couples and children.

Extensive research has established that mindfulness techniques can be applied to foster a powerful, positive transformation that reduces human suffering and brings about better work performance, mental health, decision-making, and to value and give meaning to everyday life (Edinburgh, 2011; Gehart, 2012a; Germer et al., 2005; Graham, 2011; Hirst, 2003; John, 2012; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Ronald, 2003a, 2003b; Schure, Christopher, & Christopher, 2008; Siegel et al., 2009; West, 2011). As discussed, studies have shown that mindfulness is not only applied in clinical work but can also be practised in everyday life to make life more meaningful, improve self-awareness and self-regulation, make task perception more accurate and effective, manage workplace stress or improve workplace relationships (West, 2011), and increase ethical behaviour (John, 2012). For example, mindfulness practice has been used as a tool to improve the quality of employees' and managers' interaction in the workplace (Graham, 2011). Higher endorsement of mindfulness could help rock-climbers' concentration when they climb (Steinberg, 2011). In short, in the psychotherapy field, mindfulness offers new ways to improve mental health and to expand the definition to include wellbeing, health and human potential as an essential part of the life system (Carlson & Shapiro, 2009).

There is a potential link between the present moment and positive consequences within a perspective of awareness with non-judgment and openness. However, little research has examined

travellers' present moment focus with the same view, and in relation to their experiential positive outcomes in tourism.

### *Mindfulness and Tourism*

#### *Wellness/Wellbeing*

Mental ease or 'peace of mind' has been argued as an important contributor to one's wellbeing (Hobson & Dietrich, 1995). Normally, wellness tourism includes three types: beauty spa visitation, lifestyle resort visitation and spiritual retreat visitation (Voigt et al., 2010, pp. 9-10). The last two types are typical applications of mindfulness. Myers et al. (2000) defined wellness as "a way of life oriented toward optimal health and wellbeing in which the body, mind, and spirit are integrated by the individual to live more fully within the human and natural community" (p.252). Participants such as wellness and medical tourists seek to enhance or maintain their health and wellbeing as well as find a cure, or are illness-oriented, respectively. Furthermore, Mueller and Kaufmann (2001) observed that "wellness tourism is the sum of all the relationships and phenomena resulting from a journey by people whose main motive is to preserve or promote their health" (p.7). Voigt et al. (2011, p. 27) proposed six benefits sought by wellness tourists: transcendence; physical health and appearance; escape and relaxation; important others and novelty; re-establish self-esteem; and indulgence. Currently, however, there seems to be few empirical studies in open tourism settings (rather than closed retreats) to understand what the exact consequences of mindfulness are. It is essential to understand how a traveller on a mindful journey can experience the benefits of wellness or wellbeing without visiting a wellness retreat.

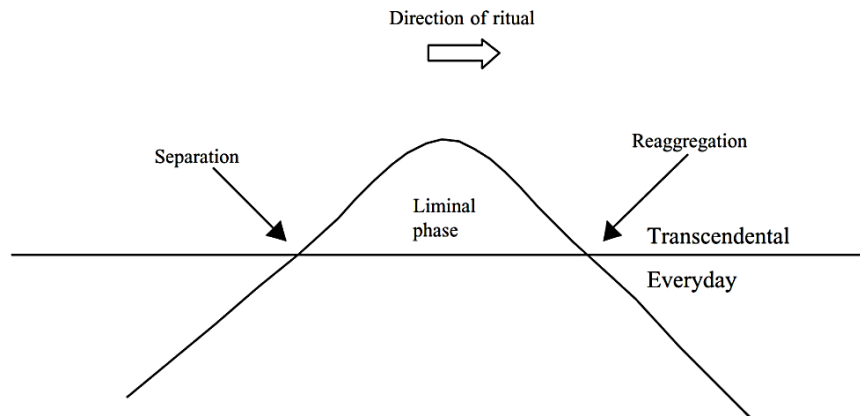
#### *Recreation*

Mindfulness training includes formal and informal mindfulness practices and are a potentially useful component of therapeutic recreation (TR) interventions that enhance people's wellbeing, produce positive emotions, decrease suffering, and create a meaningful life for personal growth (Carruthers & Hood, 2011).

#### *Transformative Travel*

Travel can help visitors to create new futures for themselves (Kottler, 1998), through a transformative journey to cultivate the mind and body toward a harmonic state (Kottler, 1998, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2010). Thus, "travel may be more effective than therapy for people who need to make changes in their lives" (Kottler, 1998, p. 24). However, during travel, there is no 'coaching' for developing mindfulness. This study views travel as a therapeutic journey to ascertain what triggers may facilitate extraordinary present experiences and makes travellers feel their journey is

more insightful and meaningful. The concept of transformation proposed by Turner (1995), an anthropologist who studied communities with rituals and focused on the transformation of the participants, mentioned a ritual process involving three steps (see Figure 2.6) which incorporates, “separation from the everyday flow of activities; a passage through a threshold state into a ritual world, where the structures of everyday life are both elaborated and challenged; and a re-entry into the world of everyday life” (Østern, 2011, p. 59).



**Figure 2.6 Turner's tripartite model**  
Source: Turner (1995)

Travel places people in novel situations. While travelling, people are away from their normal environment, separate from family, friends and colleagues, so that travellers are free to think and feel, and behave in ways that they would not ordinarily consider (Kottler, 2002). It can transform travellers' views as well as alter their mind, while they have an attitude of acceptance to face changes on an affective level (Currie, 2000; Falk, Ballantyne, Packer, & Benckendorff, 2012; Kottler, 1998, 2002). Tourists accrue experiences from travel according to their actions and manners which are regulated by their perceptions of others as well as by their own self-reflection (Rojek, 1997). This means that transformation may occur as the focus of a visitor's reflections moves from immediate self-interest to a broader view. In addition, an individual's transformative travel is toward a life of being, instead of only having possessions. In leisure time, people are engaged in the process of constructing the true self (Rojek, 1997). For example, visitors experience everyday life when they engage in interactions with people, communities, activities, and the environment, such as interacting with nature, mountain climbing, adventure trips, backpacking, and whale or bird watching. The traveller craves novelty, and a challenge is appealing.

Travellers may wish to fulfil something in their lives. Travel encourages transformative experiences in a way that allows tourists to become more flexible, open, creative and powerful in their lives (Kottler, 2002). On the other hand, while the process of change during an individual's travel might be tough and challenging, the opportunities and experiences enable them to learn, renew and refocus themselves, and to pursue meaning in their career, if they respond creatively to these

changes and challenges. As Kottler (1998) states, travel may be an effective and therapeutic path for people to facilitate them to create a new future. However, the phenomenon of transformation does not exist independently but is influenced by a specific stimulus from activities or the environment (Lindstrom, 2011). In this study, the focus is on examining the factors that lead to individual transformation, experiential meaning and benefits using a meditative mindfulness framework.

This section has discussed the consequences of meditative mindfulness. Benefits related to meditative mindfulness are noted in the writings of Buddhism, clinical psychology and tourism. However, a lack of research and information about what kinds of perceived experiential benefits can be derived from meditative mindfulness during a tourist experience still remains.

### **2.3.3 Mindfulness in this Study**

The concepts of socio-cognitive and meditative mindfulness embedded in Western and Eastern philosophical traditions have been provided in the previous sections. While these two concepts are different, they do share some similarities (Pirson et al., 2012). This section provides a detailed discussion of the two notions of the mindfulness phenomenon and then justifies the reasons why meditative mindfulness is used as the conceptual foundation for this study.

#### **2.3.3.1 Mindfulness Phenomena in Eastern and Western Philosophy**

As discussed in Section 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, there is little consensus about an accepted definition and process by which mindfulness allows knowing about an object (Schmidt, 2011). This section provides a review of the two types of mindfulness theories, distinguishing the Western and Eastern perspectives. The differences and similarities of the constructs, and the processing modes between the two conceptualisations, socio-cognitive and meditative mindfulness, will be discussed in greater detail.

The Western perspective of socio-cognitive mindfulness involves goal-oriented cognitive tasks rather than non-judgmental observation of inner experiences (Weick & Putnam, 2006). Socio-cognitive mindfulness such as novelty and surprise, can give people greater opportunities to learn and/or control their actions (Langer, 1992, 2000). Langer's (1991) research contrasts mindfulness with mindlessness and its prevalence in daily life. Her work emphasised learning that switches the mode of thinking from mindless to mindful. Thus, socio-cognitive mindfulness is seen as being a process that involves active information processing and the creation of new categories of thinking (Moscardo, 1999; Van Winkle & Backman, 2009). The use of socio-cognitive mindfulness in a tourism context suggests that information can help visitors find their way around, make connections to other tourists, and result in learning (Moscardo, 1999).

The Eastern perspective of meditative mindfulness is also considered to be an internal process of the mind, but is centred on the perception that precedes conceptualisation (Weick & Putnam, 2006). Basing on observations on classical Buddhist texts, Kabat-Zinn (2003a), argued that mindfulness is not merely a cognitive-behavioural technique to be used for behavioural change, but also a path and a state of transformation of the mind that will be useful for living a better life. In this way, meditative mindfulness in relation to awareness, observation, and concentration is a nonjudgmental acceptance of one's emotions and thoughts in the momentary present (Baer et al., 2008; Bishop et al., 2004; Bodhi, 2011; Grossman, 2008; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a; Nyklíček, 2011). The concepts refer to the constructs of meditative mindfulness such as: 'affectionate awareness', 'mindful acceptance', 'openhearted presence', and 'mindful compassion', which have been adopted in therapeutic clinics by some psychotherapists (Siegel et al., 2009).

As mentioned above, Eastern and Western perspectives of mindfulness are both concerned with being in the present moment. Although awareness is a key component of both perspectives, there are differences in how this awareness is conceptualised (Chen et al., 2014). A comparison of the two approaches to mindfulness is given in Table 2.1 (Chen et al., 2014). This table highlights the differences between the two notions of mindfulness, and these differences will be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

**Table 2.1 Comparing the two approaches of meditative and socio-cognitive mindfulness**

Characterising	Meditative Mindfulness	Socio-cognitive Mindfulness
<b>History</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arose in Eastern philosophy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed from Western perspective</li> </ul>
<b>Awareness</b> <i>Paying attention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An awareness of being aware</li> <li>• An open and receptive attention</li> <li>• On purpose monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being aware of different new contexts, information and actions</li> <li>• Multiple perspectives</li> </ul>
<b>Present</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being in the present moment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation in the present</li> </ul>
<b>State</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openness to altruistic judgments</li> <li>• Being non-judgmental with acceptance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openness to novelty distinctions</li> <li>• Questioning cognitive thinking actively</li> </ul>
<b>Applications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical psychology for clinical and non-clinical individual in daily life</li> <li>• Wellness tourism for visitors in retreat settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social psychology for visitors in interpretative tourism settings</li> </ul>

Source: Developed for this research and based on Chen et al. (2014, p. 169)

For a Buddhist discourse, the process of perception is through ‘systematic analysis’ to apply reason to happenings and overcome negative emotions (Howard, 2001). The process of reasoning and analysis in the Buddhist discourse on mindfulness is to use human intelligence and the capacity to look at our thoughts deeply and with altruistic judgment and understanding of the reality, then to let the thought go. As a result, immediate negative responses will be reduced because people are aware of, and reflect on the changes immediately. That is, meditative mindfulness in relation to awareness, observation, and concentration is a nonjudgmental acceptance of one’s emotions and thoughts in the momentary present (Baer et al., 2008; Bishop et al., 2004; Bodhi, 2011; Grossman, 2008; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a; Nyklíček, 2011). However, those constructs in Eastern thought towards the external environment, and inwards toward the internal space, also correspond to Western psychological perspectives of enhanced attention and awareness (Brown & Ryan, 2003), open and receptive awareness, a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000b), as well as reference to events and experience (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006, p. 522). Brown (2003) observed that mindfulness can be considered as, “enhanced attention to and awareness of current experience or present reality”, as well as “open or receptive awareness and attention which may be reflected in a more regular or sustained consciousness of ongoing events and experiences” (p. 822). The mechanism of meditative mindfulness practices is similar to an individual experiencing physical and mental changes associated with relaxation, and the coherence and vividness of attention that increases simultaneously. Kabat-Zinn (2002b) addressed mindfulness in terms of a process that facilitates individuals to, “see through and underneath discursive thought, beyond the conceptual, by recognising thoughts as thoughts, as what you might call ‘events’ in the field of awareness”(p.69). That is, when an individual intentionally engages in deeper thinking, he/she becomes aware of awareness. It provides individuals with a technique to understand how to quickly place experiences into “unexamined conceptual boxes” (Kabat-Zinn, 2002b, p. 69). Accordingly, the conceptualisation process can be regarded as ‘unexamined conceptual boxes’; in other words, meditative mindfulness allows people to pay attention to observations without over-elaboration or refining the information processing of the thoughts. As a result, Varela et al. (1993, p. 24) suggested that, “mindfulness is designed to lead the mind back from its theories...to the situation of one’s experience itself”. Mindfulness seeks focused attention, rather than attention overload. For example, looking at clouds or birds in the sky, allows the observer to be aware of the sky (awareness itself) through recognition alone, instead of engaging in cognitive elaboration. This is called ‘choiceless awareness’ (Kabat-Zinn, 2002b, p. 71). Following those points, Langer’s contribution was to refine more clearly through the use of concepts; whereas, the contribution of Eastern philosophy was to understand “how conceptualising itself interferes with seeing” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006, p. 518), as in a manner of a microscope, so “people can experience insight or confusion” (Weick & Sutcliffe,



2006, p. 518). Table 2.2 distinguishes the process and benefits between the two types of mindfulness (Chen et al., 2014, p. 171)

**Table 2.2 Distinguishing the process and benefits between two types of mindfulness**

Process modes	Meditative mindfulness	Socio-cognitive mindfulness
	<i>A single continuum of awareness</i>	<i>Duality of information-processing</i>
<b>Theorising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analytic process with successive pulses of cognition and awareness</li> <li>• Stability and beyond distinction-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive thinking with actively analysing, categorizing and distinctions</li> <li>• Drawing novel distinctions</li> </ul>
<b>Conceptualising</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexamined conceptual boxes</li> <li>• Reasoning using human intelligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information is coded rationally</li> <li>• Goal-oriented cognition</li> </ul>
<b>Mechanism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homogeneity of continuum               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ implicit luminosity</li> <li>○ quality of knowing</li> <li>○ mental balances</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational cognitive processes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ continuous refinement</li> <li>○ differentiation of expectations based on newer experiences</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Implicit results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine the cognitive state and overcome emotion disturbance               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relaxation</li> <li>○ Wellbeing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance effective communication between individuals and contexts               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Learning</li> <li>○ Satisfaction</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Source: Adopted from Chen et al. (2014, p. 171)

### 2.3.3.2 Meditative Mindfulness is applied in this Study

Section 2.3.2 includes a review of some of the key components of meditative mindfulness in relation to awareness that contribute to psychological treatment. These include paying attention on purpose, being in the present moment, non-judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003a), self-regulation of attention, and metacognitive processes (Bishop et al., 2004). The operational definitions of meditative mindfulness include essential dimensions of awareness. Each component of the mindfulness construct is specified in terms of the psychological characteristics that have been applied in both the clinical psychology and medicine fields. However, there has been little discussion about mindfulness theory in tourism studies in a non-therapeutic context. Previous research in tourism studies has focused on socio-cognitive mindfulness through information processing, mainly in interpretation studies; but, not meditative mindfulness experiences in a specific context. Furthermore, there have been few studies that have explored the antecedents of meditative mindfulness in tourism: how the state of being mindful occurs in a travel experience that may involve awareness that emerges from paying attention, being in the present moment, being non-judgmental and producing self-regulation of attention and metacognitive processes. Therefore,

this study aims to identify the nature of meditative mindful travel experiences and to determine the perceived experiential benefits rather than to focus only on increasing the external categories' information or knowledge. The discussion has shown that meditative mindfulness can be considered as a feasible theoretical foundation to help understand experiences that may occur in a state of peaceful mind.

In summary, the aim of this study is to identify tourist experiences associated with meditative mindfulness and to understand the self-reported antecedents and consequences of meditative mindfulness for Taiwanese backpackers. This is explored through their feelings or sensations when they engage in a particular event on their journey, rather than concerns about the process of cognitive information processing. Travellers' conscious observations and sensual participation in what happens during their journey in terms of settings, activities or other contributing factors may trigger their emotional state resulting in memorable experiences, and may also arouse some experiential outcomes. In brief, the research which has been discussed here will employ an integrative approach as proposed by Kabat-Zinn (2003a) to explore the dimensions of meditative mindfulness that might enhance mindful sensual states for Taiwanese backpackers during their travels in Australia.

## **2.4 Backpacking Tourism**

This thesis will identify tourist experiences associated with meditative mindfulness and the self-reported antecedents and consequences of meditative mindfulness for Taiwanese backpackers in Australia. The following section will examine the backpacking phenomenon, the relationship between backpacking and mindfulness, and then justify why backpacker travel provides the context for this study.

### **2.4.1 Backpacker Social Phenomenon**

Backpackers are considered as authentic experience explorers or novelty-seekers who tend to pursue self-change and prefer to venture into relatively unknown areas for a longer time, have no rigid plan or timetable for their journey, and immerse themselves in their surroundings (Cohen, 1972; Niki, Lin, & Petros, 2011; Pearce, 1990; Sørensen, 2003; Vogt, 1976; Wilson & Richards, 2004). The study of backpackers emerged in the early 1970s, when Cohen (1972) initially discussed the distinction between institutionalised and non-institutionalised tourists. He identified a variety of tourist experiences and proposed a typology of four tourist roles – *the organised mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the explorer, and the drifter*. The first two types represent institutionalised tourists as being like conventional mass tourists who remain confined to their own “environmental

bubble” during their trip. These trips emphasised a planned or fixed itinerary and gave these individuals a certain degree of control. Consequently, most tourists with less experience of novelty but with more familiarity “become isolated from the ordinary flow of life and natural texture of the host society” (Cohen, 1972, p. 170). Compared with the institutionalised tourists, the primary shared characters of the non-institutionalised groups are more “novelty, spontaneity, risk, and independence” (Wilson & Richards, 2004, p. 62). Cohen (1972) further delineated the two types: the explorer and the drifter. These behaviours and motivations indicate more engagement in tourism settings and pursuit of experiences than general tourists.

As such, Vogt (1976) argues *the wanderer* is another type of non-institutionalised individual who seeks the freedom and spontaneity inherent in travel. This type of backpacker is aware of feelings of mastery over the self and the environment (Vogt, 1976). Vogt (1976) addressed the internal dynamics in terms of the behaviour and the activity to explore the backpacker’s culture and consumer psychology. He observed a set of motivating characteristics and provided insight into travel style as an opportunity that could be more creative and generative. That could be aroused through engaging in different, new, and creative sets of strategies and choices. The interaction of the interpersonal activities drives both temporal and spatial dynamics where “the awareness of brevity encourages a sense of immediacy” and refers to “the gathering place and the resting period” as well (Vogt, 1976, p. 34). Wilson and Richards (2004) argued that “complexity, novelty, and diversity are important motivating factors in the choice of activities and destination” (p.63). These characteristics suggest *wanderers* are motivated to seek experiences in a quest for personal fulfilment (Vogt, 1976).

These arguments allow backpackers’ behaviour and psychology to be differentiated from that of general tourists. The studies acknowledge that a backpacker is an independent traveller (non-institutionalised form) and is represented as an explorer, drifter or wanderer. From the social and anthropological perspectives, a backpacker embraces novelty, spontaneity, freedom, risk, a multitude of options, and personal growth, and in doing so becomes aware of sensations, feelings and interaction between the self and others. In contrast, a general (mass) tourist (institutionalised form) prefers familiarity, prior planning, safety, minimal choices and guidance (Vogt, 1976). However, those studies have not proposed specific factors that affect their experiences.

#### **2.4.2 Backpacking and Mindfulness**

Previous phenomenological and ethnographic perspectives indicate that backpackers are open minded, pay attention, and are aware of current experience (Cohen, 1972, 1979a, 2003). As discussed in Section 2.3.2, meditative mindfulness has been proposed as an important factor to

cultivate and transform people's everyday lives, attitude, and encourage a state of openness, emotion, and behaviour that is similar to that found when backpacking. This section discusses the relationship between backpacking and mindfulness within two dimensions: awareness and self-fulfilment.

The backpacking experience seems to have a significant relationship with the dimensions of mindfulness experiences. In general, backpackers imagine themselves as 'real' travellers in comparison with mass tourists (Cohen, 2003). Backpacking involves a longer time and slower travel pace than mass travel. Thus, it can be said that the individual backpacker can experience more dynamic settings or communicate with a greater and more diverse range of encounters than the mass tourist. Cohen (1979a, 2003) argued that the backpacker experience leads to greater self-awareness and cultural sensitivity because backpackers totally immerse themselves in their journey. As Week (2012) observes, it is common for people to self-describe as travellers seeking authentic travel experiences to dissociate themselves from being a (mass) tourist. Deeply involved travel experiences surpass the superficialities of tourism allowing more profound appreciation of settings (MacCannell, 1973). This kind of self-awareness reflects key components of definitions of meditative mindfulness.

Furthermore, there is also an inherent freedom evoked by the backpackers' inner expectations (Cohen, 2003). Although most backpackers pursue conventional lifestyles which are characteristic of their subculture, they seek not only hedonistic enjoyment, but also the experimentation and self-fulfilment under relatively simple circumstances (Cohen, 2003). The state of liminality, facilitated by their own "out-there-ness", enables them to develop a novel perspective and to reflect upon their own identity (Cohen, 2003, p. 102). Cohen (1979a) suggested that the backpacker may be attached to more than one spiritual centre, and they might perceive their routine living at home as meaningful, but are still seeking profound experiences while travelling, since the backpacker travellers prefer to immerse themselves in the essence of their experiences during their journey. As such, much of the personal development benefits of backpacker travel come from dealing with the daily demands of life in an unusual setting (Gmelch, 1997). These characteristics are related to the concepts of mindfulness and it is hoped that this study closes this gap by exploring a backpacker's moment-to-moment experience in a particular situation during the journey. Backpackers normally stay longer, are generally interested in locally owned attractions, and absorb themselves in participating in activities or becoming involved in a range of different environments.

In summary, the style of backpackers' travel seems to be in sharp contrast to the mass tourist. Backpacker travel has been envisaged as an authentic (Giddens, 1991) and adventuresome (Loker-

Murphy & Pearce, 1995) form of travel. The sojourners prefer to experience things in a meaningful way (Thatcher, 2010), search for authenticity, and are on the journey for the purpose of experiencing the moment (Giddens, 1991), ‘off the beaten’ track experience (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995), self-discovery and self-change (Cohen, 2003). These types of travellers bring with them a willingness to adapt to local behaviours and become closer to non-touristic, exotic destinations and activities, such as preferences for local accommodation, transportation and eating local foods (Wilson & Richards, 2004). However, the extent of its applicability to the backpacking movement must be critically examined and this has been addressed in this study.

### **2.4.3 Backpackers’ Travel Incorporated in this Study**

The phenomena of backpacking experiences in some cases, seems to be related to the dimensions of mindfulness experiences. Reviewing meditative mindfulness, the psychological phenomenon as noted in section 2.3.2 might correspond with the backpacker’s ideology. Cohen (2003) suggested that the backpacking phenomena may embrace more dynamic and diverse nature needs which need to be explored through further research.

An examination of the subjects of these previous studies associated with meditative mindfulness reveals that they have included populations of meditators, non-meditators, and tourists. However, empirical tourism studies on mindfulness-related experiences have focused on a particular destination for tourists only, rather than alternative travellers, “non-institutionalised tourists” or backpackers in open and diverse tourism contexts (Cohen, 1972, p. 169) such as visitors to a museum (McIntosh, 1999), or tourists to a National Park (Kang & Gretzel, 2012). In addition, little attention has been given to the overlap between travelling and therapeutic mindfulness. Kang and Gretzel (2012) have suggested it is valuable to investigate the tourist mindfulness experiences in different tourism contexts.

Additionally, an early definition of a backpacker as proposed by Pearce (1990) used five criteria to distinguish them from other travellers or tourists:

1. a preference for budget accommodation
2. an emphasis on meeting other travellers
3. an independently organised and flexible travel schedule
4. longer rather than very brief holidays
5. an emphasis on informal and participatory holiday activities.

While there have been many subsequent studies and definitions (Cohen, 2003; Larsen, Ogaard, & Brun, 2011), a social definition of backpackers (Pearce, 1990) was adopted in this study as

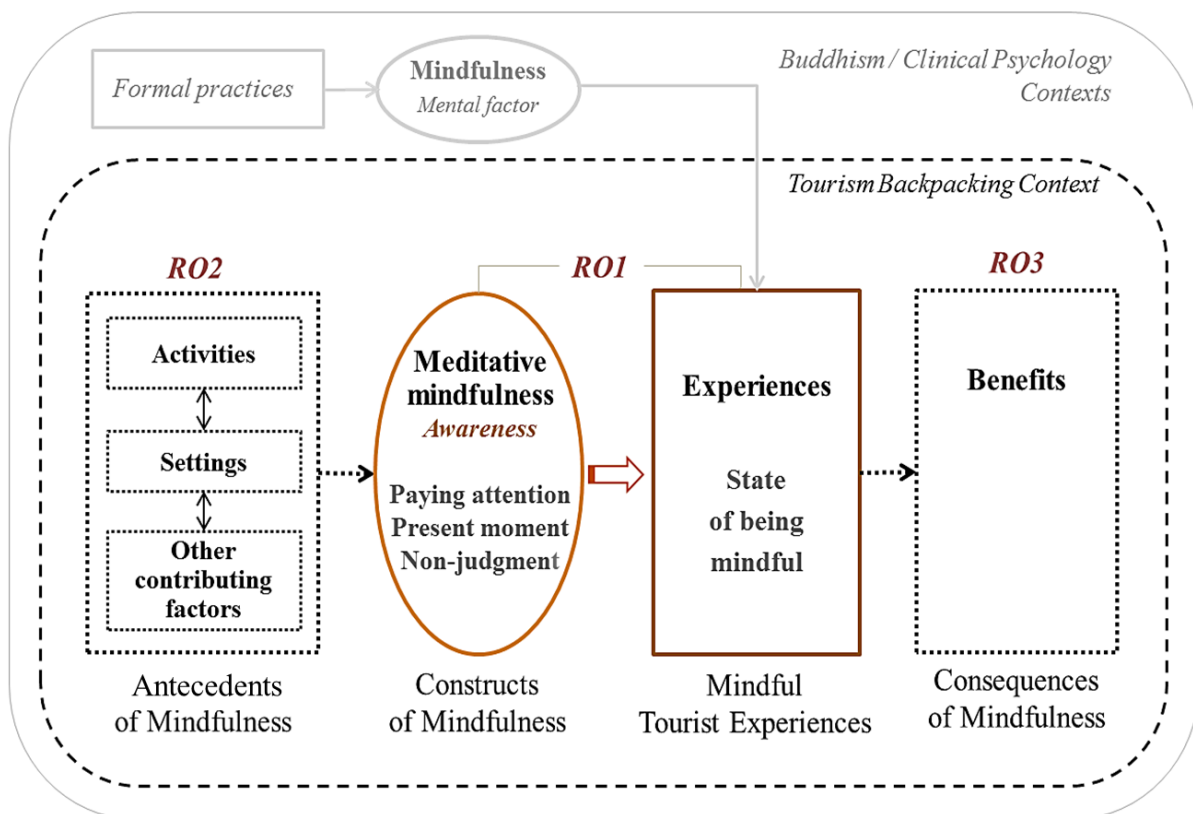
operational criteria of respondent selection and as information of data collection for the following reasons. Firstly, the first criterion is related to the definition of a backpacker used by Tourism Research Australia. In official reports, they define a backpacker as “a person who spends at least one night in either backpacker or hostel accommodation” (Tourism Research Australia, 2010, p. 1), (Richards & Wilson, 2004). The definition specifies the minimum number of persons staying in backpacker accommodation that has been used broadly for statistical and operational purposes. Accordingly, this study mainly focuses on budget accommodation, but also incorporates staying overnight as the priority for selection of Taiwanese backpackers.

The third and fourth criteria indicate the main features of their travel psychology and behaviour—an independent traveller (non-institutionalised form) on a free and flexible trip. As mentioned in Section 2.4.1 and Section 2.4.2, backpackers prefer adventure travel for a longer time and have a flexible timetable in order to pursue experiences (Cohen, 1972, 1979a, 2003). Staying in economical accommodation allows backpackers to extend their travel on a limited budget (Jenkins, 2000; Pearce, 1990). Therefore, independent and flexible modes (criterion 3) as well as longer travel periods (criterion 4) were considered for data selection of this study to distinguish backpackers from the mass tourist (institutionalised form).

The last criterion concerns participation in informal tourism activities. As mentioned in Section 2.3.2.2, leisure and recreation activities contribute to mindfulness. However, there is room to explore what kind of activities (the antecedents of mindfulness) may lead backpackers to being more mindful in a certain situation. Therefore, participating in informal tourism activities (criterion 5) is used as an interview question related to research objective two (self-reported antecedents), rather than used in selection.

## **2.5 Conceptual Framework**

The aim of this study is to identify whether tourist experiences are associated with meditative mindfulness, to further examine the antecedents and consequences of these experiences as they relate to backpacker tourism, and to offer deeper insights into their contribution from both theoretical and practical perspectives. After reviewing the literature related to tourist experience, mindfulness and backpacking, a theoretical framework to help understand the phenomena of tourist experiences associated with meditative mindfulness in backpacking tourism has been developed. This framework shows the occurrence, antecedents, and consequences of mindful tourist experiences. Figure 2.7 shows the conceptual framework that guides this research and the three main research objectives that have been formulated to help guide the researcher’s findings.



**Figure 2.7 Conceptual framework of this study**  
Source: Developed by the author

The aim is supported by three important research objectives:

- **Research Objective 1 (RO1):** *To identify the phenomena associated with meditative mindful tourist experiences in a tourism context.* A review of previous studies reveals that meditative mindfulness may invite awareness, and affect people’s perceived sensations, feelings and/or emotions as well as enable a stable and peaceful experience. This study identifies how meditative mindfulness occurs during Taiwanese backpacker’s journeys in Australia.
- **Research Objective 2 (RO2):** *To analyse the antecedents which facilitate mindful experiences of Taiwanese backpackers so as to create an awareness of the present moment, through a non-judgmental acceptance of the situation.* As discussed in Section 2.3.2.2, mindfulness practices help participants to be mindfully aware of moment by moment, and despite whatever arises in one’s surroundings. This study investigates what triggers (activities, settings and other contributing factors) the backpackers’ awareness and acceptance of an experience. It also identifies informal triggers of mindfulness in tourist contexts. Such an understanding of the antecedents of tourist mindful experiences may be usefully applied to make tourist experiences more engaging.

- **Research Objective 3 (RO3):** *To understand the perceived experiential benefits that can be derived from meditative mindful experiences.* Previous studies of meditative mindfulness indicate that participants may perceive therapeutic benefits such as liberation, wellbeing, retrospection, peace and a value for life through formal mindfulness practices. This study explores experiential and transformational benefits derived from mindful travel.

These three research objectives will be examined in the context of Taiwanese backpackers' travel experiences in Australia. By achieving these three research objectives, the overall aim of understanding meditative mindfulness experiences in the domain of tourist experience will be achieved.

## **2.6 Summary**

Tourism studies have generally adopted the theory of socio-cognitive mindfulness, which focuses on the management of tourism settings and tourist experiences. However, as stated in Section 1.1, the core focus of this current study is not on the cognitive aspects of mindfulness but rather the understanding of how the phenomenon of peaceful or fulfilling experiences occurs during travel. This study will seek to identify the self-reported antecedents and consequences of meditative mindfulness for Taiwanese backpackers. Based on the research objectives, the theory of meditative mindfulness is considered to be the most appropriate to use in this study of backpackers. The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of the importance of the meditative mindfulness phenomenon as it applies to tourism. While many studies have been undertaken in this area using the concept of socio-cognitive mindfulness, the application of meditative mindfulness in tourism research has been limited. This chapter has shown that meditative mindfulness will play an important role in understanding those tourist experiences that may contribute to therapeutic psychological benefits.

In order to answer the research questions for this study in terms of exploring the mental processes of the phenomena of mindfulness-like transformative experiences, the perspective of analytic modes of emotional processing (Teasdale, 1999) has been considered in this study. That is, this study concentrates on the travellers' emotional state associated with analytical processing modes in a backpacking context, rather than the cognitive information processing of stimuli in tourism settings. To be specific, this research focuses on understanding the traveller's perceptions and sense consciousness, from a visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental consciousness (Mosig, 2006), and borrows from the notion of meditative mindfulness that refers to, "One moment of consciousness may recall the experience of the immediately preceding moment of consciousness" (Wallace, 1999, p. 183). It is based also on a state of openness and acceptance (Bishop et al., 2004;



Brown et al., 2007a; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a) instead of the notion of socio-cognitive mindfulness, which is associated with cognitive thinking processing.

In addition, understanding how meditative mindfulness occurs and how it can be developed in tourism experiences is expected to be useful for tourism stakeholders. Business operators or policy makers must be aware of how to design engaging experiences and, in particular, how they can enhance affective, sensory or mental experiences through encouraging awareness of the present moment, effect non-judgmental thinking during on-site visits, and explore a spectrum of possibilities for better design and management of tourist settings and activities.

Accordingly, in the backpacker tourism context of this investigation, settings and activities are essentially diverse and dynamic during a travellers' journey. Travel is a derived demand generated to enable an individual to participate in a spectrum of activities distributed in different spaces (Hsu & Hsieh, 2004). Therefore, travellers might engage in different natural or cross-cultural encounters including individual, groups of individuals, communities and animals that might also trigger travellers' immediate and long-term mindful experiences resulting in awareness of the present moment and non-judgmental acceptance of the situation. It may also lead to other integrating experiential benefits derived from mindful travel experiences.

Overall, the first section of this chapter provided a typology of tourist experiences related to mindfulness, including mindfulness-like experiences, the related concept of flow, and mindful experiences. The second section discussed mindfulness theory. Meditative mindfulness, incorporating ideas from clinical psychology and Buddhism were used in this study to create a theoretical framework to help understand numerous gaps in tourist experiences associated with meditative mindfulness, and its antecedents and consequences applied in the context of backpacker tourism. The third section discussed the backpacker phenomenon and reviewed similarities within backpacking and meditative mindfulness. A justification of backpacking tourism as the context of this current study has also been explained. Finally, a conceptual framework was developed which identified the three main research objectives proposed.

# CHAPTER 3 METHODS

## 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the gaps in the literature relating to mindfulness and tourist experiences, and proposed a conceptual framework to investigate how these gaps can be filled. This chapter outlines the methodology chosen to examine the research objectives of this thesis (as discussed in Section 2.5).

The chapter consists of three main parts. After the introduction (Section 3.1), Section 3.2 discusses the need to implement a constructivism research paradigm in which this thesis is grounded, and describes the qualitative methodology that has been used. Secondly, a detailed research design including the sampling frame, interview question design and data collection methods is presented (Section 3.3). Thirdly, data analysis and evaluation (Section 3.4) as well as the ethical considerations (Section 3.5) that were taken in this study are discussed. A final summary concludes the chapter (Section 3.6).

## 3.2 Research Paradigm and Strategy

Before designing a research strategy and determining the methods to be used, researchers need to understand what is their research philosophy or paradigm (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003), and how should it be implemented in their studies (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This philosophical paradigm is important to ensure consistency between the research approach adopted for the data collection and the analysis of subsequent findings (Jennings, 2010). This section supports the adoption of a constructivist research paradigm for this study. Based on the underpinnings of this paradigm, a discussion of the qualitative method incorporated in this study is provided.

### 3.2.1 Constructivism Paradigm

A research paradigm is, “a basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Guba, 1990, p. 17) in terms of “what should be studied, how research should be done, [and] how results should be interpreted” (Bryman, 2008, p. 4). Thus, paradigms play a fundamental role in the field of social science to guide researchers in selecting a research design, observation modes, and answering questions regarding the research methods, instruments, and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Each paradigm is characterised by underpinning assumptions that offer different ways of looking at human social life (Babbie, 2010).

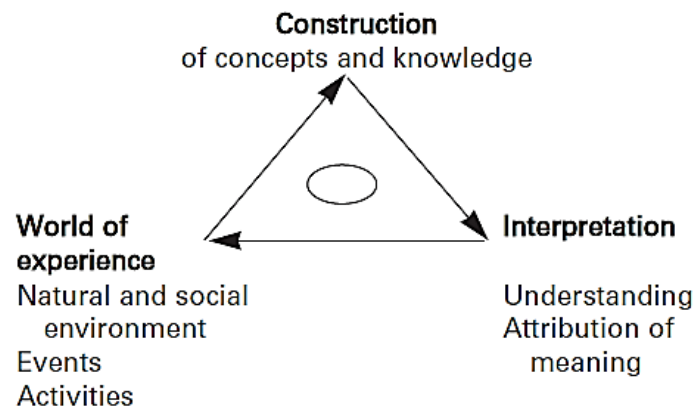
In the social sciences, paradigms are generally discussed within two major categories: positivism and constructivism (Creswell, 1999). In addition, post-positivism, pragmatism and advocacy have been identified as approaches between these two extremes (Jennings, 2010; Pincharoen & Congdon, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

Positivism is a form of philosophical realism that closely adheres to a deductive method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 2003). A positivist approach concerns the verification of hypotheses by means of quantitative methods to verify a priori hypotheses (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). The hypotheses can be often stated in quantitative propositions and converted into mathematical formulas to express functional relationships (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Basically, positivism aims to explain reality through observable and testable dimensions (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). Positivism and post-positivism are based on ontological realism because of their reliance on the scientific approach to research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). That is, the primary goal of positivistic inquiry is an explanation that leads to prediction and control of phenomena.

Constructivism which is sometimes called interpretivism, is a form of philosophical relativism that adheres to a relativist position closely related to the inductive method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 2003). A constructivist paradigm adopts pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualised perspectives toward reality (Creswell & Miller, 2000). To build themes and generate a theory, constructivist researchers seek to explain phenomena, accept multiple realities, construct realities and the subjectivity of reality (Schwandt, 1996). The constructive process typically examines the different relationships to reality (Flick, Kardorff, Steinke, & Jenner, 2004) from a participant's viewpoint and uses qualitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The constructivism–interpretivism paradigm proposes that the meaning of phenomena is hidden and must be brought to the surface through deep reflection; that is, the deeper meaning can be unveiled by interactive dialogue between the researcher and the participant (Ponterotto, 2005). The focus of this study is to explore the objective reality of meditative mindfulness in tourism, rather than criticising any existing ideographic knowledge, or applying pre-constructed multiple realities in clinical psychology. In the light of this, constructivism aligns with the philosophical and theoretical perspective adopted by the researcher in this study.

Discussion of a paradigm needs to be considered through its critical philosophical elements including ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology (Creswell, 2009). In this study, the researcher has attempted to understand the phenomenological ontology of the nature of meditative mindful experience. This in turn raises the question of ontological and epistemological assumptions about the relationship between the researcher's worldview and her knowledge. Ontology concerns the nature of reality and being, and is a philosophical discussion of the nature of knowing and

reality (Jennings, 2010; Ponterotto, 2005). Meditative mindfulness refers to an individual being in a state of ‘being in the present’ (Kabat-Zinn, 2003a). Here, the phenomena refers to “the ontological general disposition of human existence towards the world at any given moment” (Khong, 2009, p. 120). Epistemology concerns the relationship between the researcher and subjects or objects, stressing questions based on what is acceptable knowledge in a discipline (Jennings, 2010; Ponterotto, 2005). Flick et al. (2004) suggested that access to the world of experiences involves construction of knowledge and interpretation of meaning (see Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1 Construction and interpretation as means of access to the world of experience**  
Source: Adapted from Flick et al. (2004, p. 90)

The concept of mindfulness is an emerging, complex and multidisciplinary phenomenon that can be used in tourism research. Therefore, a subjective epistemological stance will be used in this thesis. It will be based on semi-structured interviews and be evident in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. It will also include the researcher’s subjective perceptions during the analysis. The study is not intended to statistically conclude or deduce an absolute truth about meditative mindfulness in a tourism context; instead, this study seeks to provide new insights into the complexities and realities of meditative mindfulness tourist experiences by unveiling the psychological processes associated with the phenomenon. Constructivism is used to allow the researcher to explore meditative mindful tourist experiences within three aspects of the phenomenon: occurrence, antecedents, and consequences. An inductive research approach is used for theory generation using qualitative data collection and analysis methods. The next section describes the qualitative research methodology used by this study.

### **3.2.2 Research Strategy: Qualitative Methodology**

This section discusses the research strategy which has been developed to address the key objectives and research questions of this study. In accordance with the constructivist paradigm that this study has adopted, a qualitative research methodology is used to explore the meaning and knowledge of

social reality from the participants' viewpoints (Creswell, 2009). The use of a qualitative methodology is appropriate for this research because the researcher aims to understand the phenomenon of the meditative mindfulness experience in tourism as an attribution of meanings (Flick et al., 2004). The following discussion provides a rationale for adopting a qualitative research strategy.

Qualitative methods are useful for examining and developing an understanding of phenomena about which little is known, and to allow for the discovery of in-depth information about the subject of study (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). In this thesis, three perspectives need to be explored: conceptual (meditative mindfulness), contextual (tourism), and target (Taiwanese backpackers in Australia). There has been limited discussion about meditative mindfulness (Western therapeutic mindfulness in an Eastern notion) in a non-therapeutic tourism context. In order to answer the research questions (to identify tourist meditative mindful experiences, and to further understand the self-reported antecedents and consequences of these experiences for Taiwanese backpackers), a qualitative method is adopted to guide the researcher through an inductive form of logic (Jennings, 2010).

A research strategy is a means of logical enquiry to answer 'what (finding out)' or 'how and why (explaining)' questions (Blaikie, 2000; Veal, 2011). In this study, it involves gathering rich information about a small number of people in order to understand their leisure or tourist behaviour (Veal, 2011) and related phenomena (Ponterotto, 2005). This requires a subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants. Themes and concepts emerge from the interviewees themselves rather than previous research in order to generate patterns or theories for explaining the phenomenon (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2009). The findings are presented in everyday language in a textural or narrative form (Jennings, 2010; Neuman, 2006; Veal, 2011). Qualitative techniques have been commonly used in leisure and tourism research; however, they may be "unrepresentative" (Veal, 2011, p. 40), and hence the validity of the research may be enhanced or verified in its trustworthiness by different sources of information (Babbie, 2010; Creswell, 2009).

To sum up, the topic of mindfulness is complex, multidisciplinary and not well developed in the tourism field. A qualitative approach is used in this study to explore the question about what relationship exists between backpackers' mindful experiences and their particular antecedents and consequences. This study is underpinned by a constructivist qualitative research method and explores concepts and theories that emerge from the data derived from participant's views. Based on the reasons given above, a qualitative research methodology has been chosen as the most suitable method for this current study.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

This section presents a discussion of the data collection method, including information about the semi-structured interview, the procedure for data collection, the interview protocols, and other sources of information.

#### **3.3.1 Research Design: Semi-Structured Interviews**

A semi-structured interview technique is a useful mean of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations, and constructions of reality, and to understand others (Punch, 2005).

Considerations of the research questions in this study are related to inner personal experiences and feelings. As a result, semi-structured interviewing was chosen on the basis of its ability to best answer the proposed research objectives. This interview technique has been used in similar studies (Henderson, 2006).

The implementation of data collection using semi-structured interviews comprised two main phases. This research procedure is addressed as follows and illustrated in Figure 3.2. Phase I comprised the pilot interviews that were mainly conducted around Brisbane to practise and improve the researcher's ability to implement the interview technique. Phase II was the actual collection of the semi-structured interviews which were conducted in Brisbane, Queensland and Uluru in the Northern Territory. These details are presented in further sections.

##### **3.3.1.1 Pilot Semi-structured Interviews**

Before going into the field to gather empirical data, the researcher checked the interview protocols including screening and extended questions for the meditative mindfulness interview questions to determine whether they were valid (Jennings, 2010). In this first stage, three screening questions (including 'attention', 'present moment' and 'non-judgment' dimensions) were used for identifying the occurrences of meditative mindfulness corresponding to the three main constructs of meditative mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003a). The three qualitative questions were adopted from validated quantifiable scales for examining mindfulness used in prior studies in clinical psychology (Baer et al., 2004; Sauer, Walach, Offenbacher, Lynch, & Kohls, 2011; Walach et al., 2006) and in a modified form in tourism studies (Kang & Gretzel, 2012). These will be detailed in Section 3.3.2.1. A pilot study was used to ensure that the screening protocol functioned well (Veal, 2011) for backpackers. The interview protocols were designed in English and Chinese and were conducted in Chinese.

The use of well-designed psychometric screening questions minimised potential bias and maximised credibility (Jennings, 2010). The interview protocols were trialled to ensure that the

interview questions, including screening and extended questions, were appropriately framed in order to ensure that there was a clear understanding of the questions asked. Five Taiwanese backpackers were recruited in the pilot study. Three were bilingual in Mandarin Chinese and English and were studying at The University of Queensland during the pilot study stage of this research. All interview transcripts were typed in Chinese, and then transcribed in English by the interviewer (the researcher herself—a PhD candidate and native speaker in Mandarin Chinese). The three bilingual interviewers were asked to check the screening interview questions and their own interview transcripts after the interviews. The transcripts were also checked by three experts; a Taiwanese academic who is bilingual in Mandarin Chinese and English, a professional English editor, and the researcher’s advisor, and were also peer-reviewed by a Taiwanese PhD candidate studying tourism at The University of Queensland, Australia. Throughout the pilot interviews, the preliminary version of the screening questions was revised by adding, dropping, or rewriting the three questions. The other two pilot interviewees were backpackers staying in Brisbane hostels who were recruited through snowball sampling. This helped the researcher to understand whether the questions were appropriate and to redesign better probing questions so as to engage interviewee interests in order to obtain valid information in stage 2—the more formal semi-structured interview process.

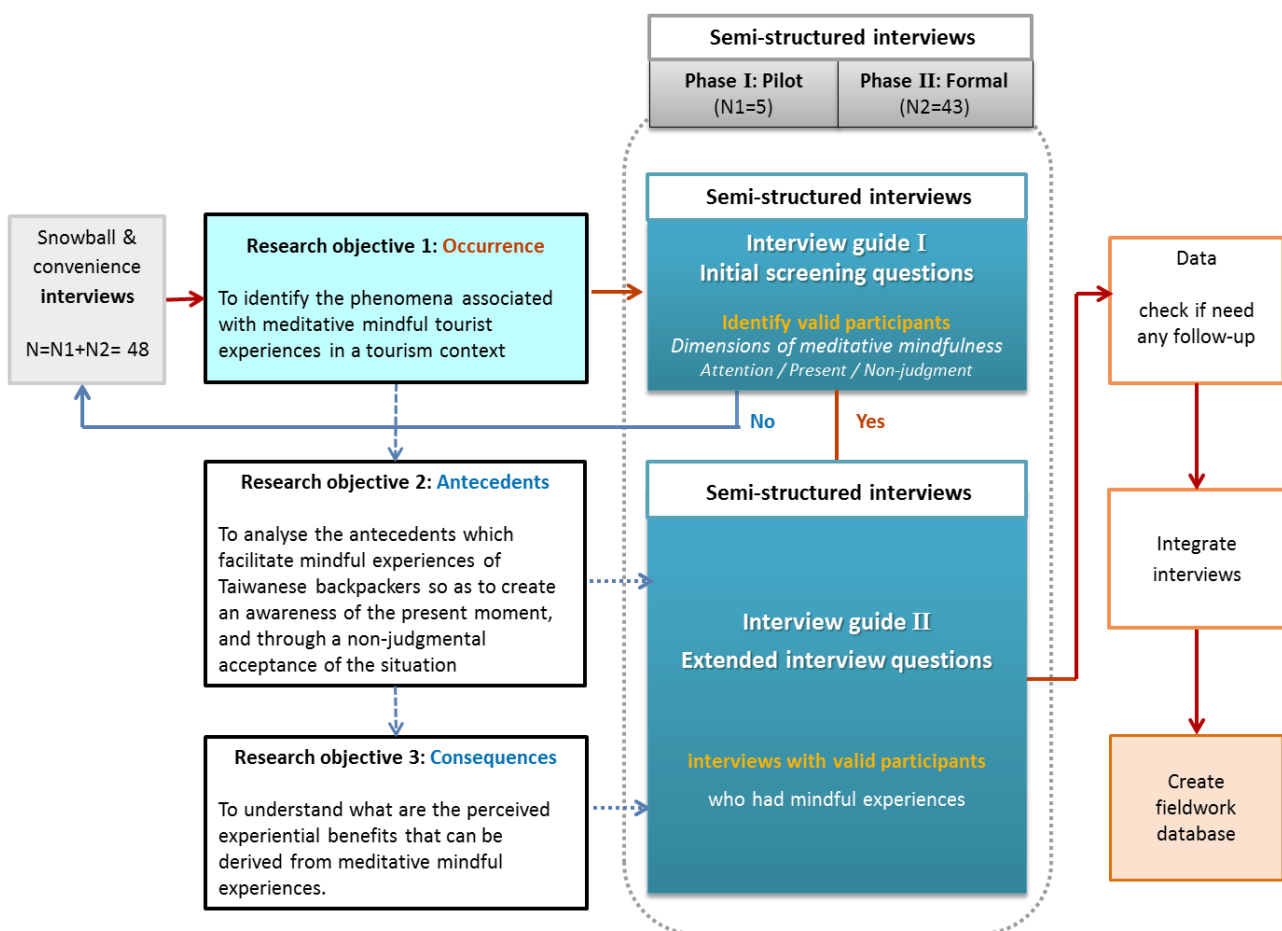


Figure 3.2 Process of data collection

### **3.3.1.2 Formal Semi-structured Interviews**

The interview process included a number of screening questions (15 minutes) and an extended semi-structured interview (30–40 minutes) which was digitally recorded with the permission of interviewees. Respondents were advised that they could withdraw from the interview at any time (as detailed in Section 3.5). The respondents were asked if they would like to provide their name and contact details in order to double check their completed interview.

Incentives are beneficial in increasing response rates (McCarthy, Beckler, & Ott, 2006). A non-monetary incentive valued at less than AUD \$10 (a cup of coffee with cookies) was provided to each respondent who participated in the interview to compensate for their time and effort. Singer and Ye (2013) suggested that quality of response generally correlates with nonresponse (if sample members fail to answer); accordingly, the use of incentives helps to target nonresponse bias effectively. All the participants in this study were keen to share their experiences, and some of them introduced other Taiwanese backpackers after participating. The backpackers were interested in sharing their experience (Sorauren, 2000).

As discussed above, the two phases of the semi-structured interviews (pilot interviews and formal interviews) were included in the data collection for this study, as discussed in the previous section. Nevertheless, it was more important to justify the participants' appropriateness for being recruited for this study. The first stage of the interview was to identify if the participants had experienced meditative mindfulness (occurrence). Therefore, the participants' meditative mindful experiences were identified through the semi-structured interviews by means of an initial screening interview schedule. If a meditative mindfulness experience was noted, the interview continued with an extended interview question. The interview protocols were discussed in detail in Section 3.3.2.

Next, participants were asked follow-up probing questions. The focus of this research was to explore tourist meditative mindful experiences through deeper reflections of their inner feelings and perceptions, so follow-up probing questions were asked. If the participants seemed unsure of how to respond to a specific question, the question was rephrased. At this stage, the participants became more deeply engaged in the interview. If information was unclear or specific issues were missing from the data, reconfirmation was used to clarify the meaning. Thus, throughout the two phases of interviews (pilot and formal interviews) a database was created.



### **3.3.2 The Interview Protocols**

The procedure for data collection is illustrated in Figure 3.2. To carry out the semi-structured interviews, the researcher used questions related to the research objectives (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Semi-structured interview protocols were developed for the two stages of interviews: screening and extended questions. They were written as a prompt list of questions that allowed the researcher to conduct the face-to-face interviews with respondents (Singleton & Straits, 1999).

Accordingly, two interview protocols were developed. The '*Interview Guide I: Screening questions interview*' was used to identify participants who had had a meditative mindful experience. The screening guide interview questions were adopted and modified from previous studies which were used to assess meditative mindfulness (Baer et al., 2004; Kang & Gretzel, 2012; Sauer et al., 2011; Walach et al., 2006). '*Interview Guild II: Extended questions interview*' were used for participants who indicated that they had experienced meditative mindful experiences. These are discussed in detail below, as summarised in Table 3.2 (see Section 3.3.2.1) and Table 3.3 (see Section 3.3.2.2).

The interviews were conducted in Taiwanese thereby facilitating a greater understanding of the meanings associated with the responses. The two interview protocols (see Appendix A and B) were translated by the researcher and checked by others, as discussed in Section 3.3.1.1. In order to keep the interview more consistent for each interviewee, one interviewer only (the researcher herself, a candidate of The University of Queensland) conducted all work.

#### **3.3.2.1 Interview Guide I: Screen Interview Questions**

The purpose of these questions was to discover the participants who had experienced a meditative mindful experience/s. The items for the screening interview questions were selected and modified from previous scales including the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI), the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS), and the modified Four Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) which was developed by Walach et al. (2006), Baer et al. (Baer et al., 2004) and Kang and Gretzel (2012) to suit the context of backpacker tourism.

#### ***Instruments for Measuring Mindfulness***

The phenomenon of mindfulness is complex and is related to a number of different disciplines. When assessing the types of therapeutic mindfulness-based treatments which are commonly used, it has been found that a questionnaire has been commonly used because it was realised that the tendency to respond mindfully to daily life experiences is subject to change with practice after

teaching mindfulness skills. In such training, participants are encouraged to focus their attention on stimuli that can be observed in the present moment, such as sensations and movements (Baer, 2011). An instrument for measuring mindfulness is necessary to understand the nature of mindfulness and its relationships with other properties. Mindfulness, as noted earlier, is used in well-known clinical interventions (Bishop et al., 2004), and in non-clinical interventions such as therapeutic recreation services (Carruthers & Hood, 2011). Over the last ten years, several measures of mindfulness have been developed such as the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003), the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI) (Sauer et al., 2011; Walach et al., 2006), the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) (Baer et al., 2004), the Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS) (Lau et al., 2006), the Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHLMS), the Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised (CAMS-R) (Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, Greeson, & Laurenceau, 2007), and the Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer et al., 2008). In addition, Kang and Gretzel (2009) developed a short-item scale to measure tourist experiences in a national park based on previous psychometric scales. These instruments have contributed to enhancing the assessment of the construct of mindfulness when collecting data from large numbers in empirical studies. However, in the tourism or leisure context, little research has explained the antecedents and outcomes derived from a tourist's experience associated with meditative mindfulness.

**The Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI).** The Freiburg mindfulness inventory (FMI) is a widely used instrument designed to assess trait mindfulness and to measure nonjudgmental present-moment awareness (Baer, 2009; Sauer et al., 2011). Questions on the FMI are typical internal responses to situations or a response that is mindful to stimuli (Lorentz, 2012). The FMI developed subsequently into two forms: a long 30-item (FMI-30) and a short 14-item (FMI-14, see Appendix C) which have recently been validated in a sample of individuals who attended Vipassana retreats undertaking meditation (the retreats consisted of at least eight hours' meditation in silence per day) (Walach et al., 2006). Walach et al. (2006) examined mindfulness using the two instruments (FMI-30 and FMI-14) and found the short FMI-14 correlated well with the full FMI-30 scale. The FMI-14 was designed semantically independent from a Buddhist or meditation context, but still covered all aspects of an assessment of mindfulness. In this vein, the long FMI-30 form can be used in a sample which is familiar with mindfulness; whereas, the short FMI-14 form is more suitable for populations without any experience of formal mindfulness practices.

In general contexts, knowledge of formal mindfulness may not be expected from all respondents. Nevertheless, the robust FMI-14 scale covers all aspects of mindfulness that is internally consistent and modestly relates to measures of spirituality, such as self-awareness, self-knowledge, body sensation dissociation, and psychological distress (Baer, 2009; Walach et al., 2006) and applied in

broader contexts with respondents unfamiliar with mindfulness (Walach et al., 2006). Therefore, it may be used in interview questions to identify mindfulness in tourism contexts.

**The Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS).** The Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills, based on the conceptualization of mindfulness as applied in dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT), is designed to measure four facets of mindfulness: observing, describing, acting with awareness, and nonjudgmental acceptance (Baer et al., 2004). The KIMS questionnaire comprises 39 items (see Appendix D) to, “assess the general tendency to be mindful in daily life and does not require experience with meditation” (Baer, 2009, p. 156)”. It is supported by exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (Baer et al., 2004). In research by Baer et al. (2004), KIMS was found to be internally consistent and had a good test-retest reliability. It showed expected relationships with other constructs including openness to experience and emotional intelligence (Baer, 2009; Baer et al., 2004).

**The Modified Four Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (modified-FFMQ).** Based on previous studies in clinical psychology (Baer et al., 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Feldman et al., 2007), Kang and Gretzel (2012) developed a 14-item questionnaire (see Appendix E) to measure tourists’ mindfulness in a national park context. The fourteen questions were selected from the psychometric scales used to measure mindfulness and consisted of four sub-dimensions: attention, present-focus, awareness and non-judgment (Kang & Gretzel, 2012). The questions measured mindfulness on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) to understand how the effect of podcasts led to tourists’ mindful experiences in national parks. In the tourism literature, Kang and Gretzel (2012) argued that mindfulness is, “an ongoing psychological state” (p.10), and is an important concept that enhances tourism experiences. They also identified that open and receptive attention to, and an awareness of current events helps people engage with their surroundings. In other words, the application of enhancing podcast tourist’s mindfulness influences attention to, and awareness of current relationships and connectedness. The FFMQ suggested that mindfulness may impact on the quality of communication and social exchange and also related to environmental stewardship. However, a limitation was that due to some measurement issues, the extent of mindfulness may have been overstated (Kang & Gretzel, 2012).

### ***Justification for Screening Interview Questions***

In summary, these instruments are justified as useful tools in empirical studies to measure mindfulness. Both FMI and KIMS were used to measure populations with limited or no meditation experience. In particular, the FMI-14 scale is valid and reliable for measuring mindfulness for a non-clinical population (Baer, 2009; Sauer et al., 2011; Walach et al., 2006). Nevertheless, the

multidimensional nature of the KIMS gives the scale a potential utility that can supplement a single general factor measurement of the FMI. However, the items of the KIMS are longer and too comprehensive to use in a screening questionnaire test for this study. Subsequently, the modified-FFMQ has been developed for tourists but was used specifically for visitors to a national park environment. Furthermore, the FFMQ still has a measure distortion in the limited scale (Kang & Gretzel, 2012) and needs to be interpreted and applied adequately.

As discussed above, three main questions about meditative mindfulness were ascertained. Based on the literature which related to the instruments that measured meditative mindfulness, such as the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI), the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS), and the modified Four Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer et al., 2004; Kang & Gretzel, 2012; Sauer et al., 2011; Walach et al., 2006) a number of screening interview questions were designed, before proceeding to the following semi-structured interviews. Some questions suited to tourism contexts were selected for the qualitative screening interview questions for this thesis. They examined the three elements of meditative mindfulness defined by Kabat-Zinn (2003a): *Awareness/Attention, Present moment, and non-judgment* (as described in Section 2.3.2) to characterise the participants' meditative mindful experience (see Table 3.1).

The screening questions began by identifying the sensations perceived by participants. This ensured the interviews captured key aspects of meditative mindfulness in a tourism context. Next, the participants were asked to describe the sensations from different dimensions that related to meditative mindfulness: (such as *'Have you experienced sense consciousness, such as visible forms, sound, odour (smell), flavours, touch and mental objects, on your Australian backpacking travel?'*), as well as the acceptance of change without making a judgment. The screening interview questions were not designed to provide all affirmative responses. The first two 'attention' and 'present moment' questions were affirmative, whereas the third 'non-judgment' question was a reverse response. In other words, if participants' responded three times with "yes", the interview was terminated. The first phase of screening validated the occurrence of meditative mindfulness in experiences from respondents selected in this way and the second phase of semi-structured interviews commenced. All questions in the interview guide were open-ended and allowed respondents to think freely and to describe their experience, as detailed in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.1 Constructs and interview questions of meditative mindfulness**

Constructs	Instruments of scales	Items of instruments in the related literature	Key points in screening interview questions of this research
Attention	FMI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I sense my body, whether eating, cooking, cleaning or talking.</li> <li>I watch my feelings without getting lost in them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notice six sensations perceived such as visible, sound, odour, flavours, touch and mental consciousness</li> <li>Pay attention to your surroundings or environment while you were in travel</li> </ul>
	KIMS	<p><i>Observe items</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face.</li> <li>I pay attention to sounds, such as birds chirping.</li> <li>I notice the smells and aromas of things.</li> <li>I intentionally stay aware of my feelings.</li> <li>I notice visual elements in art or nature, such as colours, shapes, textures, or patterns of light and shadow.</li> <li>I notice when my moods begin to change.</li> </ul> <p><i>Describe items</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I'm good at thinking of words to express my perceptions, such as how things taste, smell, or sound.</li> </ul>	
	Modified-FFMQ	<p><i>Attention items</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I could pay attention to what I was doing.</li> <li>I was able to pay close attention to the environment.</li> </ul> <p><i>Awareness items</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I noticed my surroundings when walking in the park.</li> <li>I was aware of smells and sounds and feelings such as the wind blowing in my face.</li> </ul>	
Present moment	FMI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am open to the experience of the present moment.</li> <li>When I notice an absence of mind, I gently return to the experience of the here and now.</li> <li>I feel connected to my experience in the here-and-now.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Able to focus on that moment in the situations</li> <li>Feel connected to the experience in the here-and-now</li> <li>Concentrate on what you were doing.</li> </ul>
	KIMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When I'm doing something, I'm only focused on what I'm doing, nothing else.</li> <li>I get completely absorbed in what I'm doing, so that all my attention is focused on it.</li> </ul>	
	Modified-FFMQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I was open to the experience of the moment.</li> <li>I was able to focus on the moment.</li> </ul>	
Non-judgment	FMI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am able to appreciate myself.</li> <li>I see my mistakes and difficulties without judging them.</li> <li>I accept unpleasant experiences.</li> <li>I am friendly to myself when things go wrong.</li> <li>I am able to smile when I notice how I sometimes make life difficult.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make judgments or evaluation whether your perceptions or thoughts were right or wrong*</li> <li>How worthwhile or worthless the experience was?*</li> </ul> <p>Ps*: Reversed question</p>
	KIMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad. *</li> <li>I tend to make judgments about how worthwhile or worthless my experiences are. *</li> </ul>	
	Modified-FFMQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I tended to make judgments about whether my thoughts were good or bad.*</li> <li>I made judgments about how worthwhile or worthless my experience was.*</li> <li>I tended to evaluate whether my perceptions about the park were right or wrong.*</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Note:</b> FMI means Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (Walach et al., 2006, pp. 1552-1553);  KIMS means Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (Baer et al., 2004, p.196);  Modified-FFMQ means the Four Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire that was modified by Kang and Gretzel (2012, p.452).  * means reversed question.</p>			

Source: Developed for this research, based on Walach et al. (2006, pp. 1552-1553), Baer et al. (2004, p.196), and Kang and Gretzel (2012, p.452)

**Table 3.2 Interview Guide I: Screening interview questions**

**Interview Guide I : Screening interview questions (15 minutes)**

The purpose of this interview is to characterise the phenomenon of backpacking travel experience associated with meditative mindfulness in Australia. Please recall and reflect on each of the following statements regarding some particular situations. There are neither 'good' nor 'bad' reflections. What is important to this study is your individual travel experience while backpacking in Australia.

- ***Awareness / Attention/ Consciousness dimensions***

Have you experienced sensory consciousness, such as visible forms, sound, odour (smell), flavours, touch and mental objects, on your Australia backpacking travel? And how? (i.e., *You paid attention to your surroundings or environment while you were in travel.*)

***For example (optional):***

*In a setting or destination, you noticed visual elements (visual consciousness); you paid attention to sounds (auditory consciousness); you noticed smells and aromas of things (olfactory consciousness); you noticed wind blowing in your hair, sensations of your movements whether walking, climbing, exercising or doing something else (tactile consciousness); you noticed your moods began to change or intentionally stayed aware of your feelings (mental consciousness).*

- ***Present moment dimensions***

Were you able to focus on that moment in the situations you mentioned? And why?

***For example (optional):***

*You felt connected to your experience in the here-and-now; you could concentrate on what you were doing.*

- ***Non-judgment dimensions (Accept without judgment)***

\* Did you tend to make judgments or evaluation whether your perceptions or thoughts were right or wrong, or how worthwhile or worthless the experience was? And why?

***For example (optional):***

*\*You felt some of your thoughts or emotions were bad and you shouldn't think or feel that way; \* you were not able to smile when you noticed how sometimes travel was difficult.*

**Ps.\*: Reverse-scored item**

Source: Developed for this research, based on Walach et al. (2006, pp. 1552-1553), Baer et al. (2004, p.196) and Kang and Gretzel (2012, p. 452)

### 3.3.2.2 Interview Guide II: Extended Questions

As mentioned in Section 3.3.2.1, extended semi-structured interviews were conducted if the participants were confirmed they had had a meditative mindful travel experience/s (occurrences). The questions were used to explore the self-reported antecedents and consequences of meditative mindfulness for Taiwanese backpackers. Questions about the antecedents of meditative mindfulness explored what activities, settings or other contributing factors may facilitate mindful experiences. The consequences of meditative mindfulness experiences were perceived as experiential benefits from the travel experiences. In addition, interviewees' demographic information and comments were also collected (see Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3 Interview Guide II: Prompt list of extended semi-structured interview questions**

<b>Interview Guide II : Prompt list of extended semi-structured interview questions (30-40minutes)</b>
<p><b><i>Antecedents of tourist meditative mindfulness experiences</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Based on your previous answers to question number 1 of the screening questions, which <u>one situation</u> was you aware of, or where did you pay attention to sensations that impressed you mostly? And why?</li><li>2. Could you describe in more detail how you felt and thought at the moment for the particular situation? Or could you show visualised images, such as the photos, or your blog pictures that embody more detailed informative stories as supplements? <i>For example, what were the highlights of activities and settings, or other contributing factors, such as whether your individual travel, with a companion or group and your motivations for travel have triggered you towards the phenomenon?</i></li><li>3. Have you ever experienced formal mindfulness practices or participated in a coaching mindfulness courses such as meditation, yoga etc.? If yes:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>I. <i>How long have you practised? What kinds of activities and settings have you engaged? (For example: Wellness resorts, retreat workshops, Buddhism temples etc.)</i></li><li>II. <i>How do you see the therapeutic mindfulness training helping you in experiencing this Australian backpacker's trip?</i></li></ol></li></ol> <p><b><i>Consequences (positive outcomes) of tourist meditative mindfulness experiences</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. What benefits/outcomes do/did you feel you gained from the mindfulness-like travel experience? And which experiential benefit do you think was most particular? <i>For example: meaning, peace and calm, learning, positive emotion, the reduction of anxiety or suffering, creating a valued life, aware of self and others, healthy, connected relationships, compassionate, wise and insightful, purposeful and satisfying, or flow etc.</i></li><li>5. How do you sense the experiences (or positive transformation) have changed you? And why is it important to you?</li></ol> <p><b><i>Others</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. How long did you stay for your travel in Australia? And when?</li><li>7. Are there comments you would like to make about the experiences of this trip?</li><li>8. Interviewees' demographic information (e.g., flexible schedule? solo travel or with companions (how many ___)? etc.</li></ol>

Source: Developed by the author

### **3.3.3 Sources of Information**

The academic findings are based on the direct responses from interviewees that provided rich data to help understand the nature of the phenomenon. This section addresses the reasons for the selection of the sites for the data collection.

#### **3.3.3.1 Respondent Selection**

Taiwanese backpackers travelling in Australia were chosen to provide data to help understand the phenomenon of mindful experience. As mentioned in Section 2.4, backpacking may involve being more aware of engaged sensations, feelings and interaction with the outer world. The psychological phenomena in backpacking experiences in some cases correspond to the dimensions of meditative mindfulness. Therefore, backpackers were considered to be suitable for examining whether meditative mindful experiences occur in tourism.

Taiwanese backpackers who were travelling, or had recently travelled around Australia were selected as respondents in this study for the following reasons. Firstly, interviews with Taiwanese backpackers as interviewees allowed the researcher to more clearly understand the rich detail of the responses since the researcher is Taiwanese herself. As discussed previously, this study endeavours to establish an understanding of the complex psychological phenomenon of meditative mindful experiences of tourists, and then discuss the relevant antecedents and consequences. As a result, a qualitative method which is based on the interpretive constructivist paradigm for the implementation of data collection has been adopted.

Secondly, it was relatively easier to recruit Taiwanese backpackers in Australia as interviewees for this study. The number of Taiwanese backpackers travelling in Australia has increased dramatically over the past few years (see Appendix F), to more than 14 times in the past five years, and accounted for approximately one third of the total number of tourists from Taiwan in 2010. This is because of a policy that is promoted by the National Youth Commission in Taiwan to encourage young Taiwanese to travel abroad in order to participate in an overseas lived experience, and to develop self-confidence and an outlook which is based on the concept of responsible travelling. One of the first participants interviewed for this study had been awarded a prize from a competition on travel experience writing organised by the National Youth Commission (NYC) in Taiwan in 2011. Their entry was entitled “My overseas story of a working holiday and backpacking in Australia”. This enabled the researcher to gain entry into the backpacker community and to begin the process of snowball interviewing.

Thirdly, some characteristics of Taiwanese backpackers seem to have a significant relationship with the dimensions of meditative mindfulness. Pan (2012) reported that young Taiwanese when



travelling are interested in escaping from daily life to reorganise and relax, look for new ways of life, self- explore, develop empathetic skills, hear different opinions, appreciate a slower pace of life, and to develop an open mind. The relationship between overseas travelling and holiday working lies in encouraging people to leave their classroom, home, and comfortable lives to visit different places, learn how to face difficulties, to accept deficiencies, to appreciate a slower pace of life, and thereby to facilitate an open mind (Pan, 2012). These characteristics are similar to those of meditative mindfulness, such as non-judgmental acceptance, self-regulation, and self-awareness.

Taiwanese backpackers were qualified for participation in the formal semi-structured interviews after an introductory screening interview to ascertain if they had previously experienced mindful experiences that involved appropriate characteristics of meditative mindfulness. As a result of the points addressed above, backpackers from Taiwan were selected as the only respondents for this study.

### **3.3.3.2 Respondents Interviewed**

In qualitative research, there are no rules about the number of respondents who have to be interviewed. Instead the number is based on the purpose of the research, what will have credibility, and what can be done with the available time and resources (Patton, 2002). An appropriate number enables a deeper understanding of the processes, relationships, and the social scene (Neuman, 2006), and snowball interviewing was chosen to obtain the interviews. A total of 48 Taiwanese backpackers were recruited during the data collection, including five participants for the pilot interviews, and 43 participants for the formal interviews. As discussed previously, the pilot interviews were used to determine the effectiveness of the interview procedures. During the formal interviews, participants reported between one and three incidents of meditative mindful travel experiences. As a result, a total of 83 instances of meditative mindful experiences were collected, with 77 effective instances used for data analysis in this study (six instances were collected from the pilot interviews and were excluded from the data analysis).

The interviewer (the researcher) stopped interviewing once data saturation point was achieved; that is, when there were no new emergent themes or concepts, and collecting further data appeared to be redundant (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Key concepts and themes were monitored and analysed throughout the data collection process to detect the point of data saturation (Kerr, Nixon, & Wild, 2010). Analysis involved constantly reflecting on the preliminary findings from the collected data and the related theories from the literature review (as addressed in Chapter 2). In order to identify themes and concepts emerging from the preliminary interviews, memos were used for a systemic

organisation of the collected data (Wright & Schmelzer, 1997). This process ascertained the adequacy of the data saturation point (Punch, 2005) which was reached after the 43<sup>rd</sup> participant.

### **3.3.3.3 Sites for Interviews**

As discussed previously in Section 2.4.3, Pearce (1990) defined one of the criteria to distinguish a backpacker group from other travellers as being their preference for budget or economical accommodation. Furthermore, Tourism Research Australia (Tourism Research Australia, 2010) specifies that a backpacker spends at least one night in either backpacker or hostel accommodation. Therefore, the sites for data collections of interviews with Taiwanese backpackers were mainly budget accommodation such as backpacker hostels, youth hostels and camping grounds located in two areas: Brisbane, Queensland and Uluru, Northern Territory, Australia (see Appendix G).

The reason for choosing backpackers in Brisbane is that this is a common destination for Taiwanese tourists, working holiday makers, migrants and international students (Chiang & Hsu, 2005; Glover, 2011). The initial pilot interviews and snowball sampling allowed budget accommodation to be identified where Taiwanese backpackers could be found and interviewed (see Appendix G).

Backpacker hostels and camping sites around Alice Spring and the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in the Northern Territory in Central Australia were also visited, based on the findings from the pilot semi-structured interview and the preliminary finding of formal semi-structured interviews. The sites for visiting Taiwanese backpackers included budget accommodation and camping grounds (see Appendix G). The researcher, as both observer and interviewer, also took part in activities that backpackers had mentioned. This allowed a greater in-situ understanding of the phenomenon of meditative mindful experiences of tourists.

In summary, Taiwanese backpackers in Australia were interviewed using a qualitative research design so as to determine the phenomenon of meditative mindfulness experience in tourism. Snowball interviewing was used at sites in Brisbane and Uluru. The interviewer (the researcher) met interviewees personally in different backpacker hostels and camping sites mainly based on the comments from pilot interviews, prior interviews and snowball samplings. While these interviews were at specific sites, interviewees' recollections related to significant experiences across multi-sites in Australia.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

This study used a thematic analysis, an analytical method that is commonly applied within qualitative studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). QSR-Nvivo 10, a data analysis computer program used for qualitative research, was utilised to assist the coding of interview transcripts, to enhance an understanding of the theoretical assumptions about the data, and to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the data analysis process (Veal, 2011). Since a Chinese version of the software is available, Mandarin was used in the qualitative interviews. All the collected data were transcribed in Chinese, and themes were translated in English. The process of data collection and interpretation ensured the quality (accuracy and trustworthiness) of the research (Jennings, 2010).

#### **3.4.1 The Process of Data Analysis**

Interpretation of textual material derived from the collected data involves systematically organising, integrating, and examining data to find patterns and relationships in specific detail (Henderson, 2006). The cumbersome database resulting from semi-structured interviews provides a challenge (Bryman, 2008). Thematic analysis is used to identify, analyse, and report meaningful patterns (themes) within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest six phases of thematic analysis, summarised here into three main steps: generating coding, identifying themes, and producing the report.

The first step of generating coding was achieved by the systematic coding of the collected data. A close reading of the transcripts and notes taken during the interviews allowed the researcher to immerse herself in the interviews. Over 50 hours of audio recordings consisting of a total of 83 instances, with 77 valid instances of meditative mindful experiences were transcribed by the researcher into 345 pages of Mandarin Chinese. The large body of text was coded both manually and automatically through NVivo 10. The data was coded using a descriptive and interpretive pattern (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During the coding, data was reviewed and given a label or tab for “assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). The purpose of coding is to ascertain meaning and list themes from the responses of the interviewees. However, in order to ensure the accuracy of the data, the transcripts were checked against the notes to ensure that nothing was missing in the process of data analysis.

Secondly, ongoing analysis for refining each theme was undertaken during the whole process. As described in the first step, the researcher obtained a preliminary understanding of the overall story and how to reduce data from the thick data through familiarisation. The themes were found by collating codes and gathering all data relevant to each (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Responses were placed into more than one category, then the interpretive coding and descriptive coding was

analysed more deeply and then compared, along with the different attributes, to produce proper pattern codes. The process was implemented through the progression of analysis beyond interpretive codes, to identifying relationships among codes that allowed the researcher to isolate themes of meditative mindfulness experiences and their corresponding antecedents and consequences. For example ‘sensory awareness’ and ‘relaxed attention’ were identified as two concepts (subthemes) of paying attention to tourist experience (major theme). Each data item was given equal attention during the coding process. Each theme and concept used coded extracts as initial nodes (i.e., gathering emerging patterns and ideas in one place) leading to a thematic ‘map’ (as shown in Table 3.4).

**Table 3.4 Example of thematic analysis of results for research objective one**

ROI Phenomenon	Thematic Families		Quotes	Description of Constructs used for coding & exemplified in this thesis (Extracts from Data)
	Theme	Concept	Potential Themes	
Occurrences of Meditative mindful tourist experience	Paying attention to experience	Sensory awareness	Visual sense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While scuba diving with diving goggles, I could see clearly what was in front of me. Beautiful coral and fish with slightly neon colours were shinier than I had imagined previously. It looked like many lumine scenes in a dark and deep ocean.</li> </ul>
			Auditory sense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was no sound in the deep environment of the sea; only my own breathing and the sound from the respirator could be heard.</li> </ul>
			Tactile sense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was a strong perception of tactile consciousness</li> <li>I also wore specific heavy equipment, tied with lead bricks. Nevertheless, I felt comfortable floating in the water, not floating on the surface of water or sinking down to the bottom of the ocean because my diving suit was inflatable.</li> <li>I was disoriented and couldn't tell which way was up or down, or left or right.</li> </ul>
			Mental stimuli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A feeling of solitude was aroused when I was paying attention to watching the surroundings.</li> </ul>
		Relaxed attention	Stable attention with relaxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>However, I was not scared with the dark of the environment when I was doing the scuba diving..... it was some sense like natural relaxation and calmness. Ha ha.....</li> </ul>
<b>Notes:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Example was extracted from one instance [S24]: Taiwanese backpacker who experienced scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef, Queensland, Australia.</li> <li>The transcript in the English version is detailed in Appendix K</li> </ol>				

Source: Developed by the author for this study

Lastly, a report capturing compelling extracts in relation to the three research questions of this thesis was completed. For example, in response to research objective one in this thesis, the resultant eight concepts (subthemes) related to the occurrences of meditative mindful tourist experience were ultimately grouped into three main themes ('paying attention to experience', 'living in the present', 'non-elaborative awareness') as detailed in Section 4.2 (see Figure 4.2).

### **3.4.2 Research Validation: Trustworthiness**

Research must be evaluated in relation to the procedures used to generate the findings. The evaluation of the standards "for qualitative research depend on how researchers position themselves in the study" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 163). In qualitative research the criteria for evaluation includes the researchers' theoretical lens, the rigor and the consistency of the data, the philosophical assumptions (Bryman, 2008), and the use of validity strategies to confirm the quality of the research design, particularly during the process of data collection and interpretation (Jennings, 2010). Trustworthiness was considered in this study to determine the validity and reliability of the qualitative data analysis.

In a qualitative case study, trustworthiness criteria has been applied for evaluating validity and reliability (Bryman, 2008; Jennings, 2010). Frequently, trustworthiness has been used for evaluation to ensure the objectivity of the researcher so as to avoid the researcher's bias while collecting data and making preliminary interpretations in qualitative inquiry (Bryman, 2008; Guba, 1981a; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For qualitative evaluation, trustworthiness is different (Creswell, 2009) but may be considered equivalent to the considerations of validity and reliability considerations of quantitative studies (Bryman, 2008). Validity considerations in qualitative research were used to establish and assess the quality and bias of the research and the accuracy of findings determined by employing specific procedures (Creswell, 2009). Reliability considerations were used to demonstrate whether the operational procedures of the research could be repeated and provide similar results. There are four criteria of measures to achieve trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry. These include credibility (which parallels internal validity), transferability (which parallels external validity), dependability (which parallels reliability), and confirmability (which parallels objectivity) (Bryman, 2008). These were employed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the study which is described below.

**Credibility** deals with the focus of the research and how well the process of data collection and analysis was based on multiple accounts of reality to ensure data objectivity and guard against bias (Bryman, 2008). Firstly, during the interview, the participant's key points were repeated to the interviewee by the researcher for clarification. Secondly, after the interview, the participant's

transcripts, which were transcribed by the researcher, were sent to the participant for confirmation to ensure a validity strategy. This consisted of participants checking the transcripts (member checks) (see Table 3.5). The transcript drafts were emailed to participants to review before any coding was conducted.

Thirdly, to understand the complex psychological construct of meditative mindfulness, participant observation was conducted to view the immediate experience in concrete situations and settings, and this contributed to the credibility of understanding the meditative mindful experience phenomenon (Jorgensen, 1989). As mentioned in Section 3.3.3.3, participant observation was implemented in the area of Uluru, after a number of interviews were collected in Brisbane during the data collection. Participant observation helps when little is known about a phenomenon (Jorgensen, 1989).

**Table 3.5 Trustworthiness strategies: member checks and audits**

Strategies	Technique of Trustworthiness	Criteria
<b>Member checks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reviewed transcripts and gave comments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ 3 participants</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Clarified ambiguous points of transcripts via emails and a second interview inquiries               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ 3 participants</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Credibility</b> Internal validity</p>
<b>Audits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expert examinations on data analysis               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ One academic, Taiwanese tourism scholar</li> <li>➢ One expert, member of the Body Culture Society of Taiwan<sup>1</sup> and member of the Outdoor Recreation and Association of R.O.C<sup>2</sup></li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Scrutiny of the process of data analysis               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Two academics, the researcher’s advisors, the University of Queensland and Griffith University</li> <li>➢ One professional English editor, face-to-face discussion</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dependability</b> Reliability</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Critique of the objectivity of data interpretation.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ One colleague, researcher, the University of Queensland</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Confirmability</b> Objectivity</p>
<p><b>Notes:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Body Culture Society of Taiwan is a non-profit organisation that is dedicated to academic research, publication, marketing and promotion of the meaning and value of physical body construction, culture, sport and human behaviour.</li> <li>2. The Outdoor Recreation and Association of R.O.C is an academic organisation in Taiwan that conducts tourism research on the Journal of Outdoor Recreation Studies and is dedicated to promote outdoor recreation through seminars, leisure and group activities.</li> </ol>		

Source: Developed by the author based on Bryman (2008)

**Transferability** addresses the degree or the extent to which the research findings can be generalised or transferred to other settings or groups (Bryman, 2008; Polit & Beck, 2004). Transferability is not often achievable because of the limited data obtained from small or non-representative samples stemming from non-random sampling procedures (Decrop, 2004). Provision of rich and thick descriptive data helps readers to assess the potential transferability for their own settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve transferability, an effective sample of 77 instances (Section 3.3.3.2) derived from using purposive sampling (Section 3.3.3.1 and Section 3.3.1.1), provided thick description in diverse situations (Section 3.3.3.3) across 43 participants. Therefore, clear interpretative data with appropriate quotations allows the researcher to illustrate analytic generalisation of theoretical propositions by integrating findings with existent literature and describing how related objects are similar (Decrop, 2004).

**Dependability** refers to the findings being consistent and reproducible (Henderson, 2006). To avoid inconsistency during the interviews, the researcher (the interviewer) asked the same questions of all participants (Bryman, 2008; Guba, 1981a). On the other hand, an auditing process was incorporated into the data analysis. An expert examination of second opinions was used which enabled the researcher to audit the interview interpretations and observation results (Creswell, 2009). In this study, expert examinations were conducted by members of the Body Culture Society of Taiwan and the Outdoor Recreation Association of R.O.C (see Table 3.5). These experts have rich experiences on backpacking and slow travel, as well as knowledge about qualitative studies in leisure and recreation, and were invited to examine the data analysis process. Moreover, the transcribing and coding of the data analysis was subject to scrutiny by the researcher's academic advisors who are experienced in qualitative research methods. These strategies were provided so as to provide consistency of the analysis, and contribute to its dependability.

**Confirmability** refers to the objectivity of the data and that it was factual and confirmable (Guba, 1981b; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was achieved by examining the results of the inquiry to see if the data were supported by the procedure (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001). In this research, objectivity was considered in three main areas. First, a long verbatim description of each instance was provided as part of the confirmation process. Second, one colleague was asked to criticize the objectivity of the data interpretation.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

This thesis was granted ethical clearance by the University of Queensland Ethics Officer prior to commencing the data collection, as shown in Appendix H. Ethical issues involving the balance between, "the pursuit of scientific knowledge and the right of those being studied" (Neuman, 2006,

p. 129) and such issues can arise at every stage as the researcher formulates the research questions, undertakes data analysis and reports the results. There are four significant and operational ethical issues suggested by Diener and Crandall (1978) including whether or not there is potential harm to participants; lack of informed consent; invasion of privacy and or deception (Bryman, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2007; Diener & Crandall, 1978).

In this study, all participants who took part in the research were voluntary. During the recruitment of volunteers for the interviews, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and the confidentiality of the data collected.

Consideration of the issues of potential psychological or subject feelings (Diener & Crandall, 1978, p. 19) was provided by a written document to the participants entitled the 'Research Project Information Sheet' (see Appendix I), and the 'Participant Consent Form' (see Appendix J) was provided before the interview began. No participants actually withdrew during the interview.

Secondly, confidentiality and anonymity was considered by maintaining careful control over the data. All respondents were told that their responses would be confidential if they participated in this study. For the data analysis, the respondents' names were disguised using different symbols in response to their participation. They were informed that their right to privacy had been surrendered within a limited domain (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The raw data from the interviews, including respondents' names and contact details were only accessible to the researcher and her supervisors. All data were kept securely and not used for any purpose other than for the completion of this research. In addition, during the interview, a digital voice-recorder was placed in front of the interviewee after gaining permission from participants before beginning the interview.

### **3.6 Summary**

Based on a theoretical conceptual framework, this chapter has described the paradigm used, the methodology, and the justification for each of the methods employed in this study. The methodology that guided the research strategy which used a qualitative explanatory design was based on an interpretive constructivist paradigm. Through this design, qualitative data was collected to help explore the reality of the phenomenon—meditative mindfulness experiences in tourism.

This chapter also explained the process of data collection. Taiwanese backpackers were recruited through a snowball sampling method to be participants in this study. The data were collected from two key source areas: the city of Brisbane, capital of Queensland and Uluru in Northern Australia. A semi-structured interview technique was used in this study to explore backpackers' perceptions and constructions of reality in regard to meditative mindful experiences. Two protocols for the interview guide prompt list were used for qualifying the participants who have experienced mindful



experiences; several screening questions, and then continuation with the extended interview questions. The process identified the occurrences of meditative mindful tourist experiences and explored its antecedents and consequences in response to the respective research objectives. This culminated in a pilot study and the development of a number of a semi-structured interview schedules.

Data analysis methods and research evaluation for this study were also discussed. Software QSR-NVivo 10 was used to manage and code the data. Trustworthiness was considered to achieve the validity and reliability of the interview schedule. Finally, ethical considerations pertinent to the data collection were discussed in this chapter. The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents the results from the qualitative study, and analyses the results of the qualitative interpretations.

# CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by presenting the findings from the qualitative interviews with Taiwanese backpackers describing their experiences in Australia, as detailed in Section 3.4.1. The data analysis conducted was guided by the research aim and the three objectives. Thematic analysis was used to identify the meditative mindfulness phenomenon as it applies to tourism experiences. The self-reported antecedents and consequences of meditative mindfulness for Taiwanese backpackers were also identified, using thematic analysis. The results of the thematic analysis provided a model of tourist meditative mindfulness experiences, offering insights into the theoretical and empirical relationships among the occurrence, antecedents and consequences of meditative mindfulness. As noticed in Section 3.3.3, this research is delimited in the choice of only Taiwanese backpackers in Australia.

The three research objectives which were discussed previously in Section 1.3 are repeated below for convenience:

1. To identify the phenomena associated with meditative mindful tourist experiences in a tourism context.
2. To analyse the antecedents which facilitate mindful experiences of Taiwanese backpackers so as to create an awareness of the present moment through a non-judgmental acceptance of the situation.
3. To understand what are the perceived experiential benefits that can be derived from meditative mindful experiences.

The findings in this chapter are organised into five sections, following this introduction (Section 4.1); Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 provide the findings in response to each research objective. In Section 4.2, the results identify the nature of tourist meditative mindful experiences, which is based on the constructs of awareness that occurred during the travels of Taiwanese backpackers in Australia. Section 4.3 discusses the four predisposing triggers that facilitate Taiwanese backpackers' living in the present non-elaborative awareness. These antecedents are divided into two groups; those that predispose tourists towards a mindful experience and specific setting-related factors. Section 4.4 concentrates on the perceived beneficial outcomes of meditative mindful experiences, which are classified into two types: the psychological and physical effects. Finally, a summary of the chapter is provided in section 4.5. An outline of this chapter is also illustrated in Figure 4.1.

The data analysis focuses on key themes that were evident in the narratives of a majority of participants. In many cases each theme included a number of related concepts. Individual quotes are used as examples throughout this chapter to illustrate the key themes and concepts. Quotes are also used to illustrate subtle variations within themes and concepts.

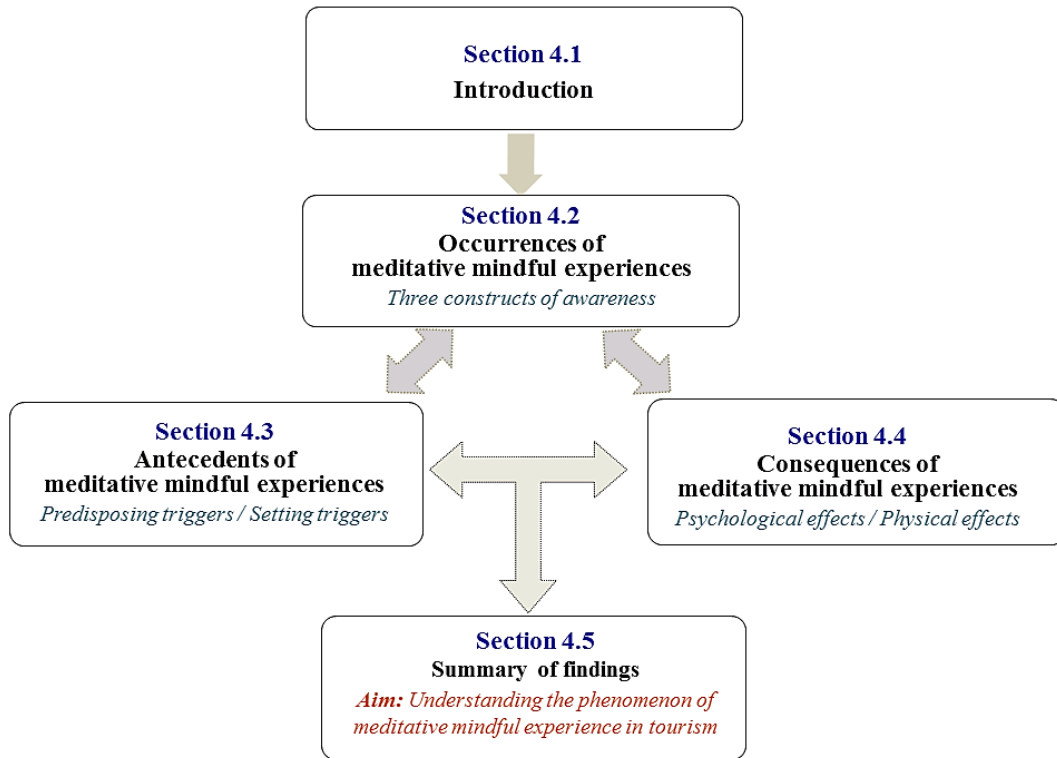


Figure 4.1 Analysis flow for Chapter 4

## **4.2 Research Objective 1: Occurrences of Mindful Experiences**

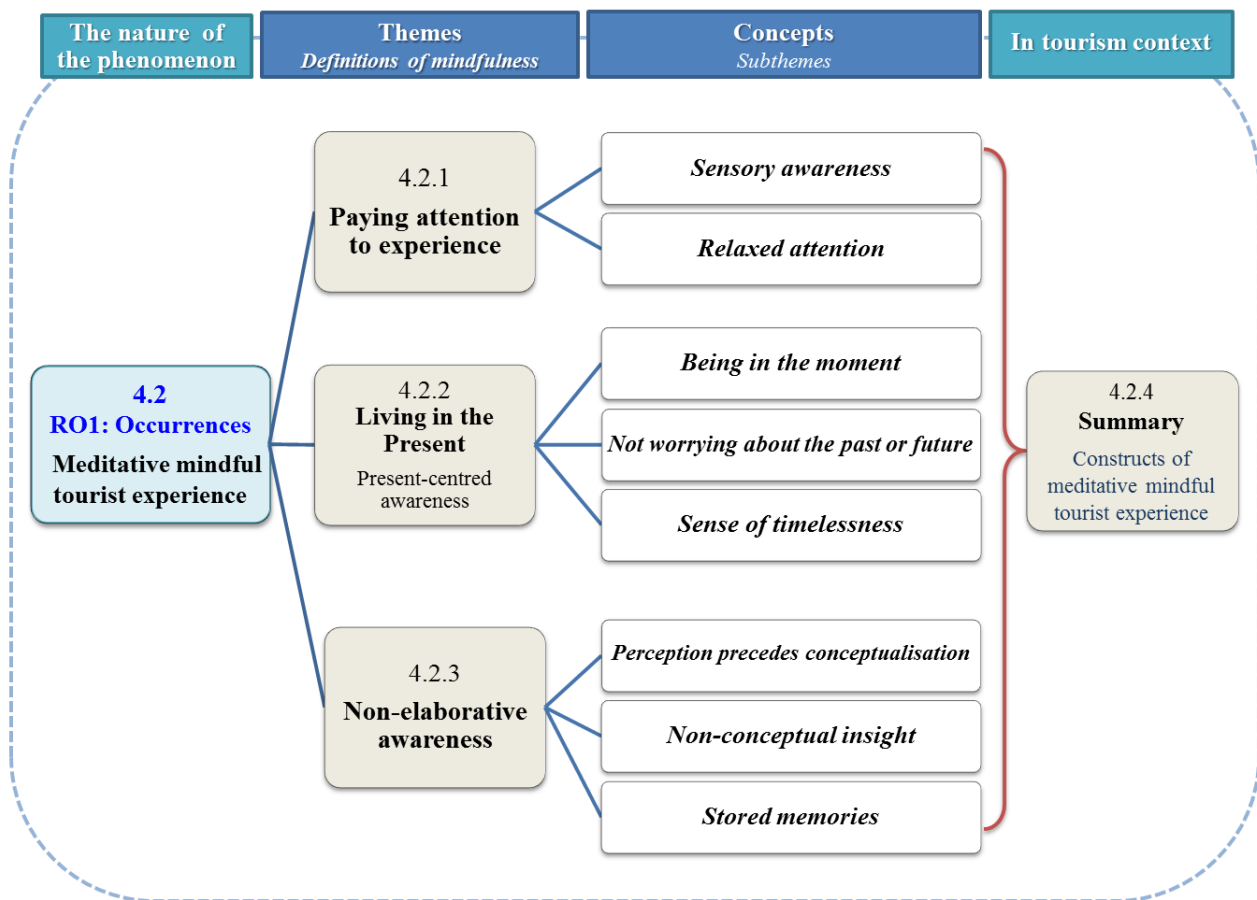
The first objective of this research (RO1) was to identify tourist experiences with the characteristics of meditative mindfulness based on a sample of Taiwanese backpackers in Australia. The qualitative analysis in response to research objective one was based on three screening questions (as discussed in Section 3.3.2.1 and Appendix A) identifying a state of being mindful.

The occurrence of meditative mindful tourist experience was associated with the three specific representations of awareness. In total, 77 instances of meditative mindful experiences (S=77) from 43 interviewees of Taiwanese backpackers (N=43) were identified. These responses were used as a basis for coding and thematic grouping as part of the subsequent qualitative and thematic analysis. Codes were grouped into three thematic types of mindful awareness. The codes assigned to these thematic types were: 'gustatory sensation' (F=5) and 'olfactory sensation' (F=25) within the concept of 'sensory awareness' associated with the theme of 'paying attention'; 'reflective thinking with acceptance' (F=35) and 'recognising my problems/ limitations' (F=35) within the concept of 'non-conceptual insight' associated with the theme of 'non-elaborative awareness'. The results indicated almost all of the respondents had experienced the three different states of awareness during the on-site experience. The representations of the experiences were highly consistent with the definition of three elements of meditative mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003a) as discussed in Section 2.3.2 and Section 2.3.3. A summary of the thematic relationships among the three constructs of awareness (themes), the thematic codes, sub-themes (clusters of codes), and the frequency of the involved instance is outlined in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Thematic classification of occurrences of meditative tourist mindful experiences**

RO1: Occurrence of Meditative Tourist Mindful Experience			N=43, S=77
Thematic Family <i>Constructs of awareness</i>	Thematic Codes <i>Selected codes</i>	Clusters of codes commonly co-occurring <i>Potential sub-themes</i>	Frequency (F) <i>of instances</i>
<b>Paying attention to experience of:</b>	Sensory awareness	Visual sensation Auditory sensation Tactile sensation Olfactory sensation Gustatory sensation Mental stimuli	75 55 69 25 5 67
	Relaxed attention	Stable attention with relaxation Easier concentration on what I was doing Simultaneous mental state of relaxation	77 77 69
<b>Living in the present of:</b>  <i>Present-centred awareness</i>	Being in the moment	A sense of being in the present / here-and-now Never miss the moment Open myself to the experience	77 77 77
	Not worrying about the past or future	Not engaged in feelings involving past/future Things I would rather be doing now Forget difficulties or worries Not care about anything Enjoyed the moment during the experience	77 77 77 61 77
	Sense of timelessness	No sense of time passing during the experience Ignored something have to do now Stillness of time and space	50 50 45
<b>Non-elaborative awareness (Non-judgment) of:</b>  <i>Acceptance of the arising thoughts and feelings</i>	Perception precedes conceptualisation	Being oblivious to oneself (忘我) /forgot myself completely A sense of emptiness (放空) /brain blank Full of affective feelings Without cognitive or rational thinking	72 66 71 53
	Non-conceptual insight	Reflective thinking with acceptance - <i>Deeper thinking and accept the unpleasant</i> Recognising my problems/ limitations - <i>Be aware of my behaviour</i> Becoming open-minded Let thoughts go	35 20 55 51
	Stored memories	Vivid memory of the experience Strong feelings of the affect Not really remember the cognitive part of the memory	77 77 65
<b>Notes:</b>			
1. N=43 means 43 collected data (Taiwanese backpackers) of formal semi-structured interview (phase II). The data were collected in Brisbane, Queensland and Uluru in the Northern Territory.			
2. S=77 refers to a sample of 77 effective instances associated with a specific experience occurring in a certain moment during an Australian trip. The instances were reported by the Taiwanese backpacker interviewees.			

Three different constructs were used to identify instances of meditative mindful experiences when analysing the qualitative data. The three constructs were previously discussed in the literature review (see Section 2.2.2). The evidence regarding the presence of each of the constructs is discussed in this section as follows: *paying attention to tourist experience* (discussed in Section 4.2.1); *living in the present (present-centred awareness)* (Section 4.2.2); and *non-elaborative awareness* (acceptance of the stream of thoughts and feelings arising during the experience) (Section 4.2.3). The meditative mindful tourist experiences are grouped into three main themes and eight concepts, as illustrated in Figure 4.2. Lastly, findings for RO1 are summarised in Section 4.2.4.



**Figure 4.2 The structures of analysis for research objective 1  
Themes identified for meditative mindful experiences in a tourism context**

### 4.2.1 Paying Attention to Experience

In order for an experience to be identified as a mindful travel experience, evidence is needed that the respondent had paid attention to it. As shown in Figure 4.2, the first theme is paying attention and is part of the definition of meditative mindfulness (described in Section 2.3.2). This section discusses the two most common concepts regarding attention during the experience: an ability to

describe **sensory awareness** during the experience and **relaxed attention**. These are discussed in detail below.

#### 4.2.1.1 Sensory Awareness

Paying attention to sensations perceived in a tourism context is the first key concept identified and found in all 77 instances that were reported by the 43 participants. Attention to the experience was evidenced by the respondents' ability to describe specific sensations from visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory and mental stimuli. Of these six senses, it was found that the majority of participants described visual, auditory and tactile sensations. Many participants were able to recall sensory elements in rich detail. In the following example, a participant notes in vivid detail the geology and weather occurring at the time, as follows:

*When I was walking alone slowly through a forest of the Noosa National Park, the world seemed still—no wind and rain, and extremely quiet. I started to notice the special geology of the area composed of **fine, soft grey** sands that displayed the **colours** of winter, even though my trip was in summer. The beautiful images consisted of harmonious **colour** keynotes with a few dead branches, tree blights, trunks shot with **grey** and multilevel **greens** of leaves. The views made me feel like I was walking through a real, breathtaking picture. I was completely involved in appreciating the dense forest. All around me were trees, but each tree was different from the next. There was alternative scenery at each bend. I felt I was in a haven; even though I did not know how far the trail would be, I did not feel bored or scared but only observant. [S16]*

The attention described by the participant S16 was aroused mainly through visual sensations of the colours, shapes, lights and textures of the surroundings. S16's experience took place during the day when it was easy to observe the surroundings but some were during the evening when it was dark. For example, one participant (S24) described her experience in the relative dark of the ocean. S24 reported the abundant intense colours and light of the creatures at night:

*While scuba diving with diving goggles, I could see clearly what was in front of me. Beautiful coral and fish with slightly **neon colours** were shinier than I had imagined previously. It looked like many **lights** in a dark and deep ocean. It was kind of fantastic and a very special experience for me ... because the world does not only exist for humankind, but also for other creatures. [S24]*

Often the rich experience involved auditory and tactile sensations along with the visual sights indicating a high level of sensory awareness. For example, one interviewee finding herself unexpectedly at the Byron Bay Lighthouse after sunset, commented on this as follows:

*I did not feel I was in front of the lighthouse. I did not feel I was on a hill. I neither felt I was in Australia, nor in a sense that I was in the real world. However, I heard the **sounds** clearly from the ocean and the **pounding** waves, although the sounds were far away from me. I couldn't see anything from my surroundings but the shining weak light from the lighthouse. To be precise, it was like experiencing nothingness or a blurred phenomenon, with no specific objects. At that moment, I was aware of my state of being in that starry night. [S03]*

S03 reported that the stimuli of the 'entry point' for the experience which triggered her attention was auditory, i.e., external sounds from natural sources. She lay on the ground, closed her eyes and began to listen. The respondent soon became immersed in and focused on sounds, some of which were very faint and delicate, being far away. Here, attention was triggered by auditory sensations. This auditory aspect was evident in the narratives of several respondents.

Most respondents reported multiple perceptions as follows:

*This feeling integrates a lot of senses such as **taste, touch, good mood** and so on. It is kind of a multi-level perception experience. [S01]*

*The travel experience of multi-sense perceptions is a clear and bright memory to me, although that travel was three years ago. I was in the water at Stradbroke Island. It was a sensation of my body **feeling cold and hot**; a sensation of **colours** of the sky and my body reflecting the colours in very bright light; also a sensation of **odour** from the ocean – a natural salty smell; sensations of **sounds**, including the wind, my ears booming because of the water pressure, and the waves slapping the shore. I felt **different senses** aroused at that moment and enjoyed every one of them. The various senses I enjoyed were purely natural. [S02]*

*The process of skydiving **combined different sensations**. The sensations were not only of vision—pieces of green and the clouds were included, but also combined to form a tactile impression—I had a feeling of flying throughout my whole body. I will never forget that I flew in the sky. I was recalling the feeling of flying when I was landing. It was a sensation of flying rather than free-falling—I will not be able to forget the skydiving experience all my life. [S44]*



These findings demonstrated how sense perceptions were able to capture the backpackers' attention and were clearly remembered. This may be because the experience settings were usually dynamic, involving outdoors recreational activities.

Moreover, the act of paying attention to one's senses also affected the respondents' mental processes. The transcript from S24 shows that during her experience, perceptions of her breathing or the weight of her body, which are normally not consciously felt, could be clearly sensed. On the other hand, other thoughts or feelings seemed to be disconnected. Interestingly, S24 also mentioned she was afraid of dark and quiet environments. However, during this experience she was not conscious of discomfort; but rather, paid attention to the changing body feelings and sounds from the external environment and her breathing distracted her from this problem as follows:

*I also wore specific heavy equipment, tied with lead bricks. Nevertheless, I felt comfortable floating in the water, not floating on the surface of water or sinking down to the bottom of the ocean because my diving suit was inflatable.... There **was no sound** in the deep environment of the sea, **only my own breathing** and the **sound from the respirator** could be heard. I was disoriented and couldn't tell which way was up or down, or left or right. However, I was aware of a pull from my coach to control my position in the water. That is, I could focus on a specific sensation, such as **tactile** or **auditory** feelings. Other senses were relatively disassociated. (Basically, I had a sick problem of claustrophobia). I could say I paid all my attention to the scuba diving. [S24]*

It is also interesting to notice that some senses were disassociated, like a mental sense of worries, during the experience. In this case, S24 had a potential mental obstacle of claustrophobia in a dark space; however, during her scuba diving in a deep and dark setting, she was able to ignore the mental disturbance because she kept a stable awareness of focusing on the perceived tactile, auditory and visual senses. It implies that an awareness of emotions such as fear and anxiety was not present while respondents were paying simple attention to their senses, rather than a goal-oriented awareness.

Several respondents also recalled other olfactory, gustatory and mental sensations. For example:

*... the first **taste** of the **hot** coffee was really amazing and pleasurable; combined with the surrounding **music**. Also the coffee was very nice **smelling**. The scenario combined with **smell, temperature, taste, and sound** almost made me forget myself; on reflection perhaps the gustatory coffee was not the best, but it was very comforting and relaxing. [S27]*

The close attention to sensations was sometimes followed by arousal of feelings. For instance, one backpacker (S24) described a feeling of “solitude” accompanying a dive experience.

In summary, these findings indicated that **sensory awareness** is a vital component of the recalled experiences and both are indicative of, and facilitators of these experiences.

#### 4.2.1.2 Relaxed Attention

The second most common concept identified from traveller narratives was labelled ‘relaxed attention’. Respondents often achieved a state of relaxed attention—a simultaneous mental state of relaxation and stable attention. Stable attention is part of the definition of meditative mindfulness. Unlike awareness associated with alertness or effort, or elaborate thinking and judgment, the awareness was more related to effortlessness and non- goal-oriented attention. For example, S06 explained her experience associated with a relaxed attention and being in state of ease:

*The scene suddenly triggered the **desire to roll on the grass** with my son. The rolling moment seemed to let me rediscover myself. I felt my whole body move with ease; the grass was soft. I rolled again and again to keep the feeling even though at the same time I could feel it pricking my skin. I did not care that there might be some tourists who were surrounding me. [S06]*

Her surroundings and mental state led her to rolling on the grass, and this led to tactile sensations. Her sensory engagement occupied her attention and she was not concerned about the perceptions or opinions of others around her. She reflected on her behaviour and stated “*My behaviour -rolling in the grass in a public area - is unusual for a Taiwanese mother. As a mature woman, I would be more aware of social judgments of such behaviour*”. However, in this situation, attention to the comfortable feeling of rolling on the grass at a beautiful scenic destination had made it possible for this woman to focus on the present moment regardless of other people’s opinions. The experience was associated with sensations as well as with a sense of physical and mental ease. Relaxed attention is akin to a stable mood or mindset where one is free from outward constraints; yet at the same time, the respondent’s attention was aroused. Relaxed attention appears helpful to achieving a state of peace or stability.

While participants were not in a relaxed state throughout their entire journey, these specific moments were punctuated by an enhanced level of sensory awareness and relaxed attention. This may imply that during these experiences backpackers were more aware of their sensations than undertaking goal-directed tasks. These results reveal the intentional awareness of paying attention in these situations requires stable and relaxed state that is related to physical and mental ease.

## 4.2.2 Living in the Present (Present-centred Awareness)

The second significant theme found in all 77 instances was living in the present which refers to present-centred awareness and corresponds with the definition of meditative mindfulness (see Section 2.3.2). This section maps the findings in relation to living in the present. Three concepts were identified from the narratives of a majority of respondents: ‘being in the moment’; ‘not worrying about the past or future’; and a ‘sense of timelessness’, as shown in Figure 4.2. The following subsections illustrate how living in the present (present-centred awareness) affects the respondents’ experiences.

### 4.2.2.1 Being in the Moment

‘Being in the moment’ is the first concept related to the theme of ‘living in the present’. All the interviewees reported that they experienced a sense of being in the moment, as stated below:

*I opened myself to the experience of the **present moment** when I looked at the stars. I did not think too much or think anything else. I felt that I was so close to the stars. It was like I could easily catch them with my hands. I felt connected to my experience in the **here-and-now**. [S38]*

This respondent was completely absorbed in observing the stars; all her attention was focused on this activity. Furthermore, her description suggests that she was watching instead of thinking. Simple attention is accompanied by a tendency of ‘connecting’ in the here-and-now with an experience. Aside from scuba diving and sky diving, most respondents were not actively moving during their mindful experience; they were sitting, lying or strolling. They were occupied with feeling rather than thinking in that present moment. During the mindful experience they were not doing anything but paying attention to something that they were focused on.

Some respondents were involved in an activity, such as scuba diving, sky diving, trekking or playing in the water. Respondents appeared to be aware of their feelings without being lost in them. Another respondent interpreted the present-moment focus as a kind of concentration on what he was doing (sky diving) and nothing else.

*I opened my eyes to look at the scenery. I did not want to close my eyes and **miss the moment**. I could keep my eyes on the scenery because I was in a state of flying rather than a feeling of free-fall. [S44]*

Ultimately, these findings demonstrate just how significant mindful experiences were, connecting the respondents’ experience and being in the moment. In these mindful experiences, the backpackers were fully focused on what they were doing whether engaged in a dynamic or a static

leisure activity. All participants acknowledged awareness of their thoughts, feelings, or perceptions of sensations. With such present-centred awareness, backpackers were paying attention to the phenomena occurring in the present moment, were open to the experience in the here-and-now, and were concentrating on what they were doing, and nothing else.

#### 4.2.2.2 Not Worrying about the Past or Future

The second significant cited concept within present-centred awareness was identified as ‘not worrying about the past or future.’ As stated: “*I was not engaged by feelings associated with **past** or **future**; instead I attended to the things existing in the present moment*” [S11]. At these present moments, the participants’ thoughts were fully engaged. For example, one of the participants [S03], recalled her experience as being aroused by gazing at the starry sky in Bryon Bay. “*I did not think [about a] specific thing from the real world*” [S03]. The focus on the present moment was associated with a lack of past or future worries. It appears that being present-centred directs the respondent’s attention to the present moment and disconnects their thoughts from the past or future.

Respondents who were troubled by specific issues reported that they were able to set aside these worries during the experience. The following extract from one of the interviews exemplifies this:

*On the second day of my Noosa trip, I suddenly found I lost my Go card [transport card] and student identification card on the way. Initially, I was very anxious and sad because it will affect an increase in my travel costs. However, I almost **completely forgot this tragic incident** of losing my ID after experiencing an impressive and tranquil walk in the national park. Therefore, I chose to continue this trip and the negative events did not affect me. That beautiful state of being in the present moment made my trip worthwhile and negative thoughts were taken away. To be honest, I am a nervous person. In contrast, during this situation, I began to **not care** about anything, even my lost cards. It **did not matter**—I could apply for new ones when the trip was completed—I **told myself at that present time**. [S16]*

During her walk in the quiet national park, S16 forgot her problems, and she experienced a sense of calmness. Her awareness was of what she was doing and watching, rather than being dominated by negative thoughts.

Participants reported similar psychological states when involved in adventure trips and participating in tourism activities. One instance of living in the present (present-centred awareness) was when S44 was engaged in sky diving, as evidenced by the following statement:

*In fact, all the nervousness came before the jump. From my personal experience, there was no longer tension and fear after jumping out of the plane. After jumping, all the fear was gone completely. That was a **moment of enjoyment and joy during the flying**. Yes, it is true; I was flying. [S44]*

These findings indicate that living in the present (present-centred awareness) facilitates a positive attitude. Backpackers did not manifest any thoughts related to the regrets of the past or worries about the future. Living in the present helps respondents to acknowledge the current situation with flexibility, relaxation and stable emotions. It is just like they manifested themselves. A state of meditative mindfulness is not associated with intention or a defensive attitude in response to negative emotions and thoughts. Instead ‘living in the present’ creates a space for the present moment experience instead of an automatic response to a proliferation of thoughts about the past or the future.

#### **4.2.2.3 Sense of Timelessness**

The third concept within living in the present is a ‘sense of timelessness’. Many respondents commented that paying full attention to an experience meant that there was no sense of time passing in the real world. In this state, respondents seemed to shift from a ‘doing’ into a “being” mode for the present moment. The following extract illustrates this:

*The state involved entering another realm where there was no timeline. My brain was thinking but it was like a **continuum** with the past, the present and future thoughts.... The experience was a quick immersion that combined past experiences, current thoughts and all of my inner feelings. As a result, my brain was blank — the situation was **timeless**; it gathered **the past, present and the future at the same point of the time axis**. [S11]*

S11 who visited the Rocks area in Sydney, and gazed at the historic buildings, people in the streets and restaurants, illustrated his present-focused awareness as like thinking of himself as an eternal witness, as timeless. He just “watched”, without taking any immediate action, regardless of what was happening—what he felt, saw or heard. In the interview he described this as “my brain was on the blink”. Similar comments were made in a number of interviews:

*I saw a very wonderful live show performed by a singer in a tent while we were waiting for coffee at Eumundi market in Noosa.... This great performance was by a solo singer with a guitar and he played drums with his feet as well, just like a professional audio CD. His voice was not particularly low or deep, but it gave me a feeling of safety - it was a warm voice,*

*without distance between the audience and performer. I forgot the time we were going to leave, and also I ignored how and where my friends were for that moment. [S27]*

*The situation happened on my travel to Byron Bay. It was to see the sunrise. I remember we went there too early, so we stayed there and waited about two hours. Initially, I thought the two hours wait might be very boring; however, I felt the time and space stood still and I was almost oblivious to myself as well, when I looked at the night sky full of stars. [S03]*

The experience associated with living in the present is associated with a feeling of nothing needing to be done; actions, duties or obligations evaporate. This sense of timelessness is a manifestation of fully present-centred awareness that is sustained across a stretch of time. As a consequence, in this state, respondents do not worry about problems.

### **4.2.3 Non-elaborative Awareness**

Non-elaborative awareness is the third major theme and is related to non-judgment. Three concepts were identified for this theme; namely, ‘perception precedes conceptualisation’, ‘non-conceptual insight’, and ‘stored memories’. Each mode is examined further in the following sections below.

#### **4.2.3.1 Perception Precedes Conceptualisation**

‘Perception precedes conceptualisation’ is the first concept within the non-elaborative awareness theme. Two manifestations of this mental process were noted from the findings, namely: ‘Being oblivious to oneself (忘我)’ and ‘a sense of emptiness (放空)’.

Phrases such as: “*I was oblivious to what was going on and spaced out*” [S44] were often used by respondents. Similar ideas mentioned include “忘我” ([wàngwǒ], literally “being oblivious to oneself”, “totally forgot myself” or “a sense of selflessness”, and “放空” ([fàngkōng], literally “a sense of emptiness”, “brain blank” or “space out”). These comments referred to a lack of consciousness of the self as distinct from the world, of forgetting the self and of being in harmony with the world. They reflect the mental process during a meditative mindfulness experience as ‘temporarily without thinking’ or an ‘absence of cognition’. The following extracts exemplified this absence of cognition.

*Being oblivious to oneself (忘我)*

‘Being oblivious to oneself (忘我)’ is an important phenomenon that mostly occurs during a meditative mindful tourist experience. Backpackers were unaware of their thinking while paying close attention to their sensations and totally immersed in the present moment.

*Waves lapped every part of my body. I faced the waves coming from the ocean and allowed the waves to slap me continuously. I felt like my body was a part of the ocean, because I was moving with the impact of the waves. As a result, there was a feeling like **I was in harmony with nature**, because I was walking, floating and swimming with the great ocean. [S02]*

*Looking at the starry sky gave me a special feeling. Even if it was just for a short moment, it really led me to **forget myself completely**, to be oblivious to everything else. I was completely absorbed in what I was looking at. I contemplated my feelings without getting lost in them, in particular, the feelings of fluttering and flying, so light and easily among stars, swimming in the Milky Way. [S03]*

Thinking about their sensations allowed respondents to connect to the setting, nature, and their inner selves. The backpackers were fully engaged in the situation, and the experience led to a sense of connection with nature and being in harmony with it.

*A sense of emptiness or brain blank (放空)*

Other terms commonly found in the interviews were ‘a sense of emptiness’ or ‘brain blank’ (放空); however, these were used to emphasise high involvement and complete immersion, as evidenced by following statement:

*As a result, **my brain was blank**—the situation was timeless; it gathered the past, present and the future at the same point on the time axis. So, it was a mind-time that belonged to me but not [one] about [which I was] thinking painstakingly. For me, it was [a] kind of alternative level of thinking... [S11]*

*I thought I was immersed in there (skydiving). There was no special mood change and no thoughts in my brain. I just felt I was part of the moment. **My brain was like in a state of emptiness or went blank**. That is, I was oblivious to what was going on and spaced out. The most impressive perception was to experience a sense of flying. [S44]*

*Furthermore, **my brain ran to another time-space continuum** because the scene was different from what I usually encounter... Such a feeling of substitution between space and time made me think about the meaning of time and being immersed in my thoughts. [S11]*

Other respondents also mentioned a feeling of being at ease, of being less tense (more relaxed) than normal, and that this appeared to be associated with psychological change. One statement supported this awareness:

*The perception of emptiness in my brain was attributed to watching the starry night. It was my first time seeing such a simple but special starry sky. I tried to **empty my brain by not thinking** about anything that would influence me when I was there. Although, more or less, I would go back to thinking, I still tried to get (my brain to become) blank again. Eventually, I immersed myself into the view and then I felt feelings of peace and relaxation. [S44]*

This temporary mental blankness appears to produce a mood of relaxation, peace and feeling of being at ease. This may be like non-elaborated awareness, a pause, the stopping of the brain, and was sometimes reported as being mentally empty. In this way a meditative mindful state appears to be like a space between impulse and action.

#### *Self-awareness and emotional balance*

The participants however remained fully aware and engaged in self-reflection, rather than making judgements. Respondents talked about being in an alternative state of self-reflection and awareness during the experience. This alternative mode of thinking employed a broader reflexive stance that may encompass not only the external environment but also internal patterns of thoughts, sensations and feelings, as demonstrated in the following quotes:

*So, it was a **mental** experience...time belonged to me but I was not thinking painstakingly. For me, it was kind of an **alternative level of thinking**... [S11]*

*I **was aware** I was in a state of calm because I did not think about anything else. The feeling I experienced did not make me think negatively. Usually if I am disturbed, I probably would fall into negative emotions. However, I concentrated on enjoying the scenery without interference; as a result, I **felt calm naturally**. [S26]*

Additionally, respondents reported being tranquil, joyful, more deeply satisfied and feeling positive and harmonious. This absence of cognition contributed to a positive mental state:

*I was drinking a cup of hot black tea with milk, and looking at a starry night with a peaceful mind in summer at Uluru. The best way was to drink it **slowly – slowly**. The experience was like **no more thoughts** were coming into my brain and mind, like when I jog. That is, nothing else; I felt very peaceful and calm at that moment. [S38]*

*It was like you take a deep breath after enjoying a good movie or drama although it is also accompanied by stimulating sensations. It was also a satisfaction that was **beyond happy**. If happy is like seeing a surface layer of an iceberg; well, then the satisfaction is like I have, eureka, seen the bottom of the iceberg. It was like a sigh of praise! [S11]*



Respondents felt neither good nor bad, their moods were close to neutral. The following excerpts illustrated this point:

*I was in a state of sensation. There was nothing in it that was about being in a good or a bad mood. It was a state of **being stable** or calm; like waves of sound when the frequency is very close, neither sad nor lonely. [S11]*

*I felt I was connected to the sound of the sea when I was there. Also I felt I was connected with nature, the stars, the ocean, even the dark. There was **no longer a distance between my mind and the universe**; very peaceful... [S03]*

This affective state involves low arousal with positive valence. The process of ‘perception preceding conceptualising’ appears to facilitate emotional balance. The findings indicate that this transformed state was associated with affect that contributed to psychological benefits such as mental ease and affective balance which will be further analysed in Section 4.4.1.

This type of mental process consists of non-elaborative awareness—the third construct of meditative mindfulness—which emphasises self-awareness and occurs when respondents pay attention and are totally immersed in the present moment. ‘Being oblivious to oneself (忘我)’ and ‘a sense of emptiness (放空)’ were two common terms that Taiwanese backpackers used to describe the absence of a sense of self-centredness—just a neutral observer. ‘Perceptions that precede conceptualising’ dominate the meditative mindful travel experience associated with non-elaborative awareness; that is, the findings reflected an awareness of simply noticing and minimising thinking about it, rather than elaborating or structuring the perceptions related to thoughts or reactions.

#### **4.2.3.2 Non-conceptual Insight**

Non-conceptual insight, contrasted with perception precedes conceptualisation (temporarily without thinking or absence of a cognition mode), is a type of open-minded reflective thinking mode. It is the second concept within the non-elaborative awareness theme. This involves non-conceptual judgment with acceptance or non-elaborative evaluation during the experience. This section provides evidence that the two most common interpretations in terms of ‘reflective thinking with acceptance’ and ‘non-elaborative judgment with open-mindedness’ involves a mental process associated with meditative mindful experience, rather than cognitive judgmental thinking or categorising of phenomena (as discussed in Section 2.3.3).

### *Reflective thinking with acceptance*

Reflective thinking with acceptance as suggested by participants is based on an awareness of what the reality is, and being aware of the limitations and risks. During the reflective thinking mode, the non-conceptual insight embodies evaluation with acceptance to the experience, as evidenced by the following statement:

*My mind was in a state of enjoyment of where I was. However, most importantly, it was based on **recognising that I was aware of my body and its limitations**, and understood the nature of the ocean as well, even though I preferred adventurous activity like playing in the water. [S01]*

*Of course I paid attention to **safety**. For the saying of “harmonious union between human and nature”, I think it means **understanding nature, and also knowing its limitation**. In other words, picking up its good points, such as when the big waves came, just diving down in a timely manner to merge with the environment, nature and myself as one. [S02]*

The participants did not challenge their limitations when they were undertaking tourism activities. The process of reflection helped to cultivate a feeling of self-awareness that led to a form of insight and to produce a conversation of metacognition during the experience. That is, during the experience, the participants were more likely to be aware of their limitations in terms of their ability and not challenge the big waves. Instead they would adapt to their surroundings. This suggests they were not risk-takers, but instead mindful travellers. By knowing their limitations the backpackers adjusted their actions to achieve harmony with their environment. The respondent [S02] interpreted this as enjoying their sensations calmly and being aware of one's limitations:

*I tried to go along with the wave **rather than challenge or combat** it. For example, I hid myself under the water once a big wave came toward me, because I could not bear the force of the water. By doing so, it helped me not only to avoid the water, but also make me enjoy the flow of the dive. I opened my eyes and saw something under the ocean. [S02]*

These instant feelings reveal that the mental process of non-elaborative awareness was embodied with two important paths: self-awareness (perception preceded conceptualization) and metacognition (reflection on one's limitation with acceptance).

### *Non-elaborative judgment with open-mindedness*

There was a general consensus reported by participants that the non-elaborative judgment with acceptance allowed them to welcome situations with more openness. The judgment or evaluation

they had been made was based on recognising the current situation, the reality of the objects and accepting what was happening, as demonstrated in the following excerpts.

*While I was being slapped by the waves, I became sunburnt, but I was not disturbed. I **recognised** everything has two sides, one is positive and another is negative; I can **accept the negative effect** because my whole body and mind was washed and refreshed thoroughly. [S02]*

*I saw the wallaby's neck was almost bitten through but the animal was still kicking to break away from the two Dingo dogs until there was no longer any movement. The image of the process was bloody like in a thriller movie and almost shocked me. I heard someone screaming in the bus; however, **my emotion did not go up and down too much** because I knew the wallaby was not going to run off. [S34]*

In this case of watching the wallaby being killed by dingoes, the respondent [S34] was like an outsider observing the event but not becoming emotionally attached to what was happening. The respondent reported that he was not disturbed by negative thoughts. It may imply that deeper thinking relating to the quality of attention helped him to understand reality and then to let those thoughts go.

### **Metacognition and cognitive balance**

These examples have illustrated that the mental process of non-elaborative awareness is in response to a meditative mindful tourist experience. The cognitive evaluations or judgments involve a reflective process with self-awareness and metacognition by recognising the reality of the current situations, events or objects, and then allowing negative thoughts to dissipate. One participant stated how his worries were transformed: “*At that moment of skydiving, I was simply concentrating on tactile senses aroused from skydiving with no judgments or evaluation of other things. I was not disturbed by anything and not thinking about the past or future*” [S44]. As a result, the openness refers to the acceptance of his emotions, thoughts, capacities and limitations that helped participants engage with the present moment experiences. “*It was a moment of solitude that belonged to me and helped me to grow up. So, the experience for me was an acceptance of every sensation and thought*” [S01]. Interestingly, the meditative mindful experience was viewed as a positive and joyful experience when situations were viewed with an open mind. “*Yes, in fact you may also enjoy the feeling of being with the harmonious union between humans and nature in a swimming pool; as long as you enjoy yourself wherever you are*” [S02]. However, most of the immediate experiences reflect a human intuitive knowledge that may come from an individual's fundamental nature. From

these findings, it may be concluded that cognitive balance may occur in a way that transforms one's state of being mindful.

In some instances, a respondent's ego was separated from the situation associated with the experience, while involving a deeper insight. In these situations, the respondent became a neutral observer. Neutral observation involved purely watching objects without making too many judgments and not being adrift in thought about the observation. Therefore, the amount of cognitive evaluation and thinking was reduced, and perceptions became neutral, simple and clear, as evidenced by the following:

*I heard people laughing from crazy drinking (in the Rocks in Sydney). It seemed I was living in a movie. I was there watching them but I was **at an alternative level to see them and the surroundings**. At the same time, the "I" in the scenario was neither happy nor sad because I could observe and understand my feelings clearly. So, I could **control my emotions completely and I was not controlled by the setting either**. I think my cognition was located at a different level at that moment.... I was looking through something like a **superego during that reflection**. Then nothing would happen to me. It seems incredible but it is true.*  
[S11]

This disembodiment reflects a stance of neutral observation and reflection. That is, respondents were engaged but they were merely aware of their observations and not involved in any prior pattern of thinking or affected by emotions that may have normally been aroused through such observations. The non-elaborative awareness might not only turn one's attention inwards in a focused observation, but also produce a metacognitive-like internal conversation.

This type of mental mode of deeper non-conceptual insight embodies reflective thinking with acceptance and non-elaborative judgment with open-mindedness. This mode emphasises metacognition and occurs when the respondents were evaluating the experience by recognising with acceptance.

### ***A continuum of awareness and cognition***

As revealed above in Section 4.2.3.1 and 4.2.3.2, it was found that a novel interaction between awareness and cognition emerged during meditative mindful tourist experiences. Consistent with the literature the two components of self-awareness and metacognition were identified during the mental process and helped to justify this interesting phenomenon. The respondent's attention was directed to sensations from external stimuli, which then aroused some inner experience and resulted

in an interaction between self-awareness and metacognition that allowed tourists to be at ease, relaxed and in harmony with each other.

#### 4.2.3.3 Stored Memories

When respondents were asked to recall their most memorable experiences they appeared to review their memories to identify those connected with intense feelings. As mentioned in chapter 2, memory is important because it is associated with the original definition of meditative mindfulness. The results indicate that in a state of mindfulness, respondents are likely to retain knowledge in their memory about their feelings. This is demonstrated in the following quote:

*The calm that emerged was not happy or sad, but it was an **unforgettable memory**, of my feelings and satisfaction. [S11]*

S11 had a vivid memory of feelings of satisfaction during the experience. All respondents had vivid recollections of the specific moment, which were strongly linked to perceived sensations. In particular, memories were directly connected to the respondents' inner feelings and affections. For example, the perceptions of auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory senses and mental feelings were recalled when the particular event was described by the participant during the interviews, as evidenced by following:

*Currently, I can recall the moment experience and connect with the feelings over three years ago—I climbed on top of a giant rock in Kakadu National Park, near Darwin (sic). Even though the wind was whizzing and blew away my hat, I could clearly hear my breathing at that moment. It was amazing! Interestingly, however, these **sounds** and the **experience** seem to be here again, here and now, when I am talking to you. [S08]*

All the respondents appeared to be paying close attention to their feelings, and their mental resources were applied to remembering these memories. Consistent with the literature the mindful experience is linked to memory and memorable experiences. Furthermore, the memories were also related to emotion. During the interviews, the respondents had vivid memories that related to their sensations and affect quite a long time after their travels. The affective experiences have become robust memories. This may imply that meditative mindful experiences are readily transferred into memories.

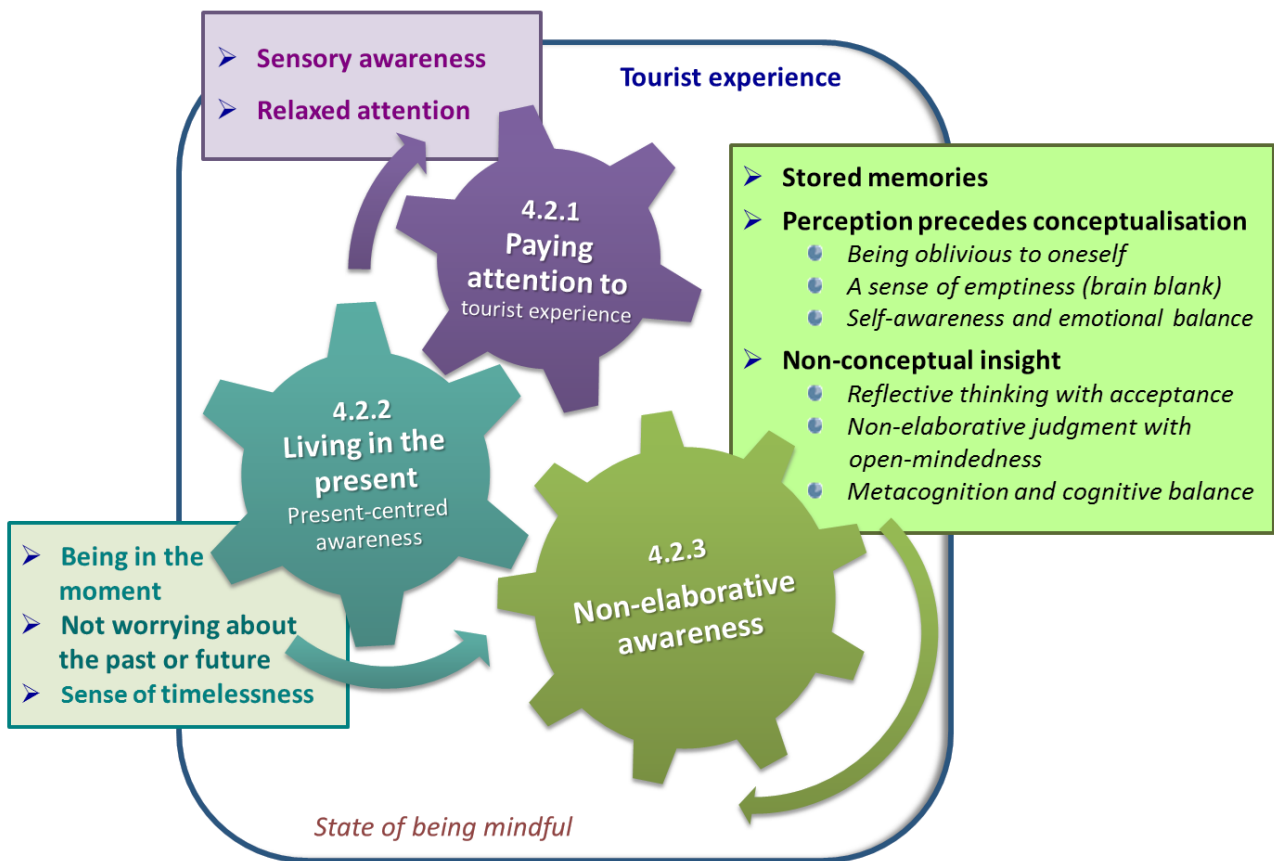
#### 4.2.4 Summary of Research Objective 1

This section has provided evidence of tourist experiences associated with meditative mindfulness that occur in a backpacking context, and has revealed three dimensions of awareness that respond to meditative mindfulness. Findings identified three constructs; namely, paying attention to the experience, living in the present (present-centred awareness), and non-elaborative awareness (as illustrated in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.3)

Each component was distinct but did not occur independently; they worked closely together during mental processes associated with a meditative mindful experience. Firstly, sensory awareness, sensations that are perceived to attract the attention of the respondent, led to stable attention and a simultaneous state of relaxation. Significantly, the findings indicated that a meditative mindful experience is subtly different from flow (see Section 5.2.1.3).

Awareness in response to meditative mindfulness is focused on the present moment: the term ‘living in the present’ refers to present-centred awareness. Backpackers operate in the here-and-now and concentrate on what they are doing ‘now’—not about the past or future. This facilitates a positive flexible mindset in response to the current situation. Furthermore, the results indicated that there are different functional attributes in the occurrence of the meditative mindfulness experience in response to the dimensions of awareness. Non-elaborative awareness is the third component that helps interpret the processing of awareness. Two main modes of mental process (‘perception precedes conceptualisation’ and ‘non-conceptual insight’) are related to reflective thinking with acceptance and an open mind. This may imply that, the state of being oblivious oneself connects to the absences of self-centredness and rational judgment. It is an important that the conceptual significance of meditative mindfulness differs from socio-cognitive mindfulness and it will be further discussed in Section 5.2.1.

In conclusion, meditative mindfulness has been identified in different tourism contexts. The three different types of awareness found suggest a definition of meditative mindful tourist experience as *“paying attention to a present moment experience, without elaboration on it”*. This is important because it has explained the particular phenomenological nature of meditative mindfulness experience in the field of the tourist experience domain.



**Figure 4.3 Key themes/concepts associated with meditative mindful tourist experiences**

### 4.3 Research Objective 2: Antecedents of Mindfulness from Backpacking Contexts

The second research objective aims to analyse the antecedents of meditative mindful experiences which have been identified during the participants’ journey. The focus of research objective two is to understand the potential attributes or triggers that may facilitate Taiwanese backpackers experiencing a mindful state. They were found during an open-ended journey, at a range of different types of sites, and in unplanned situations.

Factors found to facilitate meditative mindful travel experiences were identified from the themes which emerged from the interview transcripts (see Figure 4.4). The four themes related to the antecedents of on-site mindful experiences were: *Travel-induced relaxation* (Section 4.3.1), *aesthetic appreciations* (Section 4.3.2), *atmosphere of quietness* (Section 4.3.3), and *development of curiosity in stimuli* (Section 4.3.4). These diverse perceived attributes or triggers were found during the experiences and further described in the following sub-sections.

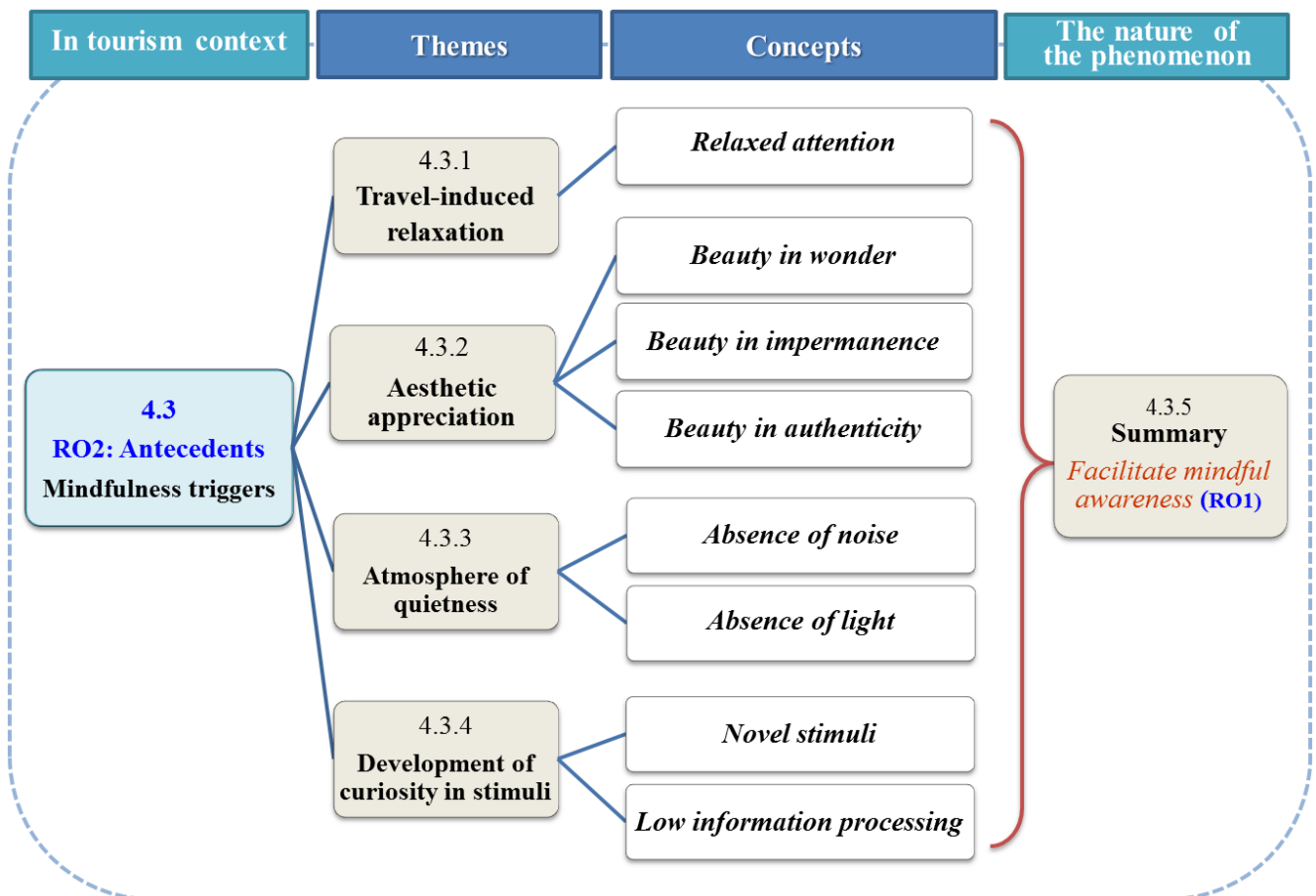


Figure 4.4 The structures of analysis for research objective 2  
Themes identified about antecedents facilitate meditative mindful experiences in tourism



### 4.3.1 Travel-induced Relaxation

As stated in Section 4.2, a meditative mindful experience is related to associated awareness, paying attention, being present-centred and exhibiting non-elaborative awareness. All respondents reported these factors before the process that produced the awareness.

Firstly, travelling resulted in a relaxed state, which facilitates awareness of the surroundings, as evidenced by the following statement:

*The reason why I felt **relaxed** was because I had decided to travel. So, I would not think too much except when I was seriously interrupted by someone. So the experience helped me to concentrate on one thing at a time, and stop adding more stuff. [S15]*

The sense of relaxation induced by travel was explained by S15 as facilitating stable attention or concentration without thinking too much about it. The relaxation activity seemed to be like a ‘change of gear’ that enabled higher attention and the ability to dwell less on the travel obstacles or disturbances that arose along the way. Further, the experience associated with mindful awareness might only be disrupted by significant interruptions. In other words, a key antecedent of a mindful experience is the relaxed state often facilitated by travel.

Furthermore, relaxation leads to less information processing—simply paying attention to the process of travel. This may help to reduce the impact of distractions. This argument is also supported by the findings of interviews with the backpackers, showing their relaxed travel attachment which led them to a more receptive mindset, as the following quote attests to:

*Actually, I was in a **casual and relaxed mood** when I was travelling because my mind was prepared for travel and fun. So I would not think about too many things or negative thoughts, nor care about other things or people surrounding me. I would just naturally focus on being curious about what I was seeing or doing, and [being] in a receptive mood. [S20]*

S20 reported that because her mindset was directed towards travelling, she was in a relatively relaxed state, rather than being focused on other situations or obstacles outside the travel experience. The information processing mindset corresponding with travel-induced relaxation is illustrated by S27 as she states,

*I thought I was in comfortable state, enjoying the time when I visited Eumundi market. I felt I was free because I was in **travel mode**; as a consequence, I was less concerned about things that might disturb me. I would say that I was in a state of **relaxation**. I felt ‘no worries’. I would temporarily not think about anything else because I was enjoying the*

*present atmosphere of travelling as my priority. The importance of experiencing the travel ranked as first and other things moved to the back of my considerations. [S27]*

S27 described the comfortable state she associated with travel as allowing her ‘chattering’ mind to move into the background and the sensations associated with the travel experience were brought to the foreground of her attention. That is, under a state of relaxed attachment to travel, a switched mode of information processing appeared to bring about a flexible interaction between her experience and thoughts. Therefore, travel-induced relaxation is identified as a preliminary trigger for helping tourists experience the action of travel, displacing the agitation or proliferation of thinking about other things or having negative thoughts.

In summary, travel-induced relaxation as seen by backpackers represents their mindset about travel. In essence, having a relaxed mindset will contribute towards concentration based on the sensations aroused from travel. It can be concluded that relaxed attachment to travel is the predisposing trigger to facilitate attention; hence the relationship between antecedent and occurrences associated with mindful travel experience is coherent.

#### **4.3.2 Aesthetic Appreciation**

Aesthetic appreciation is the second theme for the antecedents (or triggers) (see Figure 4.4) arising from settings that can facilitate meditative mindful experiences by paying attention to a present moment, without any elaboration on it. Most of the aesthetic appreciation was found in encounters with nature. The scenery in Australia offered backpackers opportunities to experience peaceful bays and coastlines, thunderous surf, towering mountains, untouched wilderness, beautiful sunrises and sunsets, and special local flora and fauna. This appreciation of the beauty of cultural landscapes and resources also captured the backpackers’ attention.

The main characteristics of these aesthetic appreciations that helped backpackers to awaken their sense-perception and to reflect on their travel experiences are discussed in this section. Three characteristics of aesthetic appreciations found in the Taiwanese backpackers’ responses were ‘*beauty in wonder*’, ‘*beauty in impermanence*’, and ‘*beauty in authenticity*’. While most of the triggers of aesthetic appreciation were found in natural settings, some were also found in cultural settings.

##### **4.3.2.1 Beauty in Wonder**

Among the triggers that facilitated meditative mindful awareness, ‘beauty in wonder’ was most commonly noted by the respondents. This concept involved settings or events that created a sense of

awe and wonder and combined with experiences that produced attention. This section discusses three features, commonly describing settings, that evoked the perception of beauty in wonder; vastness, uniqueness, and transcendence. The codes associated with the concept of ‘beauty in wonder’ along with examples from visitor statements are shown Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2 Aesthetic appreciation theme facilitating meditative mindful tourist experiences**

<b>RO2: Aesthetic appreciation theme (antecedent) facilitating tourist meditative mindful experience</b>				
• <i>Triggers captured the backpackers' attention</i>			<i>N=43,</i>	<i>S=77</i>
<b>Concepts</b>	<b>Coded extracts</b>	<b>Interesting characteristics of features in supporting quotes</b> <i>Exemplified by interviewees' similar statements</i>	<b>Number of instances</b>	<b>Number related to nature-based areas</b>
<b>Beauty in Wonder</b>	<b>Vastness</b>	<b>An instant visual shock from a huge, wide, magnificent, or boundless vision</b> <i>The Rock (Uluru) was huge... I was so amazed. [S1,8, 10,38,39]</i>	49	49
		<b>A strong sense of sublimity/awe, being stunned, amazed</b> <i>Immersed myself in that situation ... to enjoy the shock of the vision. [S26 and others]</i>	47	40
		<b>A sense of distance—from afar, looking down, or looking up</b> <i>I stood at the opposite bank of the river to gaze [at] the glorious Sydney Opera House for a long time. [S07, 35,40,41]</i>	41	34
		<b>Immersed in purposeful gazing at immensity</b> <i>I was totally immersed me in the cosmos, when I was looking at [the] starry night in my swag camping... [S1,3, 10, 38, 39]</i>	48	41
		<b>Connection with vast beauty—introspective reflection</b> <i>The endless ocean let me feel the secrets of nature that human beings cannot control, [the] human is small ... [S4, 15, 22,42, 43]</i>	35	35
	<b>Uniqueness</b>	<b>Never seen it before—no expectation or beyond expectation</b> <i>I cried out when I was on the Airtrain and saw the Sydney Opera House for the first time....[S35]</i>	61	51
		<b>Unique geographical landscape</b> <i>Magic power embodied in the mysterious rock... [S1,8, 9,10]</i>	46	46
		<b>Iconic landmark or architecture</b> <i>Wow... it is a landmark building that represents Australia [S7,9,12,35,41]</i>	37	15
		<b>Australian native wildlife</b> <i>I was really astonished watching the magic little penguins returning home at sunset to their colonies [S35]</i>	7	6
		<b>Cultural uniqueness—lifestyle</b> <i>Recreation...surfing and sandy sports were unique... I have never seen similar scenery before... beyond my thinking [S4,22,17,21]</i>	25	15
	<b>Transcendence</b>	<b>Be transcendent—beyond thinking</b> <i>The scenic encounter made me feel like I was in “Heaven”[S21]</i>	40	37
		<b>Amazingly beautiful—being immersed or intoxicated with appreciation</b> <i>Beautiful coast destinations without margins or encirclement ... [S22,25,31]</i>	58	50
	<b>Notes:</b> N=43 refers to 43 collected data (Taiwanese backpackers) of the formal semi-structured interview (phase II). The data was collected in Brisbane, Queensland and Uluru in the Northern Territory. S=77 refers to an effective sample of 77 effective instances associated with a specific experience occurring in a certain moment during an Australian trip. The instances were reported by the interviewees of Taiwanese backpackers.			

## Vastness

The first most cited concept within beauty in wonder was vastness. Vastness or immensity, led to mindful awareness and facilitated an aesthetic appreciation of nature, as demonstrated in the following excerpts.

*The nature-based scene of wilderness was **vast and boundless**, and the Rock (Uluru) in Australia was **huge**, and spectacular. I was so amazed. What fantastic scenery! [S10]*

*I would say the whole stunning visualisation—the **vast** ocean and spectacular rock in the Great Ocean Road, gave me most strong and impressive experience... I hopped on a sightseeing day tour to the Great Ocean Road. I was walking there and looking at the ocean. I had never seen such magnificent scenery before, when I stood in front of the spectacular view and vast sea. It was a visual shock for me. I immersed myself in that situation for the whole half day to enjoy the shock of the vision. [S26]*

As reported by S10 and S26, the wonder involved in perceiving natural beauty was accompanied by a strong sense of sublimity or awe that resulted in respondents being stunned, amazed or even shocked. An appreciation of vastness was found in the endless, huge, spectacular and magnificent sights. Such external stimuli sharpened the respondent's visual perception and directed awareness to them.

Seeing a pleasing or beautiful object in the distance often attracted a traveller's attention. The following comments were made by Taiwanese backpackers (S44, S39), expressing the wonder involved in perceiving beauty from afar.

*The most impressive perception [skydiving] was flying and I think it was related to the vision I saw at that moment. The reason that may contribute to this was the **very wide vision** because I was in a pretty high point looking down. I saw clouds in the beginning, then houses and a large green lawn continuously coming into my view, and a very broad ocean was seen as well. [S44]*

*I was totally immersed to experience the moment of inner ease with that situation of star-watching in my swag camping in Uluru national park—what a beautiful and peaceful cosmos! [S39]*

A sense of distance is a variation of the concept of vastness, as exemplified by S44 and S39. Distance from afar, a subset set of vastness, could be embodied by looking down from a high point or by looking up from a low place, or in a horizontal aspect, by a broad and extended view. For

example, a lookout on a mountain, a lighthouse on the coast, or a view in a national park were captivating and triggered the tourist's attention.

Sometimes, the awareness of wonder was stronger if the object was seen from afar rather than at short distance. One respondent commented as follows:

*I stood at the opposite bank of the river to gaze at the glorious Sydney Opera House for a long time. I was amazed that I was here with the dreamy icon. However, I felt it was not so good looking when I approached the building. I would rather see the architecture better from **afar** perhaps. [S35]*

Two other significant findings were that 'beauty in wonder' was sometimes associated with 'shock' or 'awe (or awesomeness)', and secondly that nature-based destinations in Australia embody 'beauty in wonder'. Shock or 'awe' led to a sense of wonder and for the respondent to be immersed in the natural encounter. They saw the beauty around them, and they were then drawn to explore this beauty purposefully. Most respondents did not try to evaluate the object of beauty. Rather, it seems that they opened themselves up to the experience while it was happening. However, the awareness would sometimes produce an introspective reflection between humans and nature.

### *Uniqueness*

In a number of transcripts, uniqueness appeared to be related to perceiving 'beauty in wonder'. The manifestations of uniqueness are variously embodied in natural and cultural contexts. In the context of nature, there were various breathtaking and unique natural resources and native wildlife in Australia that aroused a state of wonder as the following reflection noted:

*I like travelling in Australia, because of its nature. The nature is **different, unique, wide, and sublime** and it makes my mind more open. Actually, I don't know the reason but I knew the feelings happened when I saw huge rocks in Uluru and Kings Canyon. The scene was so **vast and unique** and it fascinated me. I have never seen special views like these before. I felt I had been changed as my brain and mind went blank. [S44]*

S44 commented that the unique geographical landscape, featuring towering rocks, spectacular gorge formations, and breathtaking views across the rugged bluffs in an inhospitable desert, made him feel immersed in the settings. These manifestations of uniqueness were mostly embodied in the landscapes, such as the sublime coastal or mountainous national park landscapes, as well as classic architecture. These trigger thoughts about spirituality or magic, as commented by one respondent (S10):

*I felt I was making a pilgrimage to the huge rock and its surrounding environment. I cherished the **magic power** embodied in the mysterious rock when I saw it in front of me while we were on a long drive getting towards it. [S10—in Uluru]*

The popular Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was often found to be wonder-inducing for Taiwanese backpackers. Experiencing this park and other unique nature-based outdoor activities led to a sense of wonder from being immersed in the beauty of nature. Respondent (S44) explained his wonder while camping in an Australian ‘swag’ under millions of stars as he stated:

*What countless stars there were in the night sky! That was true! My first experience of being so close to nature happened while I slept on the ground at Uluru under the night sky and where there were no lights. It was so wonderful because I had never before had the experience of **sleeping in a swag outdoors**. I could not believe that I was so relaxed lying there concentrating on the stars; I was like in a state of emptiness and my mind went blank for a while. [S44]*

This respondent enjoyed his swag experience during a budget tour package called “The Rock Camping Tour: 3 Day Uluru”. This type of package is a traditional and normal camping tourism product that is popular in Australia but is completely different from tourism products offered to consumers in Taiwan. The uniqueness of nature-based outdoor activities not only triggered the Taiwanese backpacker’s curiosity and willingness to sleep in an Australian swag, but also created a space in which they could notice their surroundings in a relaxed state. This experience appeared to facilitate awareness of their surroundings. More deeply, the meditative mindful experience had reinforced a sense of interaction with nature.

Some Australian native wildlife was unique and new to Taiwanese backpackers, and encounters with unique Australian animals triggered people’s attention. Examples included feeding kangaroos, cuddling a koala in a zoo, and/or observing whales in the ocean. These encounters with the animals created mindful attention as evidenced by the following statement:

*I was really astonished watching the magic little penguins returning home at sunset to their colonies in Phillip Island. I paid attention to spotting the first little penguins emerging from the sea and saw their pretty waddling along a Phillip Island beach. The experience was an electrifying moment for me. I concentrated on watching them diving up and sinking down in the sea until they walked back to their burrows. I could even listen to their singing. I was in wonder at the **amazing creatures’ unique** behaviour. In addition, the evening tour of experiencing the penguins’ parade triggered in me a motivation to protect animals since they were so cute. [S35]*

The respondent enjoyed the sensations engendered when she attended the unique event of watching the lovely ‘waddle’ of the penguin parade on the beach after sunset. During this penguin parade, S35’s attention was stable, without distraction:

*Rather than thinking about anything else, I focused on spotting the penguins. I held my breath waiting to see the little black spots on the surface of the ocean at dusk because the appearance of the penguins was irregular and **unpredictable**. I was **curious** to see the **wonder**. [S35]*

This respondent (S35) appreciated how amazing the birds were. This encounter with animals led to a sense of wonder and connection between human beings and other animals.

In addition, there was evidence of uniqueness embodied in landmarks or architectural icons. For example, the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House were commonly remarked on by participants since they have never seen them before. “*It was like a strong shift of a mood that I had arrived in Australia. So happy!*”[S35]. In some cases these sites resulted in quite strong affective responses. The perceptions made the participants feel a sense of appraisal, shock, and one even cried out:

*I cried out when I was on the Airtrain and saw the Sydney Opera House for the first time.... The most impressive experience for me was the first sight of this icon. What a **great work** in the world! It is a **landmark** building that represents Australia. [S35]*

*I learnt about the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House from textbooks when I was a child. However, I was shocked at seeing these well-known landmarks at that moment. I was moved and in a trance for around 40 minutes by the whole **composition of the scenario**—the big harbour, brilliant steel arch bridge, spectacular buildings, beautiful sunshine reflecting on the surface of ocean and the beautiful blue sky. In addition, the sea breeze and temperature made me comfortable. I took a slow, peaceful walk there and it was amazing! [S41]*

The iconic structures of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House captivated the tourists’ attention. This attention may be only brief as in S35’s experience, or for 40 minutes as in S21’s trance-like experience. Nevertheless, both experiences are embedded in their perceptions of wonder. The feelings and memories of those incidents, whether brief or extended, remained with them. Both situations created positive feelings and moods:

*My mood became more positive when I saw the **unique landmarks**. I felt peaceful. The state of peace was like no worries could invade the feeling in my brain. I did not think about any*

*disturbance. It seemed that all my troubles had become smaller or nothing, because the feeling of beauty occupied the majority of my mind. My worries were very small and I did not place importance on them. [S21]*

As such, encounters with unique manifestations of lifestyle, and/or a blend of cultural uniqueness and natural beauty increased the Taiwanese backpackers' wonder, as evidenced by the following quote:

*The combination of recreation including long stretches of stunning coastline bordered by modern high rise buildings on the Gold Coast, the surf, sand and sunshine was unique; I **have never seen similar** scenery in other places. Especially, I was touched by the skyline there. I was satisfied seeing the ocean and it made me so relaxed. You know, I have heard about the Gold Coast for a period of time, what I saw was **beyond my previous thinking** – what a relaxed view and lifestyle! [S22]*

In a broad sense, the beauty in uniqueness proceeded and enhanced the tourists' wonder.

#### *Transcendence*

Some attributes of Australian destinations were found to be transcendent or amazingly beautiful to Taiwanese backpackers. The following comment about Whitehaven Beach in the Whitsunday Islands illustrates that aesthetic appreciation that leads individuals to experience a meditative mindful state:

*When I walked out of the cabin and saw the scenery, I felt refreshed and said, “Does a real **Shangri-La** exist in the world?” I was astonished and excited. It was unlike the pictures in travel books I saw. The scenic encounter made me feel like I was in “**Heaven**”. The awesome beauty involved light blue water, an island arc, a pure, non-polluted and peaceful beach and schools of tiny fish. My companions and I shared the precious moment with each other. It has become a very special memory for me. I can recall the image of this event vividly and it stills arouses my feelings. [S21]*

Australia was seen as transcendent, amazing, or awesome, and beyond the Taiwanese backpackers' previous experiences, which contributed to their astonishment. Such wondrous experiences sharpened the respondents' perceptions and focused their attention: “*I was intoxicated with appreciation of the amazing beauty of nature*” [S06].

This experience of wonder involving transcendence created a 'break' with previous cognitive judgments and knowledge. The experience of wonder led the subject to feel astonished at the



'miracle' of the setting. This triggered aesthetic contemplation and questions such as: "Why is this beauty here when I did not know it existed?" as seen in S21's statement, "*Does a real Shangri-La exist in the world?*" Such transcendence encouraged the respondents' awareness of the world around them, and an especially vivid and compelling aesthetic contemplation of the amazing beauty. "*Suddenly, I have found how amazing the world actually is*" [S25]. Such experiences can trigger transformative changes in the respondents and may allow them to transcend what they knew. During the process of encounter between the subject and objects, the respondents reported that the experience can also contribute to a state of being immersed or intoxicated with appreciation. In other words, the experience involving wonder can be seen as a catalyst that corresponds to a kind of awareness.

This experience of wonder involving beauty in immensity, uniqueness or transcendence may follow or be accompanied by a strong sense of awe and also a sudden intense awareness, as the following statement attests from a traveller visiting Noosa Heads:

*I neither like going to the beach in Taiwan nor travelling to different countries. In contrast, I like the ocean experience in Australia because there are lots of **beautiful** coast destinations without margins or encirclement here. So great! The feeling was like a sense of **awe**. The awe was embodied with **vitality** that came from the ocean rather than from human beings. It was a feeling of comfort while **interacting** with the ocean and natural surroundings. It seemed I was in a loop when I encountered the great ocean. Within the loop, I was the only object with the ocean. No matter what happened outside of the loop, it did not matter to me because I was closed inside instead of exposed. At that moment, only me getting along with the sea; and only me could touch and talk to the ocean. I **enjoyed** this kind of **atmosphere within the loop completely**. I may not come out from such a state until I am interfered with by external distractions, such as someone is calling me, or it rains. Actually, I found I had spent a long time there when I suddenly came out from this situation of the loop. [S25]*

The sudden intense awareness triggers a sense of enjoyment that fascinated the Taiwanese backpackers. The experience of wonder encouraged the respondents to become adventure seekers, to gain knowledge, and to experience feelings of beauty and awe. This argument is supported by the following quote from a traveller visiting the Great Ocean Road:

*The magnificent nature in Australia is much more spectacular than in Taiwan. The vast and endless ocean let me feel the secrets of nature that human beings cannot control or change. It seemed that there exists a power of nature that I was immersed in completely. I think people should get into the outdoors to experience the magic. [S26]*

This experience of wonder at something that is rare or extraordinary encourages travellers toward adventure or to learn more about it. The aesthetic experiences may awaken the tourists' attention, elicit wonder or awe, and facilitate tourists' mindfulness. These experiences were manifested in sublime landscapes, ancient coastlines, mountainous national parks, or classic architecture. These triggers all may be representations of permanence or immortality. This characteristic of aesthetic appreciations in terms of beauty in impermanence is discussed further in section 4.3.2.2.

Beauty in wonder, the first category of aesthetic appreciations was found to be embodied in certain specific characteristics. Analysis of the characteristics of 'beauty in wonder' reveals several coherent themes emerging from the visitors' responses in relation to the 'wonder' of the meditative mindfulness experiences gained; namely, characteristics of the vastness/immensity, uniqueness, and transcendence/amazing beauty. These coded characteristics commonly occurred together in one location. The finding of this study is that perceived attributes that embodied characteristics of wonder helped visitors to pay greater attention to the objects that they encountered. It appears that aesthetics such as beautiful nature, landscape, or creature elements delivered the visual delight, fascination and enchantment capable of promoting transcendent states and a sense of wonder, and to create a connectedness to nature and the real world. Those attributes were identified as contributing to the meditative mindfulness experience.

It was also interesting to note that the meditative mindful experience associated with aesthetic appreciation involved the representations of beauty in wonder that led to specific benefits. The intense awareness of beauty and awe created positive emotions. The perceived experiential benefits associated with mindfulness will be explored in greater detail in section 4.4.

#### **4.3.2.2 Beauty in Impermanence**

Mindful experiences can be produced by thinking about both permanence and impermanence. The representations of permanence that facilitate tourist meditative mindful experiences have been illustrated in the previous section. This section discusses some particular impermanent situations that were commonly mentioned in the interviews. The changing natural phenomenon was considered as triggers embodied in the natural environments at destinations that evoked the perception of beauty. This current section discusses the representations of impermanence caused by the changing natural phenomena including sunrise and sunset, a shooting star, a rising moon, a night sky and the Milky Way, and a double rainbow.

## Transient natural phenomena

Representations of transient natural phenomenon are mostly found in Australian outdoor destinations where tourists were undertaking their travel, such as camping in a national park, driving on a road trip, and outdoor sightseeing. Some triggers were embodied in nature, in particular, related to the astronomical phenomena. The following evidence revealed diverse possibilities for appreciating the beauty of natural, transient natural phenomena as follows:

### *Sunrise and sunset*

The most significant representations of impermanence reported by the majority of Taiwanese backpackers derived from the sunrise and sunset. For example, one respondent reported his experience of encountering the sunrise as follows:

*Watching the **sunrise** in front of Uluru was a special experience; **the same as looking at a performance** .... The rock was like a leading actress waiting for the sun to uncover a prelude. The other lights and shadows were the rock's director, conducting the rock's actress to display her different looks. I could feel the actress (rock) was speaking .... I fully concentrated to notice those changes during the sunrise attentively. It seemed I had seen a spiritual art performance on a stage that was different from looking at a picture or books .... I felt peaceful, beautiful, and nothing interrupted me at that moment. The rock and the nature seemed to embody some magic powers. They were **beyond my understanding and imagination** .... It aroused in me a sense of respect for the **wonderful** nature. [S10]*

This example indicated that the respondent's creative imagination was invoked by the relationship between himself, sun, and rock leading to a sense of 'abstract beauty' of the sunrise. This result was due to the ephemeral nature of the sunrise and the surrounding scene changing moment by moment, rather than being permanent. The experience of watching the sunrise corresponds to focused attention, while the awareness of an aesthetic response seemed to make room for imagination and emotion, and forged affective links between the observer and his surroundings. Immersion in the experience was awakened by the backpacker's sense of aesthetic appreciation, and allowed him to experience a spiritual and magic moment beyond the knowledge gained from books or photos.

Likewise, an encounter with sunset was found to be related to an inward sense of aesthetic appreciation. Another respondent (S20) pointed this out that when he stated:

*An unforgettable experience for me is when I worked for a food vendor at Mindil Beach Sunset Market when I travelled to Darwin. The **joyful moment** for me was watching the sunset every evening. During the sunset, my boss would share a cold beer with me to cheer*

*me up in this beautiful moment. Everyone including our customers and other tourists were **cheering for the sunset** together; we were like a big family although we did not know each other. We had the same **appreciation for the beauty** of the sunset—the wonderful sunshine with different orange and purple colours, very beautiful, and bright sky at that moment. I **enjoyed the time I was there**, and more interestingly, I will forget my boring employer around me while he chattered sometimes. I felt I was enjoying life like the local people. The sense of enjoyment surpassed my exhaustion from working. The feeling was like watching fireworks on the last day of the year celebrating New Year's Eve. The whole feeling was like I was immersed in nature and in the people as well...It is impossible to stop work for drinking and appreciating nature during work in Taiwan. [S20]*

The beautiful sunset allowed the respondent (S20) to experience a deep and stable awareness of the natural event. Watching the sunsets also led to specific affective benefits. The stopping of 'busyness' to allow greater appreciation of a beautiful natural phenomenon encouraged a sense of harmony. There seemed to be no differences between employer, employee, and customers; everyone was paying attention to the particular phenomenon of impermanence with equality, joy and ease.

#### *The night sky*

Looking at a starry night appears to have enhanced the concentration of some respondents: respondent (S38) describes seeing a shooting star in the Northern Territory:

*...I was pleased to see a **shooting star** whereas my companions did not observe it. At the moment I saw it, I found my mind became an **innocent state**, like a child's...no evaluation, value, or reward was aroused. That is the happiness of a child. So interestingly, slowing down like this calmed my mind. [S38]*

These comments suggested the beauty of the shooting star encouraged her to 'slow down' which in turn calmed her mind. This same beauty was found in other instances of impermanent nature, for instance, a rising moon, twinkling stars and a double rainbow. Several travellers were surprised and impressed when they saw a moonrise and recalled it as an overwhelming moment:

*We tried to get a campsite as soon as possible when I was on a road trip to Western Australia with my friends. We were worried because it was getting dark, we had no GPS, and the gravel road would not allow us to drive faster. Then, we saw a bright light in the distance and thought the illumination was from a campsite where we could stay. So we followed the light and drove there in a more relaxed mood. (We forgot the nearest tourist caravan park was not a powered site). Eventually, we found a very **big moon rising on the***

*distant horizon after sunset. What an **astronomical spectacle!** It was an **overwhelming moment** that surprised and impressed me. I also forgot my initial worries. [S13]*

It was noticed that even this unexpected and overwhelming moment not only triggered the backpackers' interests, but also helped the tourists to be distracted from their worries. Other aspects of the night sky were commonly noted by one of the participants:

*The sky looked like a screenshot from a film. The twinkling stars were close to me. It seems easy to touch by hand. It was vivid, like some animation or cartoon I saw when I was a child—a pure milky way.... Before this travel, I thought people could see nothing in the dark. But now I know the **clouds and sky are not static**. They are **dynamic!** [S03]*

During the experience of looking at the starry sky, respondents could recall subtle changes in their view of the Milky Way.

### *Rainbows*

A double rainbow, which is an unusual natural phenomenon, triggered Taiwanese backpackers' attentive attention and aroused positive feelings, as illustrated by the following statement.

*We were in a rush driving to a Tasmanian airport one afternoon. Unexpectedly and surprisingly, we saw a **double rainbow** after a rainy day. Amazing! We slowed down and then drove through the path of two rainbows. I was so grateful to capture the beauty—one rainbow seemed like an inverted image of another rainbow and the secondary arc in a double rainbow had reversed colours where the red was on the bottom and the purple was on the top. I had never seen such a wonderful scene before. [S24]*

These findings showed that seeing such beauty also led to an awareness of impermanence. The rising moon, night sky and a double rainbow are transient phenomena that make the experiences unique and subjective to each participant. Therefore, the moment became precious, and attention was focused on the objects. These moments of beauty captured their focused attention. The findings demonstrated that tourists are drawn to beautiful transient natural phenomena. Although such phenomena happen in everyday life, people, while travelling, have more time to look for them.

### **Transient experience vs. memory**

In addition, the findings revealed how the respondents were able to recall and clearly describe their feelings about the experience during the interviews. This was identified in all interviews but the following quote provides a good example:

*Suddenly, I don't know why the experience was **so beautiful** to me while I was watching the sunset in Kakadu National Park. I felt very quiet. The upper part of the beautiful image was slightly brighter with rich colours, whereas the lower part was dark. I was aware of living in the moment alone (even though my two companions stood beside me) and did not think about the past, the future or anything else. In other words, I was alive mindfully in that scenario just through focusing on the view. Wow... it would be wonderful if the feeling could last. In fact, I understood the sunset would disappear very soon and would not last. However, I **remember that romantic moment indeed**, even though it only lasted ten minutes and happened three years ago. I believe this **memory will appear again in my life like a trotting horse lamp scrolling the image.** [S08]*

Memorable experiences were found to be linked to the experience of appreciating transient natural phenomenon, such as watching a sunset in this example above. This transient phenomenon could be clearly recalled, regardless of the duration of the experience. This implied that the tourists were impressed and paid full attention. The experiences were then transformed into a memory. Respondents seemed to relive the event when they shared the story with the researcher. Many times the researcher noticed that interviewees had smiling faces and were emotional when recounting their stories. The backpackers often mentioned how enjoyable the experiences had been to them while recalling and sharing their experiences during the interviews. The emotional responses relived when the experience was recalled appeared to be positive.

#### **4.3.2.3 Beauty in Authenticity**

The term 'beauty in authenticity' is not equated with flawless perfection. In this study, experience involving authentic beauty was a sense of, or a response to, what the respondents felt were genuine features of a setting. There are three appealing characteristics of settings or destinations based on the natural beauty and authenticity that were identified in this study.

##### *Purity*

The first appeal of beauty in authenticity was purity (or cleanliness). The following findings from interviews explained this further:

*I had never seen such beautiful and **clear** water as when the doors on the boat opened when we were approaching Whitehaven Beach. I was excited by the glance of the **pure** water and the **unpolluted** island. What a **real** Australia! [S21]*

*... I was surprising from various aspects of the destination: **pure** blue sky and white clouds, bright sunshine, very **refreshing air, quiet environment**, and few people. Everything made me have a kind of recreation while I was travelling through the Valley of the Winds (Kata Tjuta). [S39]*

The appeal of Australia as a beautiful destination was found to be often attributed to the pure environment. Respondents were astonished by, and appreciative of the extremely pure elements embodied in nature-based attractions ranging from the iconic coastline to mountainous national parks. For example, Central Australia (Alice Springs Region), the Great Barrier Reef, the Great Ocean Road, Philip Island, and Sunshine Coast were described by many Taiwanese backpackers as pure destinations. No matter whether they were trekking, diving, playing in water or just staying in one place and doing nothing, the perceptions of genuine purity or cleanliness from seeing, smelling, and touching impressed them. Destinations in Australia are pure, especially nature-based attractions, and appeal to Taiwanese tourists. This led to a feeling of immersion and of being one with the place and a part of the pure environment.

### *Simplicity*

A second appeal involving beauty in authenticity is simplicity. Backpacker participants often valued the simplicity embodied in tourism settings or local life. The explanations were provided as:

*The scene over there was similar to seeing the television channel of “Animal Planet” or “Discovery” while driving from Darwin to Kakadu National Park. What a **genuine** wilderness—**pretty wild and very few people**. I wondered about such a wild land that survived on the earth since I have never experienced these kinds of views in Asia. I met one car after a long drive and we (drivers) greeted each other. The bare desert-like area looked like nothing but bushes. The strange images did not scare me; instead, I became immersed in the environment and appreciated the sunset when I was looking out onto the wilderness. I was **part of the wilderness** and I won't get lost [on] my way because there was only one road for driving. [S08]*

Another example provided a personal inner experience corresponding to a genuine insight into Australian pastoral life:

*I was noticing that sheep, cattle and horses were browsing on a grass plain located on the road side near Mount Coot-tha. The **simple image like a picture of a cartoon** impressed me and it was truly appealing in my real life. I was so excited about the moment, and felt relaxed and calm as well. Interestingly, the excitement and calmness looked like conflicted*

*emotions; however, they happened at the same time and combined together harmoniously. Meanwhile, I did not know why classical music was ringing in my mind involuntarily. This was a true beauty with harmony that I have never seen before. [S37]*

The authenticity associated with the simplicity of local rural life was illustrated in this comment. The farmland and animals triggered the respondent's inward thoughts. The simplicity of a tranquil farming life connected to the backpacker's inner space. Other explanations were given as:

*We brought sandwiches and drinks with us for picnicking like the **general Aussie lifestyle**. I really enjoyed the moment of lying on grass, basking in the sun, looking at the sky, and enjoying the winds. Such a **simple event** made me calm and at ease. I was at a picnic at Roma Street Parklands near Brisbane; however, I felt that I was escaping from the city and isolated from its busy life. I enjoyed slowing down in my small space and thought of nothing simultaneously (voluntarily). This kind of **simple relaxed travel pattern** I have never had in Taiwan. I have also done this simple activity in different destinations such as a beach near Hobart in Tasmania, or unknown parks to relax myself during my working holiday in Australia. [S04]*

The individual traveller felt truly authentic where he or she was fully engaged with the environment and was aware of aspects or meanings of the situation.

*The city of Brisbane is clean and the river is **friendly**. The atmosphere looks similar to where I live—the Love River in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Although the experience of river sightseeing was not as spectacular as my ocean visit (to the Great Ocean Road); however, I felt a **real sense of safety** aroused while taking a Brisbane City Cat. I enjoyed the moment and it was akin to a graceful comfort from a kindly mother. [S26]*

This respondent described her City Cat sightseeing experience as involving a connection between Brisbane in Australia and Kaohsiung in Taiwan and produced an emotional bond between the respondent and her environment. The cleanliness and friendliness of Brisbane was associated with the safety and comfort of the hometown where the respondent grew up. The quality of the experience created a link between the external stimuli of authentic beauty and the respondents' psychological perceptions.

#### **4.3.3 Atmosphere of Quietness**

A third theme that emerged from the Taiwanese backpackers' responses reflected those factors that sensitised their perceptions of sensations or conscious awareness, generalised here as an 'atmosphere of quietness'. Attributes frequently mentioned by respondents related to an



‘atmosphere of quietness’ and an absence of noise and an absence of light. The auditory and visual senses were the two senses that were associated with mindfulness (as discussed in section 4.2.1.1). These senses were evoked in their memories of their travel experiences. This section provides the two dimensions that encouraged backpackers’ attentiveness during their travel experiences. Each of these proposed reinforcers of mindfulness will be illustrated in the following sections.

#### 4.4.3.1 Absence of Noise

Noise, as an obstacle or interference and mainly referring to artificial, man-made acoustic dimensions was noted by many Taiwanese backpackers. Individuals paid attention to sounds from nature because it was very quiet; as a result, they were clearly and vividly perceived:

*I had a **strong sense of focusing on listening**, including to the different birdsongs, the sound of the waterfall and creek, the tick-tock of raindrops, even the slight rustle of leaves in the wind or slight commotion among the bush grass. That **area was very quiet** and there were no other tourists. [S28]*

One respondent reported that his perception of the acoustic dimension became heightened in the national park, which was a quiet and natural environment. The silence heightened the backpacker’s hearing, revealing various sounds in the national park that were pleasant. Mindful hearing appears to allow tourists to immerse themselves and open their minds to the experience, even if what they are hearing is a very faint, delicate or distant sound. One participant described that he felt as “connected with the sound of the sea when I was lying on grass next to the lighthouse at Bryon Bay” [S03]. Quietness was also connected with an individual’s internal bodily sounds, such as his/her breathing, as evidenced by the following:

*I **heard nothing except my clear breathing** from myself and sound from the ocean while I was being coached in snorkelling by a tour guide on the Great Barrier Reef. A vivid view of unexpected, spectacular colourful coral and schools of fish freely came to my eyes; sunshine was on my back when I was floating in the quiet ocean. My **long and slow inhaling and exhaling** were so **clear**, because I had to **keep silent** because I was biting on a snorkelling tube. [S30]*

The absence of noise was identified as an important key in creating an atmosphere of quietness. That is, silence seemed to evoke the tourists’ attention to sensations and contributed to quietness of the mind and an awareness of inner sensations such as the long and slow inhaling and exhaling described in the quote. The absence of noise meant that there was less distraction from auditory information processing, which facilitated attention to other sensations.

#### 4.4.3.2 Absence of Light

‘Dark’ or ‘night’ appears to sharpen an individual’s awareness of sensations. In the backpacking contexts, little light is found during outdoors activities such as camping or night-diving, or simply watching a starry sky:

*The most impressive sense was seeing stars **in the dark**. It was simple scenery with a black sky with a lot of bright spots. The bright silver spots made me feel that the stars were so big and spread all over the sky. I was like in a state of emptiness, or went blank for a few minutes. [S44]*

Another respondent described a connection with nature:

*I felt I was connected with nature, the stars, the ocean, even the dark. There was **no longer a distance** between my mind and the universe; very peaceful. [S03]*

These respondents discussed looking at stars as leading to a stable awareness and a sense of timelessness or being immersed in the universe. The quiet night atmosphere produced calmness and peace, feelings of ease and relaxation.

#### 4.3.4 Development of Curiosity in Stimuli

The fourth antecedent of a meditative mindful experience identified in the transcripts was curiosity. If a respondent was curious during their experience this focused their attention on the present. ‘Being curious’ appeared to open mental “doors” allowing the respondent’s attention to be directed to the senses and to information derived from the stimuli or settings. Respondents reported novel stimuli and low information processing stimuli which could motivate their curiosity and lead them to engage intently and earnestly, to see something they have not seen before, to feel novel sensations, and to ask questions of one-self and others.

##### 4.3.4.1 Novel Stimuli

Travelling is one way of removing an individual from familiar places where he/she lives; to live in an unfamiliar setting. Travelling to an unfamiliar or novel destination appears to be a catalyst for evoking one’s curiosity. Destination attributes provided novel symbols or cues that focused attention on the experience:

*It was a sand island like an un-spoiled paradise. I was **surprised** seeing many pelicans gathering on the bays when I was reaching Moreton Island on a ferry. I **had never** seen such a beautiful scene in Taiwan. I did not know the sand was so soft until I stepped down on it.*

*The big birds, light yellow with pale brown sand, blue sky and white clouds appeared sequentially...were like an impulse to move me forward the island. Basically, I did not notice a local guide's talk; even though I was sitting on the sand to hear her interpretation. Instead, I was looking around and enjoyed the unusual place at that moment. Wow... the experience was wonderful and beautiful! [S40]*

In the above quote, Moreton Island was seen as a novel context for the respondent. He (S40) had never been to such a beautiful sandy natural-based destination before, and this novelty and uniqueness focused his attention on unusual sights such as the big birds (pelicans) and fine yellow sand, both not found in Taiwan—and he was distracted from the interpretive information provided by a local guide. This curiosity mainly occurred when first seeing a new destination, as illustrated by the following:

*I **have never** seen such clear water before. I was **excited** by my first glance of the pure water and the unpolluted island.... It has become a very special memory for me. [S21]*

The novelty was a motivation to change one's behaviour:

*The glance **motived** me to jump into the water, so I took my dress off with only a bikini left. Actually, you know, I did not know how to swim and it was unusual for me to wear a bikini when I was in Taiwan. However, I did not know why, but it felt like myself and the environment were living as one. I did not care about the other people surrounding me. One glance seemed to provide the **impulse** to immerse myself there. [S21]*

Moreover, mindful curiosity helped the backpackers to arouse their attention when questioning the novel stimuli by contemplating the object's unique quality. This suggestion is illustrated as follows.

*I was **curious** to explore the spectacular ocean [Great Ocean Road]. I **asked myself** why the ocean is so powerful and spectacular that I have never experienced similar landscapes in Taiwan. I thought that human beings cannot control the secrets of nature; so I **should move through my days** in openness and happiness, rather than be limited in my own frame. [S26]*

As described, novelty triggered openness and a sense of being fully connected with the perceived sensations allowing a new awareness of the ocean. Here, engaging with nature and with a curious mind produced an insight that did not arise from conscious thought. This may imply that the novel stimuli can evoke such as curiosity, self-awareness and reflection about other aspects of life. Thus perception of novel stimuli leads to reflection about the present tourism experience and also to thinking about other aspects of life.

Furthermore, curiosity about a novel setting was associated with calmness and the emotion of joy as follows:

*It was a beautiful moment for me. I felt happy and relaxed. The world had become wonderful since I placed myself on the desert-like island. I did not think too much when I was lying on the beach and getting sun. The only thing I desired was to drink a cup of coffee. [S40]*

This excerpt indicated that the respondent was in a state of mental ease during this experience. The process of experiencing a novel experience was underpinned by non-elaborative awareness, with little thinking—the temporary mental quietness contributed to a mood of relaxation and ease.

In addition, curiosity about novel stimuli can be activated by participating in novel activities. Backpackers were engaged by novel sensations that they had not experienced before, as illustrated by the following quote:

*Although it was terrible at the moment before jumping off a helicopter, I forgot the horrible instance because I focused on the senses in each moment during the jump—opening my parachute, viewing the beautiful ground and enjoying slow flying. I was impressed by [the] whole picture of Cairns under me. I accepted all the terrible, painful, and exciting emotions. I still remember the shallows of the sunshine reflected on the ocean. Wow, the experience was a wonder! [S14]*

In this case, the novel activity was a catalyst to evoke attention to the present-moment experience. It also revealed that the respondent was attentive and receptive. Even though the duration of experiencing skydiving was very short and confounded by negative emotions such as pain and fearfulness, she was able to attend to her tactile and visual senses, and engaged in the moment.

In summary, novel stimuli were found to be ‘triggers’ that created a broader mental space, allowing backpackers to explore the differences or wonder in front of them. Novel stimuli can provoke a curious state of mind involving non-elaborative present-centred awareness. This curiosity with novel stimuli also aroused positive emotional responses.

#### 4.3.4.2 Low Information Processing Stimuli

Novel stimuli may also be derived from unexpected circumstances and the lack of rich information communicative settings—for example, a lack of information provided at remote destinations like national parks or wilderness, such as signs or guiding tours. One respondent said:

*We walked along the only hiking trail to head towards the inner area by following the instructions of the first sign at the entrance of the trail. There were **no** further clear **signs** during the whole adventure. I had a strong sense of focusing on listening, including to the different birdsongs, the sound of the waterfall and creek, the tick-tock of raindrops, even the slight rustle of leaves in the wind or slight commotion among the bush grass...My friends had the same sense as well, because we were in an alert but happy mood in wild bush land along the Broken River looking for platypuses. I had a thought about my experience of looking for platypuses “there would be a lot of fun if there were **unknowns during this trip**”. I still found there were many beautiful relaxed feelings aroused in me. I think if I had known something about this trip in advance, the fun may have been less than I would have experienced on that discovery adventure. [S28]*

Curiosity in response to awareness of the novel situation led to intense and **continuously alert** attention. There was no information such as brochures, maps, signs or a tour guide. Instead attentive awareness was activated by vivid perceptions of sensations. Self-awareness followed by a cognitive reflection may also be activated by:

*I felt it was really similar to the reason for my living life... you may feel I am too serious about this issue, but it is really true. I keep in my mind “Don’t worry about the way I have chosen. Try to be aware of and keep quiet for each **unknown** happening and face and overcome it through my own different ways. It is **more interesting** and fun for life.” [S28]*

In summary, the development of curiosity leads backpackers to be mindfully aware of what is around them and encourages them to explore possibilities that exist on their journey and which differ from their daily routines. The findings identified that being curious about novel stimuli, triggers attentiveness, and may enhance positive feelings such as joy, relaxation, or gratitude. It is also important to note that the situation may embody a challenge or risk that may lead to a problem; nevertheless, the backpacker in retrospect describes the experience as enjoyable and memorable. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

### 4.3.5 Summary for Research Objective 2

Four main types of antecedents or potential attributes that facilitated tourists (Taiwanese backpackers) experiencing a mindful state were found in this study. These were labelled as: travel-induced relaxation, aesthetic appreciation, atmosphere of quietness, and curiosity-developing. Within these themes, nine concepts were explored to form a complete picture of the diverse manifestations or representations of the antecedents (as illustrated in Figure 4.5).

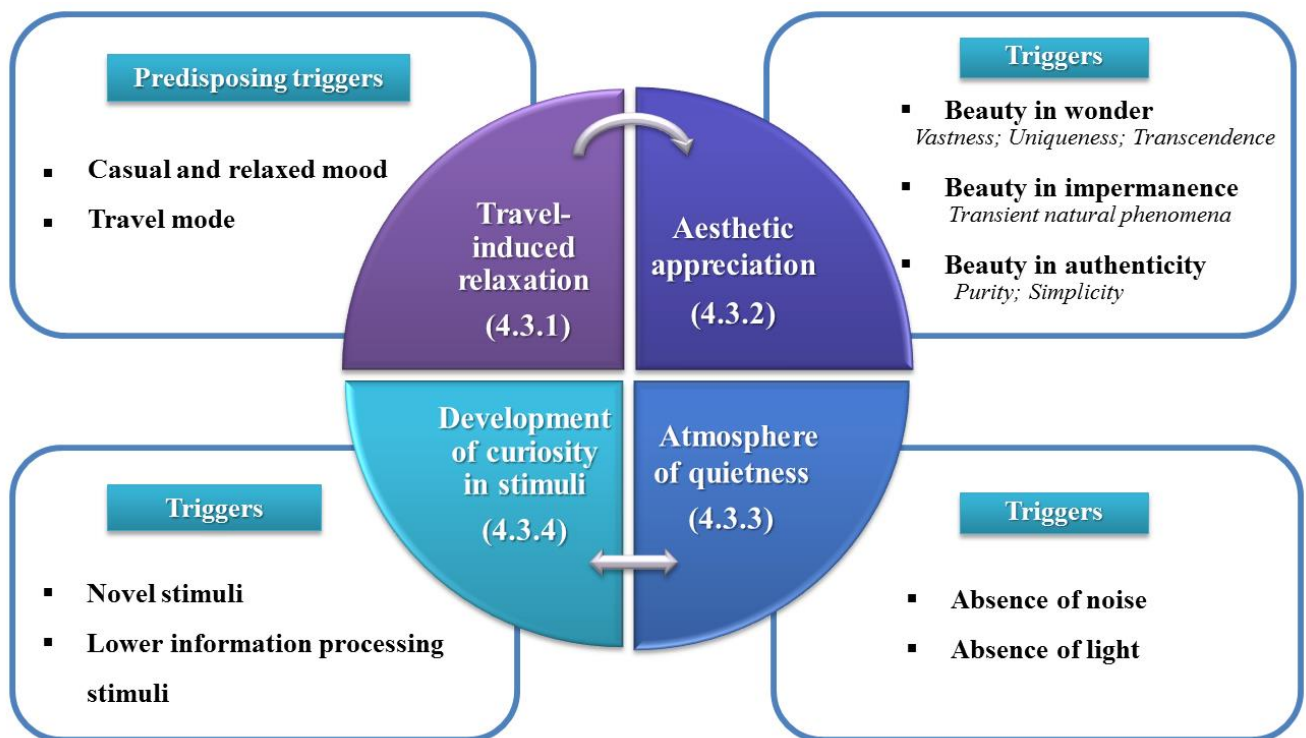


Figure 4.5 Key themes/concepts of antecedents facilitating meditative mindful tourist experiences

### 4.4 Research Objective 3: Consequences of Mindfulness from Backpacking Contexts

The third objective of this study was to understand what perceived experiential benefits can be derived from mindful travel experiences. An analysis of the transcripts indicated that mindful travel experiences had positive effects on the respondents, and that these effects had in some cases become important to their daily lives well after the experience itself. Positive effects of two types were noted: psychological (Section 4.4.1) and physical (Section 4.4.2) experiential benefits. These beneficial outcomes are also discussed in terms of spontaneous thoughts and lasting long-term representations (see Figure 4.6)

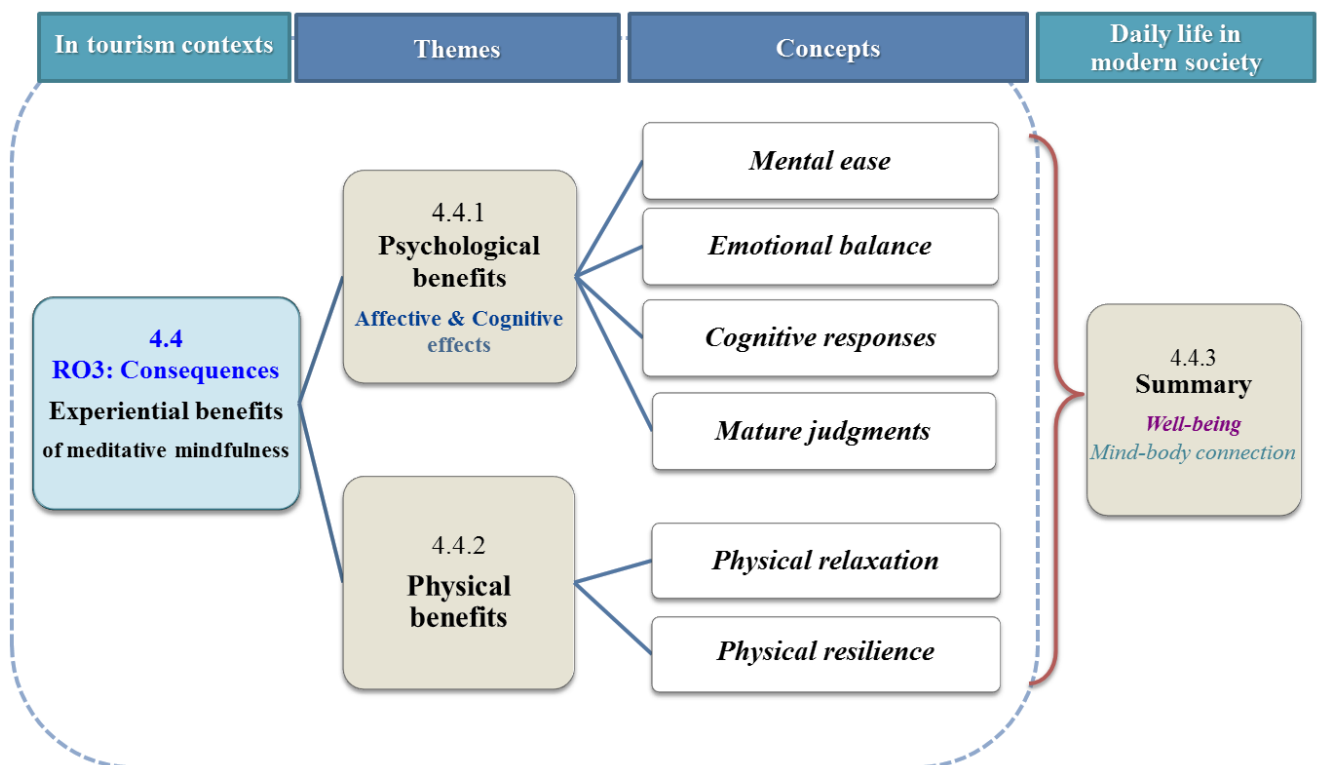


Figure 4.6 The structures of analysis for research objective 3 Themes identified about consequences of meditative mindful tourist experiences

#### 4.4.1 Psychological Experiential Benefits

This section presents two principal ways in which the positive psychological outcomes were perceived during and after the respondents’ travel experiences: affective experiential benefits (an effect on the feelings or emotions) and cognitive experiential benefits (an effect on thoughts and thinking). Affective experiential benefits were associated with spontaneous feelings of mental ease (Section 4.4.1.1) and transformed feelings of emotional balance (Section 4.4.1.2). The cognitive benefits were an immediate feeling of cognitive response (Section 4.4.1.3), and transformed mature judgments (Section 4.4.1.4). These findings are explained fully below.

#### 4.4.1.1 Mental Ease

The term 'mental ease' is akin to the tranquillity, relaxation or stress release that may be accompanied by spontaneous feelings of joy. The effect is more like a mood rather than a more intense emotion. Mindful travel experiences led to a participant being tranquil and relaxed. One respondent (S11) discussed his emotions as a result of his mindful experience:

*The feeling of this experience was **being calm** or **peaceful**. It was like you take a deep breath after enjoying a good movie or drama although it was also accompanied by stimulating sensations...The state of calm embodied relaxation, excitement and maybe with a bit of tension; but the relaxation was not like being normally relaxed or slack. I might say it was a **positive feeling** for me – from a neutral to a positive aspect...[S11]*

Three specific characteristics of mental ease were described by respondents; calm/peace, relaxation /stress release and perceived positive emotions.

*At that moment, my mind was in a state of calm, followed by a sense of **comfort**.... The calm was derived from my **inner experience**; the environment was filled with various sounds from nature, such as the bird and wave voices. These voices came from nature rather than from humans. Although there were some people around, I was **not affected** by them because I **enjoyed** the situation, scenery and felt pretty deeply. [S15]*

S11 discussed feeling a calm and peaceful state when wandering along an alley at The Rocks in Sydney in the evening.

*I may not say it was spiritual growth or **healing**, but it was like an acquisition of **spiritual comfort** for me...There was nothing about a good or bad mood. It was a state of **stable** or **calmness**, like waves of the sound where the frequency is very closer, not changing, neither sad nor lonely. [S11]*

Another respondent stated her mood was between peace and relaxation when watching the vast sea on the Great Ocean Road.

*I was in a state of **calm**. My feelings stayed between **peace and relaxation**. The feeling was composed of emotion; it was not exactly like a superlative peace but it was stronger than a relaxed entertainment. The perceived affection of watching the sea on the Great Ocean Road was deeper than viewing a river. [S26]*

The same respondent (S26) also reported her alternative emotional response as involving a sense of serenity and safety:



*On a City Cat of the Brisbane river tour, the river was quite calm, unlike the sea with its constant beating and strong wind and waves. Although the river is not spectacular like the ocean, it gave me a sense of safety. So, being close to the river made me feel like it was a great and **graceful** mother to me, so natural... [S26]*

The interviewees reported that peace, calmness and relaxation are the most distinctive beneficial characteristics of the experience associated with meditative mindful travel. In addition, these beneficial outcomes including stress release were also identified during the on-site experience as follows.

*Participation in a multi-senses combined activity such as immersing myself in water brought about a shift in my awareness where I exchanged my reaction from a state of stress to one of **ease**. The destination or resort helped my travel to be filled with **relaxation**. [S02]*

*I felt lots of pressure filled my life, such as working. The experience let me **release this pressure** by transferring my attention from a place of 'people' to a place of 'nature'. It also transferred from a setting of 'socialised' to 'simple'. [S02]*

*In other words, the experience helped me to **refresh myself** and [be] **stress released**. I believe I am not able to work well and have fun, if I am under a pressure. [S15]*

#### *Positive emotions*

The findings indicated that on-site mindful experiences were sometimes accompanied by arousal and positive emotions. These enjoyable emotions included cheerfulness, happiness, freedom, feeling unfettered or experiencing ecstasy. This argument was supported by a number of the interview findings:

*The skydiving experience was a feeling of **being comfortable**—a kind of unfettered freedom, with joy and excitement. The ecstasy-like joy was far beyond the scare derived before the jump. [S44]*

*I cheered for the beautiful sunset with other people and the feeling was like we were in the same family although we did not know each other—I even disliked one of my companions. However, I was so **happy** and **relaxed** at the moment after an exhausted day. [S20]*

The affect perceived was a type of relaxed enjoyment. Stimulus driven pleasurable experiences were more associated with positive emotions in contrast with the less intense more neutral mood of calm and peace or relaxation. Evidence (S21) also supported this point as follows.

*When I walked out the cabin and deeply gazed at the scenery, I felt freshened: “Does a real Shangri-La exist in the world?” The scene encountered over there was beautiful with light blue water, island arc, pure and peaceful beach and schools of tiny fish. I praised the image for a precious moment with some surprise. [S21]*

Another example of empathetic joy was found in the findings from the interview with S11:

*I was in a state of **being stable or calm, without my emotions going up or down**. I was neither depressed nor happy, and I felt **satisfied** that my inner state belonged to me rather than it being temporary. I would rather say this inner satisfaction is a part of my journey and only can be experienced and understood by myself. [S11]*

#### **4.4.1.2 Emotional Balance**

The examples above referred to perceived mental ease accompanied by meditative mindful experiences that were almost always spontaneously or immediately obvious during the meditative mindful travel experience. Nevertheless, the experiential benefits could last for some time and even influence daily lives after the journey. This seems to be a type of therapeutic benefit, as it appeared to provide a re-establishment of affective balance; the ability of a person to experience emotional equilibrium. Such a beneficial feeling was noted on-site after the meditative mindful experience but could also continue afterwards. “*Personally, I used to dislike a state of solitude or loneliness; whereas, I am willing to spend time to face myself as well as to get along with myself after the experience of scuba diving*” [S24]. When explaining how the meditative mindful experience had positively influenced their daily lives, several interviewees commented on the longer term or transforming effect.

#### *Wellbeing*

Another respondent noted that after experiencing scuba-diving they were more willing to spend time alone thinking:

*Everything became very simple as long as I **faced it with ease instead of rush**. I was able to complete many things in one minute. One minute is nothing for hurried people, but it is plenty of time if one eases the path. Interestingly, **slowing down the path then calmed my mind**. For example, I was pleased to see a shooting star whereas my companions did not observe it. [S38]*

These examples support the supposition that affective imbalances might be improved through meditative mindful experiences. The findings also support the idea that mindful experiences help

people slow down their pace of life, cultivate the ability to co-exist with their own loneliness, and deal with their worries.

The cultivation of affective balance was associated with psychological tranquillity, relaxation as well as enjoyment that were associated with a mindful experience. One respondent emphasized that the benefits from experiencing mental balance were persistent:

*Travel with my mind is like recharging. The experience for me was **not a temporary calm** at that moment, but also akin to **filling up my fighting capacity** until I was back at my working place. I would say the experience had functions of rubbish out and energy in. [S15]*

### *Therapeutic functions*

Most interestingly, the benefits gained from affective balance can be remembered and reinforced through reliving the experience. For example, one Taiwanese backpacker discussed how they had learned to focus on beneficial stimuli: “*It is like a **therapeutic path** of star-watching. I would look at the starry sky while I walk back alone to my house after a stressful work*” [S03]. This reliving of the experience may also be purely mental. “*A creative way to make me at ease is looking at the sky with my mind, I don’t think too much. I always try this and have experienced the benefits... even if I am in a very busy moment or situation*”. [S38]

S02 highlighted the similarity of the meditative mindful experience to a therapeutic treatment.

*Essentially, that situation was equal to an effect of **therapy**. It triggered in myself a **balance of relaxation and happiness** and **shifted my focus of thoughts**. Most importantly, it filled up a gap in my life...I would rather not say the experience of immersing myself in the ocean is a kind of ‘perceived learning’, since the term ‘learning’ is too hard and heavy when contrasted with the soft term of ‘renew, new or alternative therapy’. [S02]*

The therapeutic balance facilitated the backpackers to respond to their negative emotions and seemed to address such affective imbalances. However, the impact of this ‘treatment’ may not last a long time. This idea is further supported by findings from the interviews:

*This experience acted as a **recharge** that **brought me power and energy** to face future challenges. It is hard to get the same feeling of recharge when I am back in a normal life. Sometimes I need such a push from taking a break to make me temporarily forget pressure from my academic work. [S02]*

*After the travel, the effect of the perceived benefit aroused by the wave would not exist consistently. When I was back to my daily life and work from the previous couple of days,*

*the effect of **recharge** and **restoration** peaked but did not exist in the future that followed. So, my next plan for travel is a way to recharge and refresh me again. [S16]*

This implies that the restoration or the recharge associated with meditative mindful travel experiences may fade over time. Therefore, the finding supports that mindful travel it is important to refresh the affective balance and to release negative emotions.

#### **4.4.1.3 Cognitive Response**

Cognitive responses associated with awareness were found to be important and more likely to lead to cognitive experiential benefits such as: remembering, and self-monitoring and reflections. These findings are explained as follows.

##### *Cognitive recall (Remembering)*

All respondents in this research suggested that meditative mindful experiences were well-remembered and remained in their mind. Respondents were able to refer to the quality of their mind at the time of the experience and to objects involved in the situation. When asked what the recalled mindful experiences felt like, respondents could describe them in detail indicating that they had paid attention to the experience and this present-centred awareness could be recalled for a long time afterwards.

All respondents recalled and reflected on the most memorable or impressive experiences of their journey. They were able to recall and discuss stories quickly and about their experiences, spontaneously. The interviews clearly connected their current thinking with their vivid memories, as demonstrated in the following excerpts:

*The experience was as **memorable** as shooting a film or taking a photo. It was videoed or pictured into a special image where the focus was on the story's time and space, but it was not made by means of the shutter of a camera or machine. It was **photographed** through my eyes and my mind. [S12]*

*The picture will be printed as my **memory** in my brain or in my **mind-sight** forever. It might be triggered when some similar encounter happens again, and makes me **recall** it and **connect** with it immediately. [S11]*

One important cognitive characteristic of these events is their memorability as illustrated in the quotes above. These respondents described the events as if they were reengaging with the experiences. Hence, meditative mindful experiences are vividly memorable. As one respondent said “I left the experience with a clear memory” [S11]. On the other hand, some respondents stated their

mindful experiences involved the act of remembering the past. In the interviews, they recounted prior familiar feelings or connected the meditative mindful experience to some previous memorable event. This was manifested in a number of the interview findings:

*The calm was like a burst of wind through me and that was associated with my childhood where I lived in the rural countryside. I was sitting at home and watching the clouds...very peaceful. [S11]*

*There was a mix of smells, like an interesting composition of wood, carpet and the sheets smelt of bleach, when I entered the backpacker dorm. The smell was familiar due to my prior backpacker stay experiences and made me reconnect my feelings immediately to another **memorable** situation. **Time and space switched instantly.** [S32]*

#### *Self-monitoring and reflection*

Self-monitoring is a cognitive experiential benefit mentioned by many respondents. Self-monitoring related to reflective responses during and after the event and is a kind of introspection. Examples are provided by the following two responses:

*After this travel experience I started to **reflect** on why I limited myself to something. Actually, before this trip I was in a very bad mood, and cared about such small things. However, I am now more aware from these experiences regardless of whether they were positive or negative that they provided me with a wider angle to see the world. That means that I am able to **look at my life** through different and multiple dimensions. Hence, my thinking and thoughts have been changed from these travel experiences. [S26]*

*The comfort for me is like I took a deep breath after appreciating a drama in the Sydney Opera House. I was immersed in the wonderful performance and **reflected** it has been a long time for me to engage in music that was my favourite interest. It seemed a long time. I have never **reflected on my life and reviewed my mind.** That is, I was thinking such as “oh, how come that I did something stupid?” rather than thinking about “I should continue my music career to make more money in the contemporary society”. [S11]*

These comments showed that capacity for reflection and introspection appears to be developed through experiencing a state of awareness. Many respondents observed their own mental states without over-analysing them and this led them to a greater exploration, understanding and acceptance of themselves. Hence, self-monitoring induced by the meditative mindful experience seems to allow awareness and changes of habitual thinking patterns that allow positive reflective responses to the situation:

... there was a kind of **reflection**, dialogue between me and the spectacle, such as how my past actions might have been changed or improved to bring about the person I am now ... the effect of **reflection** was enlightenment such as I should do something different or change my attitude in the future. [S10]

My **reflection** was like skimming a Chinese revolving scenic lantern to look back at my lifetime. The **reflection** was not about thinking but an inspection of my mind ... [it avoids] yielding to someone else's criteria rather than reflecting on their own, deeply. [S15]

#### 4.4.1.4 Mature Judgments

Mindful travel experiences influenced the respondent's thinking leading to more mature and enlightened judgments of the self and others. Three types of cognitive transformations were identified from the interviews and were labelled self-compassion, openness and an awakening of insight.

##### *Self-compassion*

For some backpackers, self-compassion was being kind to oneself in instances involving negative thoughts or difficult emotions such as guilt, rather than being self-critical, as evidenced by the following:

*I tried to **forgive myself** for killing a dying wallaby using a stone... the wallaby was hit by a vehicle driven by my friend in the night on the highway heading to Uluru. I **understood** we had to do it because we don't like to see the wallaby's lasting suffering, even though we were extremely reluctant to kill an animal. [S13]*

Here, S13 reported she could not help but kill a dying animal although it violated her ethical beliefs. During her meditative mindful experience, she became more aware of the purpose of her actions rather than only focusing on the emotional killing itself, rather than elaborating on the cruelty or whether the killing "should" or "should not" occur. Hence, she was able to escape from a fixed frame of guilt, and create a space in which she could reorganise her thinking. This seems to imply a sense of self-compassion that involves awareness and cognition that led to an emotionally positive self-attitude to avoid any negative cognitive consequence of self-judgment or rumination.

##### *Openness*

Openness is described as an attitude that allows respondents to be in a receptive state of mind. Some examples below illustrate the characteristics of openness associated with the interviewees' meditative mindful travel experiences. "An attitude of **openness** to my life was aroused from the

experience... [I want] to be happy and not to haggle with others” [S26]. Furthermore, travelling was found to be a feasible way to invite the tourists’ awareness of various sensations perceived and bring these experiences to being in the present moment, as illustrated below:

*I travel to **allow** my sensations to sharpen and become alert again. An effective way to take a break is to travel to a new environment that will **awaken my sensations** – to experience every moment but not to think too much. [S02]*

When open to experience, respondents were inclined to develop a better understanding of the needs of others and to try to help them. This kind of altruistic thinking constituted a cognitive shift. Another characteristic of openness is neutral acceptance of disturbing events or difficulties—facing challenges with a positive attitude—as evidenced by the following quote:

*There was a funny side to camping in Kakadu National Park. Initially, I was angry about lots of unexpected distractions when I was sleeping, such as lots of annoying mosquitos, then heavy rain as I had to run to collect my clothes that were hanging in the forest. Basically, it was chaotic and the worst night. However, I felt it was a special experience because I pushed a gecko into the tent to expel the mosquitos. As a consequence, the gecko ran around my tent and seriously disturbed my sleep. Finally, I grabbed a wet towel to cover my head to sleep. **I thought it is natural and accepted those uncontrolled happenings.** [S38]*

In addition, backpackers found that they were open to novelty as they were more aware of new or different things in their surroundings. One respondent reported:

*I felt happy being in the open. You know, my mood was wonderful, spectacular, and amazing. This trip had not been made in vain. I think I need to go out to see the world **rather than to be limited in my own small frame.** My view of life is different when I look at or experience something different. In particular, this experience has influenced my personal views when I encounter something or someone new back in Taiwan in my normal life. [S26]*

Here S26 pointed out that he had a heightened state of involvement in his surroundings while observing encounters that broadened his horizons and encouraged his ability to face the world.

### *Awakening of Insight*

Enlightenment, or the awakening of insight, is developed by applying cognitive abilities to evaluate mental states. When asked what they felt had changed as a result of their mindful experience, one respondent described the transformation of his mindset:

*That is the mindset that engaged me in that moment of travel and helped me to **transform** my routine habits, space and time. For example, I am talking with you but I also feel I am connecting with that travel moment. It is a kind of learning or inspiration to me. [S02]*

S02 reported that his habitual thinking had been changed by his experience. Thinking is often evaluative, but such routine thinking is limiting and may frame an experience negatively. Another respondent observed:

*Skydiving is a high risk activity. I was a little bit worried before jumping whether the parachute might not open. However, after the jump, personally, I agreed with a saying "Life and death, poor or rich, it's all destined". I **thought** things and fate are **predestined**; something would either happen or not happen naturally....However, I thought I should **try** as much as possible instead of regretting it if I did nothing. Don't be afraid of something before you have tried it. [S44]*

The quote above illustrates how mindful experiences allowed respondents to be more open to experiencing the present moment and more receptive to the unknown, whether pleasant or unpleasant.

The findings revealed that the interviewees experienced liberating cognitive transformations. Mindfulness experiences can be seen as a mediator to restart habitual thinking modes and allow thoughts to be more introspective, engendering a child-like innocence, instead of over-identifying the meaning or over-emphasising the material value of an experience. As a result, respondents seemed to have become more open and thoughtful. This is illustrated by this statement:

*Looking at the sky simply **changed my attitude and thoughts**. I found my mind adopted an innocent state, like a child's...no evaluation, value, or reward was aroused. That is the happiness and wellbeing of a child. [S38]*

Accordingly, a mindfulness experience might be a trigger to evoke one's inner desire and create more mental space to transform active thinking patterns about the external world into a more introspective and self-conscious state, as illustrated by this quote:

*The memorable events in Sydney and in my hometown have the same feeling of calm. They are different from my daily life's experiences, so I notice it but it is **beyond my normal thinking**. [S11]*

The respondents' meditative mindful experiences seemed to allow them to become more open, not only to novelty but also to embracing compassion for themselves and others. These cognitive



transformations led to more positive thoughts than would normally result from ‘mindless’ normal automatic thinking. Such experiences seem to allow the individual’s subconscious thoughts and cognitive judgment to become closer and allow an individual to become more loving and kind to them. It may also trigger memories and connect to events that evoke a similar feeling.

These examples illustrate the processing and outcomes of mindful experiences. The benefits are related to a kind of altruistic thinking. This altruistic mode is freer than mindless thinking, which tends to be based on automatic judgmental outcomes. Mindful experiences appear to facilitate remembering, self-monitoring of reflection, and more altruistic thinking. The respondents did not dwell negatively on past thoughts or future expectations and instead were more aware of what was taking place in the moment; observing the experience and his/her reactions rather than elaborating on their content or meaning. In this way, the backpackers stated they were able to develop a state of non-reactive equanimity that enabled them to see things as they presented rather than being fixed in their usual patterns of evaluative reactivity.

In summary, analysis of these findings indicated that during meditative mindful experiences, past memories, future expectations, and current evaluations were not elaborated on and simply observed. That is, the experience allowed the scope of attention to attend to what was happening at the moment leading to very few negative outcomes.

#### **4.4.2 Physical Experiential Benefits**

This section identifies two emergent, physical, beneficial outcomes (or physical indicators of transformative mental experiences) which resulted from the Taiwanese backpackers’ mindful experiences in Australia. These benefits were physical relaxation, which is considered a response to low physiological arousal, and physical resilience in response to the physical responses.

##### **4.4.2.1 Physical Relaxation**

When respondents were asked what significant changes they felt were associated with their mindful experiences, some mentioned that the most significant change they perceived in terms of physical senses was physical relaxation, and that this was related to certain situations where they immersed themselves in what they were doing. These physical responses manifested quickly while the visitor was on-site, and furthermore, would often last after they had left. Muscular relaxation and more comfortable breathing were noted by most respondents in this study.

### *Muscle Relaxation*

Muscular relaxation was noted during and after experiencing mindful experiences. The physical symptoms of muscle relaxation included a feeling of having a lighter body and muscular flexibility. Here are some examples:

*I watched my feelings without getting lost in them, the feelings of **fluttering and flying**, so **light and easily** among stars; swimming in the Milky Way, and lots of stars followed my flying. I was so **relaxed** and felt at ease. [S02]*

*Basically, I get a stiff **neck** and tight cheekbones when I am under pressure. However, that experience made me **relaxed** because I could feel my **shoulders loosening** rather than being raised or hunched. I also felt my head cool down and stones were falling away from my jammed brain. At that moment, I feel my **entire head was loosened**. [S15]*

These quote illustrate that physical relaxation embodies simultaneous body awareness and positive psychological responses, such as feeling at ease or being mentally relaxed. Furthermore, they indicate that changes in body awareness involved increased muscular flexibility. For example, muscles became less tense when an individual was involved in a meditative mindful experience. As a consequence, the physiological response seems to activate a natural mechanism against muscular rigidity, which allows the respondent to turn off stressful bodily effects, or to relieve the effects of the fight-or-flight response. This is also illustrated by S15 as “*The feeling of the body being totally relaxed is similar to instantly unloading sandstones from a big truck*” [S15]. This respondent used the metaphor of unloading sandstones from a big truck to describe the feeling of muscular relaxation throughout her body. In summary, physical relaxation is helpful to reduce strain or overcome pressures that have troubled the respondents.

### *Comfortable Breathing*

During mindful travel experiences that are associated with present-focused awareness, many respondents noted that their breathing became more natural and comfortable. This was observed by only some of the respondents. The response that accompanied the experience resulted in the respondents becoming fully relaxed. One respondent reported:

*I felt so relaxed when I **breathed** the cool pure breeze in Byron Bay. The temperature of the air was a bit lower than my body. Basically, it was a hot day, yet **inhaling** the air made my body cool and to calm down. It seemed like I had opened the door of refrigerator and let the cool air come into my body, just like when I came in from an extremely hot outdoors in*

*summer. Wow...the amazing **inhaling and exhaling** made my **body relaxed** so it felt like all the **pressure** I was burdened with was **removed**. [S15]*

The respondent was able to feel her inner body sensations that were connected but different from those that were normally expected for the situation.

When talking about the characteristics of their breathing, the respondents reported they felt enjoyment with a slower and deeper rhythm of breathing than their normal pace, as evidenced by the following statement.

*I heard nothing except my clear breath from myself and sound from the ocean while I was snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef...My **long and slow inhaling and exhaling** were so clear, because I had to keep silent because I was biting on a snorkel tube. I could hear the calm voice of the ocean through the flow of the waves as well as my **slow and easy breathing**....It was so peaceful. [S30]*

This lower physiological arousal state including slower and/or deeper breathing and muscular flexibility was identified as a state of relaxation and related to a state of mental calm, ease or peace.

#### **4.4.2.2 Physical Resilience**

The most common physical barriers to a mindful experience described by the respondents were physical discomfort and feeling sick due to stress. The section explores how the physical relaxation responses in turn changed other physical functions and led to a reduction in stress and facilitated a state of functional wellbeing.

##### *Sleep Quality*

An improvement in sleep quality is one of the transformed physical indicators of improved health outcomes found in this research. One respondent described how she felt relaxed in relation to her sleep:

*I knew my body was in a state of relaxation because I had a good sleep that night. While I did not sleep very long, my **sleep was deep and comfortable**. I knew my **body rested well** after the slow walk in the Sunshine Coast National Park that day. [S16]*

Similar mental responses and sleeping outcomes were also mentioned by S16:

*Before this travel, I felt sleepy and had a tired body but I could not sleep deeply because I felt stressed. Even if I tried to work hard and exhausted myself, I woke up easily and my sleep was short. It is kind of an illness I feel when I am in modern civilized society. [S16]*

The evidence suggests that meditative mindful travel may help some backpackers to improve their sleeping habits and the quality of their sleep.

### *Reducing Fatigue*

The finding also shows that after meditative mindful travel, participants perceived enhanced physical resilience and reduced fatigue. This was evident in a range of tourism activities, as illustrated below:

*Every day I work with my brain on my academic study, whereas walking out to the beach is an alternative type of **brain work** and I felt my brain was suffused with more blood and **energy**. It had the effect of **restoring balance** to my daily life, because the power of the wave slapping my body refreshed my brain and mind deeply. That is, the wave was the key that made my travel experience a real one. [S02].*

In conclusion, the findings have shown that a reduction in physiological arousal also reduces psychological arousal and leads to positive outcomes. Hence, this indicates that there are subtle relationships between mind and body.

### 4.4.3 Summary for Research Objective 3

In response to Research Objective 3, it was identified that meditative mindfulness results in tourists gaining specific benefits. Two main types of psychological and physical experiential benefits of positive consequences were identified (as detailed in Table 4.3), and it was found that they were significantly related to mind and body for each type of benefit among backpackers.

**Table 4.3 Key themes/concepts of benefits derived from meditative mindful tourist experiences**

Consequences	4.4.1 Psychological benefits		4.4.2 Physical benefits
Positive effects	Affective effects	Cognitive effects	Physical effects
<b>Immediate representations</b>	<p><b>Mental Ease</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Calm/Peace/Serenity</li> <li>▪ Relaxation/Stress release</li> <li>▪ Positive moods</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cognitive Responses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cognitive recall <i>Remembering</i></li> <li>▪ Self-monitoring <i>Reflections</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical Relaxation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Muscular relaxation</li> <li>▪ Comfortable breathing</li> </ul>
<b>Transformed representations</b>	<p><b>Emotional Balance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Well-being</li> <li>▪ Therapeutic functions <i>Recharge</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Mature Judgments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self-compassion</li> <li>▪ Openness</li> <li>▪ Awakening of insight</li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical Resilience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sleep quality</li> <li>▪ Reducing fatigue</li> </ul>
Eastern approach	Mind		Body

#### 4.5 Summary: A Model of Meditative Mindful Tourist Experience

This section presents a ‘Model of Meditative Mindfulness Tourist Experience’ and its components are based on the key findings (see Figure 4.7), which conceptually link meditative mindfulness to its antecedents and consequences. The model provides a theoretical framework to illustrate the meditative mindfulness process. The model may be useful for future tourism studies that underpin their studies with a comprehensive knowledge of the phenomenon of meditative mindfulness. This model will form the basis of further discussion in Chapter 5.

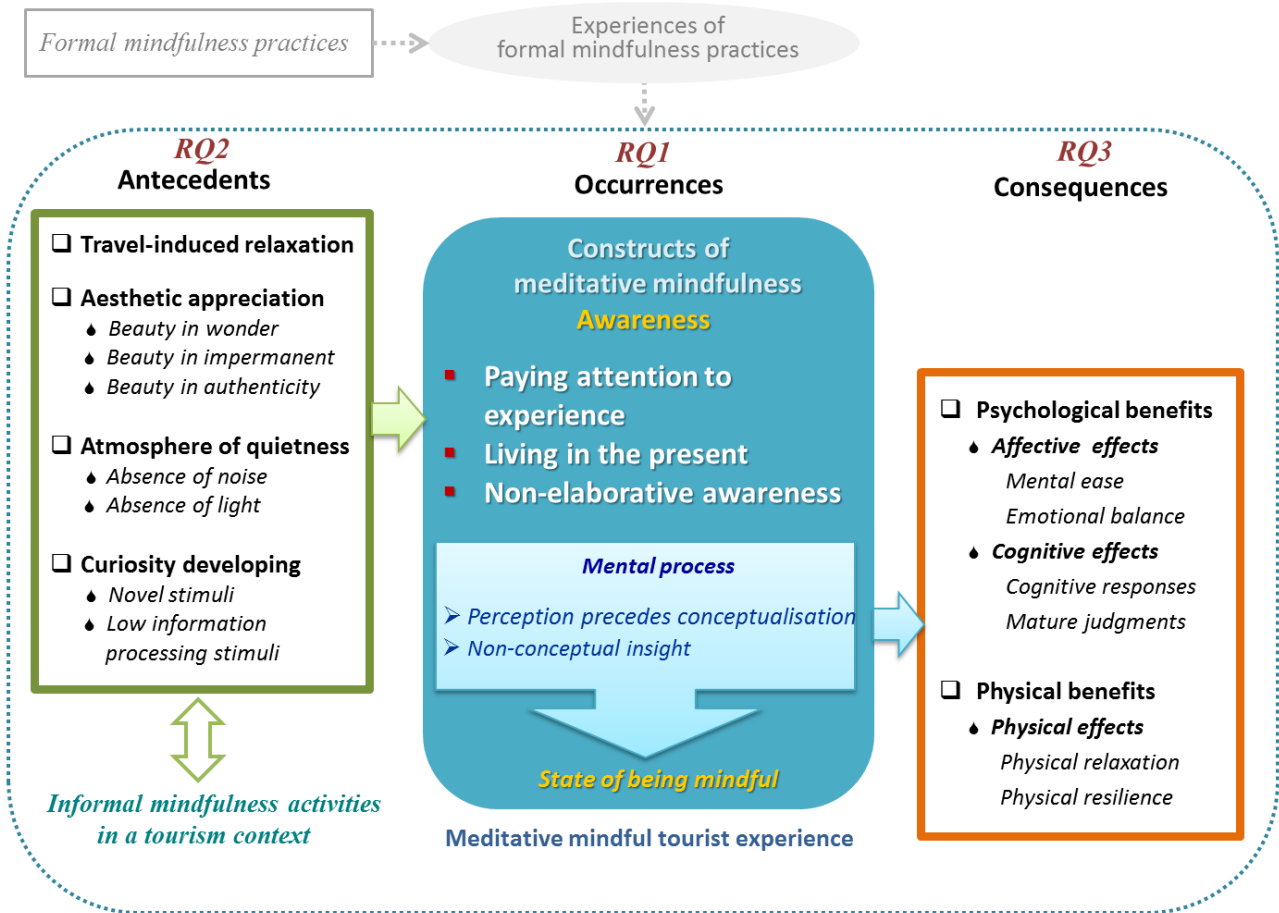


Figure 4.7 Model of meditative mindful tourist experience

## **CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The overall aim of this thesis is to determine whether the meditative mindfulness phenomenon can be applied to the Taiwanese backpacker tourism experience. To achieve this, the study sought to provide an understanding of this type of travel experience, and to explore the theoretical and empirical relationships between the antecedents and consequences. The study has addressed three research objectives: (1) to identify the phenomena associated with meditative mindful tourist experiences in a tourism context, (2) to analyse the antecedents which facilitate mindful experiences of Taiwanese backpackers so as to create an awareness of the present moment, and through a non-judgmental acceptance of the situation, (3) to understand what are the perceived experiential benefits that can be derived from meditative mindful experiences.

The qualitative findings of the research were provided in the previous chapter. In this concluding chapter, Section 5.2 will discuss the general conclusions relating to the three research objectives. The theoretical and practical contributions of this study for both academia and industry will be addressed in Section 5.3. Section 5.4 will present the delimitations and limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research will be also discussed in Section 5.5.

### **5.2 Discussion of Key Findings**

This section discusses the research findings that are linked to the three research objectives of this study. It comprises three parts; the first identifies occurrences of meditative mindfulness experiences, and distinguishes them from socio-cognitive mindfulness and flow experiences. The second part discusses the antecedents of meditative mindfulness experiences, and the third part examines the consequences (experiential benefits) that Taiwanese backpackers received from their meditative mindfulness experiences in Australia. The following section provides a conclusion to the findings of the three research objectives in order to address the aim of the study: to examine the meditative mindfulness phenomenon in regard to the travel experience.

### 5.2.1 Research Objective 1: Occurrences of Meditative Mindfulness Experiences in Tourism

This thesis has identified and provided evidence that respondents reported many examples of meditative mindfulness experiences during their Australian journey. These experiences fit with the general definition of mindfulness by Kabat-Zinn (2003a) but emphasise the psychological construct of awareness as the key element in identifying meditative mindfulness (Yeganeh, 2006). This section will discuss three aspects related to the findings for research objective 1. Firstly, the three dimensions of awareness will be examined further. Secondly, the concept of meditative mindfulness will be contrasted with the alternative concept of mindfulness defined by Langer (1992), used by Moscardo (1999) in tourism, and distinguished as socio-cognitive mindfulness by Pirson, Langer, Bodner and Zilcha (2012). Thirdly, subtle similarities and differences between meditative mindfulness experience and the related concept of flow experience defined by Csikszentmihalyi (2000a) will be identified and are discussed. Table 5.1 provides a summary and visual reference for these discussions.

**Table 5.1 Dimensions of meditative mindful experiences**

Constructs of mindfulness	1 <sup>st</sup> dimension of awareness	2 <sup>nd</sup> dimension of awareness	3 <sup>rd</sup> dimension of awareness	Applications
<b>MM</b>	Paying attention on purpose	Paying attention being in the present	Paying attention being nonjudgmental	Clinical psychology
<b>This study</b>	Paying attention to tourist experience	Living in the present Present-centred awareness	Non-elaborative awareness	Tourism
<b>Mental process</b>	<b>Perceptions</b> <i>feeling, sensations</i>	<b>Central feature</b>	<b>Conceptualising</b> <i>thinking, judgment</i>	
<b>Theme Sub-features</b>	<b>Sensory awareness</b> ○ Naturally focusing on an object ○ Internal feelings or external stimuli	<b>Being in the moment</b>  <b>Not worrying about the past and future</b> ○ Less goal-direction with flexibility and relaxation	<b>Non-conceptual insight**</b> ○ Reflective thinking with acceptance ○ Non-elaborative judgment	
	<b>Relaxed attention*</b> ○ Flexible and relaxed awareness	<b>Sense of timelessness</b> <i>fully meditative mindfulness</i> ○ Deeper attention ○ Being mode ○ quasi-‘non-experience’	<b>Stored memories</b>  <b>Perception precedes conceptualisation</b> <i>temporarily without thinking</i> ○ Being oblivious to oneself ○ A sense of emptiness	
<b>Differences between SM &amp; F</b>	* Major differences between MM and F are highlighted in yellow. ** Major differences between MM and SM are highlighted in green.			

**Note.** “MM” means meditative mindfulness, “SM” means socio-cognitive mindfulness, and “F” means flow. The grey overlap areas indicate that sub-features of meditative mindfulness share similar representations.

Source: Developed for this thesis

### 5.2.1.1 Dimensions of Awareness in Meditative Mindful Experiences

This study found a number of instances of tourist experiences that were associated with meditative mindfulness which occurred in backpacking contexts. These experiences fitted in with the general definition of mindfulness by Kabat-Zinn (2003a) but emphasised the psychological construct of awareness as the key element in identifying meditative mindfulness (Yeganeh, 2006). The three awareness dimensions as identified in Chapter 4 were: paying attention (Section 4.2.1), living in the present/present-centred awareness (Section 4.2.2); and non-elaborative awareness (Section 4.2.3). The finding that meditative mindfulness is related to a number of other dimensions of awareness is similar to the idea of ‘streams of awareness’ as discussed by Siegel (2009, p. 154) who considered that awareness “is not a unitary process but may have distinct layers”. Kabat-Zinn’s (2003a) definition of mindfulness—paying attention, being in the present moment and being non-judgmental with acceptance—is in the tourist context, found to be paying attention to a present moment experience, without elaboration on it. This is important because it helps to explain the particular phenomenological nature of tourist meditative mindfulness experience.

#### *Dimension 1: Paying Attention to Tourist Experience*

Paying attention has been categorised in the findings as sensory awareness and relaxed attention. In discussing mindfulness—paying attention has been mentioned as an important element by many authors (Bishop et al., 2004; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a; Reid, 2011). It has been variously described as ‘intentional awareness of what is’ (Reid, 2011, p. 50), ‘intentionally attending to experience’ (Shapiro, 2009, p. 557) or ‘being aware of awareness’ (Reid, 2011, p. 50). Therefore paying attention is seen as intentional awareness. In this study, intentional awareness was found to be closely related to the sensations perceived during relaxation. That is, a meditative mindful tourist experience involves being aware or paying attention when naturally focusing on an object (which may be internal feelings or external stimuli). The term object here means any stimulus with which attention might become involved, including sensations, thoughts, and feelings as well as environmental stimuli such as sounds (Bishop et al., 2004). This implies that the stream of the awareness begins with the sensory awareness during an engaging experience.

Several researchers have discussed that a stream of awareness is ‘attentional attention’ or the observing and attending to the changing range of sensations, feelings, and thoughts, moment to moment (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2002b, 2005; Zeidan, 2009). This indicates that the perceived sensation is a fundamental element of mindfulness because a stream of awareness beginning with sensation leads to the start of mental processing in a mindful way (Siegel, 2009). Siegel (2009, p. 154) explained this phenomena as a kind of ‘flow’ in response to a ‘bottom-up’



experience and the ‘bottom–up flow’ enables an individual to “hold onto the present moment, not getting lost in prior learning or worries about the future”. This means that we are not thinking about the future (prospection) or the past (retrospection) but experiencing present sensations (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007).

As a result, an individual is able to, “clearly separate this bottom–up input from top–down constraints that shackle the mind” (Siegel, 2009, p. 154). In formal mindfulness training practice such as meditation, sensation is described as the starting point for mental processing (Kabat-Zinn, 2005), sometimes called premised mindfulness (Zeidan, 2009). For example, practitioners are guided by simply focusing their attention on somatic sensations wherever they arise in the entire body. These somatic sensations include breathing and body sensations although the sensation of breathing is mostly emphasised (Bishop et al., 2004; Carruthers & Hood, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2002b; Kuan, 2012; Siegel, 2009; Smith, Amutio, Anderson, & Aria, 1996; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). During the process of formal mindfulness practice, the awareness of breathing is encouraged by refocusing on the breathing each time attention wanders away, or simply as “taking notice of whatever the mind happens to wander to and accepting each object without making judgments about it or elaborating on its implications, additional meanings, or need for action” (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006, p. 695). Directing attention back to the breathing prevents further elaboration (Bishop et al., 2004) and enhances an individual's ability to sustain their attention.

The respondents in this study did not only attend to their breathing but instead reported an awareness of a range of sensations both external and internal. The sensations reported by Taiwanese backpackers included visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory and mental feelings. However, the most frequently mentioned sensations were visual, auditory and tactile, and were derived from the beautiful and wondrous scenery and settings that are often found in natural tourism contexts. Thus, meditative mindfulness experiences in tourism are different from situations found in formal mindful practices such as meditation because the focus is not on deliberate breathing but an awareness of a spontaneous and enthralling experience. Despite the starting point of a travel-induced meditative mindfulness experience being different from that of formal mindfulness practice, the process of intentional awareness of a perceived sensation involves the same stable attention to the current moment.

Relaxed attention is the second part of paying attention. The results of this study indicate that the state of awareness is more flexible and relaxed while travelling: travel by itself is said to provide opportunities for relaxation and exploring new experiences (Li, Meng, Uysal, & Mihalik, 2013; Weiler & Yu, 2008) in the pursuit of fulfilment (Chen & Petrick, 2013; Currie, 2000; Filep, 2009; Kottler, 1997). Indeed several commentators have argued that people travel to avoid the isolation,

work orientation, and stress-related disorders of everyday life in postmodern society (Giddens, 1991; Kleinman, 2004; Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001; Schroevers & Brandsma, 2010). Therefore, we can argue that tourist experiences can provide a sense of mental ease, especially when visiting beautiful Australian nature-based destinations (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011).

Accordingly, a respondent's awareness can be relaxed when orientated by perceived visual, auditory and tactile sensations. Relaxed attention is maintained by the mindfulness experience, rather than attached to a person's attitude to the tourism context. Buddhist attentional training tries to develop this same awareness through relaxation (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Relaxed attention plays an important role in effecting psychological calmness and somatic relaxation, when a person has a stable mood and feels free from any outward constraints. Relaxed attention is akin to the "relaxation response" (Benson, 1975) which is an important part of the mechanism of practising formal mindful meditation (Shapiro et al., 2006; Wallace, 2006; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Relaxed attention enables formal mindfulness practitioners to develop a stable awareness and to reduce cognitive vulnerability to reactive modes of mind that might otherwise heighten stress and emotional distress (Bishop et al., 2004; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006).

Thereby, awareness of paying attention reflexively involves a stable and relaxed mental state related to physical and mental ease. It is important to note that relaxed attention is not found in flow experiences and will be discussed in section 5.2.1.2. A relaxed state was implied in the definition by Kabat-Zinn (2003a) but not previously mentioned.

#### *Dimension 2: Living in the Present (Present-centred Awareness)*

Kabat-Zinn (2003a, p. 145) defined mindfulness as "*the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment*". In the previous subsection, paying attention on purpose has been discussed. Here, paying attention in the present moment is discussed. Paying attention in the present moment is described as present-centred attention/awareness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown et al., 2007a; Dreyfus, 2011) or present-centred focus (Hayes & Feldman, 2004).

The emphasis in meditative practices is on present-centred awareness so that a novice can learn how to attend to what is being presented to one's senses (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Present-centred awareness helps an individual to keep their mind in the present and focused on the object rather than being distracted (Dreyfus, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2002b; Siegel, 2009; Wallace, 2006). Present-centredness allows the mind to pay attention to a focused object and not float away from it (Dreyfus, 2011).

In the meditative mindfulness tourism experiences found here, present-centredness was identified from the transcripts. Present-centred awareness relates to a meditative mindful tourist experience and has three central features as identified in Chapter 4. These are; experience in the ‘being in the moment’, not worrying about the past or future, and senses of timelessness. Each will be discussed below.

Being in the moment is one of the central features of living in the present (present-centred awareness) and was seen in all meditative mindfulness experiences. Taiwanese backpackers discussed present-centred awareness as a feeling of being fully occupied with the object based on their current experience (the object may be internal or external stimuli). Being fully occupied means natural and undivided observation/attention to the object.

The same ideas are also found in the non-tourism literature. For Bishop et al. (2004), present-centred awareness means bringing awareness back to the current experience through observing and attending to the changing objects from moment to moment. In the same way, a meditative mindfulness tourist experience involves engaging with a particular event that is focally present for the tourist at a tourism destination. A tourism setting or leisure activity may embody some trigger or factor that causes the tourist to attend to their senses in the same way that clinical meditative mindfulness practices encourage. For example, rainbows, spectacular landscapes and vast oceans appear to draw the visitor’s attention, which immerses them in that present moment experience. This was discussed in Section 4.3.2.

Present-centred awareness can be regarded as functioning mindfulness: when mindful, an individual’s attention is on the target of the current experience (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness is discussed as present-oriented awareness (Brown et al., 2007a), a ‘state of being attentive to’ and ‘aware of what is taking place in the present’ (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 5) that involves monitoring and observing one’s own moment-to-moment sensory and psychic events (Brown et al., 2007a). The triggers or factors of meditative mindfulness tourist experience identified in this study were discussed in Section 4.3 and will be discussed further in Section 5.2.2.

Certain moments during each respondent’s journey were vividly recalled, indicating that at those moments the respondent was present-centred. The backpackers reported their experience of that particular moment very clearly, with the analysis revealing that the experience began with sensations. For example, one respondent could describe the pattern of clouds in the sky as if they were seeing it again. Others could re-experience the smell of the ocean or the feeling of grass on their skin. Present-centred awareness creates a retentive focus on the experience object, so that an individual is able to recollect it later and to generate a clear understanding (Dreyfus, 2011). This

implies that paying attention to objects in the here-and-now underpins retentive recall. Consequently, present-centred awareness leads to a vivid memory (Dreyfus, 2011); however, as will be discussed below, it did not involve elaboration (see subsection: *Dimension 3: Non-elaborative Awareness*). Formal mindfulness practice teaches students to pay attention to awareness of the present moment. It involves intentionally simplifying one's awareness to only a non-judgmental observation, as well as narrowing in on one aspect of the inner and/or outer experience in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2002b). This also relates to the third dimension of meditative mindfulness— non-elaborative awareness— as discussed in Section 4.2.3.

Not worrying about the past and future is the second central feature of present-centred awareness identified in this study. When the respondents were fully immersed in observation of the focal tourism object, the respondents did not have thoughts related to regret, worries about the past, or fears for the future. They simply paid attention to what was occurring at the moment without any particular intention for action.

All respondents reported that they were thinking about nothing else when engaged in their meditative mindfulness experience. In this state, their attention was not entangled with thinking about the past or the future; moreover, they were not thinking in the present and also not engaged in judgments about the present. In this way, meditative mindfulness experience in tourism contexts is close to the state achieved through meditation in a clinical context. For example, when meditators or practitioners are in the present moment they are not thinking about the past or future (Baer, 2003). Instead, they only notice that they have begun to have such thoughts, and then they return their attention to the present moment. This contrasts with mental states in which the mind is preoccupied with thoughts about the past or the future, such as planning or fantasies.

Retrospection —thinking about the past— is associated with increased severity of depressive symptoms and anxiety (Kang, Gruber, & Gray, 2013).

When 'in the present moment', respondents paid attention but their thoughts did not involve an intention to act. Instead, their attention did not have a goal-direction; rather, they were relaxed in response to negative emotions and thoughts that were aroused during the experience. Other researchers described this as "quieting the mind with concentration" (Mikulas, 2011, p. 3). Meditative mindfulness tourist experiences appear to have the same effect of 'quietening'; helping people to distance themselves from their thoughts and relax in the here and now. Present-centred awareness stops an automatic response to thoughts about the past or the future. Indeed respondents mentioned they had a 'blank brain', meaning that they avoided thinking that could arouse emotional feelings such as anxiety or panic. This is further discussed in the subsection on non-elaborative awareness.

A sense of timelessness is the third feature of present-centred awareness, whereby attention is sustained across a stretch of time without being aware of that time passing. The sense of timelessness commented on by Taiwanese backpackers was attributed to paying full attention to and becoming totally immersed in the present-moment object, and hence not thinking about the past or future. This resulted in a sense of timelessness during the backpackers' leisure and recreation engagement.

Timelessness during tourists' on-site experiences has been noted in other tourism studies. Borrie and Roggenbuck (2001) suggested focused attention through immersion in the environment leads to a wilderness experience involving a sense of timelessness. In this state, there is a greater focus on the environment and in introspection, and less focus on others or social objects. Respondents had no sense of time passing and seemed to shift from a 'doing' into a 'being mode' for that present moment. Sharpley and Jepson (2011) also found that a sense of timelessness, a sense of oneness, and connection to the world are subconscious emotional dimensions associated with tourists' spiritual experiences in rural tourism settings. These tourists were at the moment thinking that nothing needed to be done; all actions, duties or obligations seemed to evaporate when respondents gazed at historic buildings, were immersed in a night sky full of stars, or were enjoying a music performance.

Interestingly, this concept has not been closely studied in the tourism context, although it has been explored in detail in the non-tourism literature. In Buddhism and clinical psychology studies, Kang and Whittingham (2010, p. 169) argued that 'timeless awareness' is uncontrived natural awareness during mindfulness meditation. This occurs when sensation and perception are towards a state of deeper mental concentration. Timeless awareness helps to free an individual from a proliferation of thoughts. The successive states emerge with an abiding inner stillness, a sense of bliss and dissolution of cognitive boundaries (Kang & Whittingham, 2010). In an organizational sense, Mainemelis (2001, p. 548) described timelessness as "an experience of transcending time and one's self by becoming immersed in a captivating present-moment activity or event". Thus, "the notions of past, present, future, and recurrence are entirely contained in the unfolding present moment".

Similarly, this study found that present-centred awareness in tourism applications shares similarities with formal mindfulness practices. The tourists' experiences connect their experience of paying attention with the here-and-now and ignore the emotional disturbances derived from processing. Furthermore, all appearances and thoughts become 'blank' naturally. For example, 'my brain was on the blink (放空)', being oblivious of myself (忘我)' and 'sitting and forgetting all things (坐忘)' —which are metaphors from the Chinese classic literature (Defoort, 2012)—were frequently

mentioned by interviewees. The use of these terms suggests that the tourists were immersed in their present-centred experience. This sense of timelessness is followed by a sense of ‘emptiness’ which appears to be derived from paying closer attention and being fully immersed in a particular event or object. The same phenomenon has been explored in meditative mindfulness practices: the experience involves timelessness as a kind of quasi-‘non-experience’ (Kang & Whittingham, 2010). In other words, this sense of timelessness is a manifestation of fully present-centred non-elaborative awareness which is sustained across a stretch of time. As a consequence, in this state, respondents do not worry about problems.

### *Dimension 3: Non-elaborative Awareness*

Nonjudgmental awareness is the third dimension from the definition of mindfulness provided by Kabat-Zinn (2003a, p. 145); that is, “*the awareness that emerges through paying attention ... nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment*”. In this current study, the dimension is termed ‘non-elaborative awareness’.

Non-elaborative awareness is cognition that involves only recognition of an object rather than conceptualising or judging it. It is a welcoming acceptance of any object (thought, feeling or sensation) where the objects are not deeply elaborated on or conceptualised. That is, non-elaborative awareness is non-conceptualising (or non-judgmental) with acceptance. This non-elaborative awareness merges awareness and cognition during the mental processes of a tourist’s meditative mindfulness experience. Compared with the first two dimensions of awareness, this third dimension of non-elaborative awareness is more often related to the cognitive modes of mental processes. Three alternative modes of thinking (temporarily without thinking/absence of cognition), deeper non-conceptual insight and stored memories (retrospective memory) were identified in this study.

Let us look at some examples of non-elaborative awareness that consist of awareness and cognition. For example, a backpacker, (who was also an adventure tourist), was watching a wallaby being killed by dingoes. While watching, the tourist merely observed and did not become emotionally involved (demonstrating awareness only) and instead, had the insight (cognition) that this event was a natural occurrence. The second example was a backpacker who was immersed in diving (awareness) and also conscious of safety issues concerned with the body’s limitations (cognition). A third example was when tourists were walking around Uluru. They focused on beauty (awareness), were accepting and not troubled about negative factors (acceptance), and some who were deeply involved, obtained insights into aboriginal respect for nature (cognition). In these examples,

cognition involved non-conceptual insight and links among ideas. They obtained deeper insights but without self-centredness, rational judgment or evaluation, and with full acceptance of the event.

### **5.2.1.2 Modes of Thinking during Meditative Mindful Experiences**

There are different modes embodied in the three alternative modes of thinking (temporarily without thinking, deeper non-conceptual insight, and stored memories), and these are discussed in Section 4.2.3. The modes are summarised below.

#### ***Temporarily without thinking/Absence of cognition***

The first mode of thinking is being oblivious to oneself (忘我) or ‘blank brain’ (a sense of emptiness) (放空) that was linked to the concept of ‘perception precedes conceptualising’. This mode occurred when the respondents were paying attention and totally immersed in the present moment. This mode allowed them to be at ease, relaxed and in harmony, which led to an emotional balance. Taiwanese people used these specific words to describe their experience.

Being oblivious to oneself (忘我) was one way that respondents communicated their present-centred non-elaborative awareness. Being oblivious to oneself (忘我) represents a blend of ‘blank brain’ (a sense of emptiness) (放空) and ‘a sense of timelessness’. That is, a respondent’s self-central sense was absent and they were not thinking or emoting— just a neutral observer. The experience of being in harmony with the world is found to be related to nature-based destinations in tourism (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Sharpley & Jepson, 2011). In neuroscience, being oblivious to oneself is considered a kind of optimal flow in which individuals produce affective states of arousal and have a sense of richness and deeper insight that is associated with emotional balance (Siegel, 2009).

The interpretations of ‘being oblivious to oneself (忘我)’ and ‘blank brain (a sense of emptiness) (放空)’ described by Taiwanese backpackers were similar to the phenomena of awareness in ancient Chinese philosophy. The classical text Zhuangzi (莊子) from Dao (道) philosophy discusses the interaction of nature, the life of a human being and the philosophy of the mind (Defoort, 2012). Central features of Dao philosophy included “sitting and forgetting all things (坐忘)”, “being oblivious of myself (忘我)”, the “harmonious union between human and nature (天人合一)”, and “objects and myself within one (物我一體)”. All these terms reflected a state of mental “wandering at ease”. Literally, the former two terms depicted people as being oblivious of themselves at that present moment and others as being immersed in the infinite. That implies liberated wandering beyond the boundaries of the mind (Blakeley, 2008). The latter two terms illustrated the state of

Dao (道). Zhuangzi (莊子) suggests that “*attention to the unique design, exuberant variety, and astonishing uniqueness of things... leads to an aesthetic-artistic appreciation of the uniqueness of creativity*”. This will be further discussed in the next section. Similarly, Arlow (1986) indicated that the experience of ‘timelessness’ relates to the ‘oceanic feeling’, a state of mind supposedly reflecting a sense of fusion and oneness with the universe. In tourism studies, a wilderness experience shares similar characteristics with the meditative mindfulness experience associated with a sense of timelessness and being oblivious to oneself, such as humility, primitiveness and oneness (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001). Living in the present (present-centred awareness) connects tourists’ experiences in the here-and-now, and creates an immersion of timelessness that helps to blank out emotional disturbances derived from thinking.

### *Non-conceptual Insight*

Two main features ‘reflective thinking with acceptance’ and ‘non-elaborative judgment with acceptance’ were identified as related to the second mode of deeper non-conceptual insight. The first feature ‘reflective thinking with acceptance’ was reported as a mental process that involved developing a deeper insight of one’s inner self or a better understanding between the subject (observer) and object (observed). Tourists identified that they were thinking reflectively about their observation of an object rather than thinking analytically. As a consequence, a sense of knowing was produced through a direct, intuitive and subjective insight, without elaboration (Bishop et al., 2004). That is to say, their thoughts led to a greater curiosity about the unfolding experience. This curiosity seems like inattentive awareness that does not lead to cognitive conclusions or judgements. The process of curiosity induces insight and consciousness toward a better understanding of the cognition (Wallace, 1999). Results of this study provided empirical evidence to substantiate the occurrence of ‘introspection or reflection’ during the experience; for instance, tourists were curious and thought deeply about how aboriginals survived in such a dry wilderness as that surrounding Uluru and why it was a spiritual place. One common outcome of this reflection about Uluru was that people should be humble because human beings are tiny compared to the vastness of Uluru. Reflection allows tourists to self-generate insightful knowledge. Such introspection or reflection was often noted when the backpackers were immersed in nature or in outdoor activities. Similar reflections have also been noted in studies of adventure travel, rural tourism and backpacking tourism (Trauer, 2007). Tourism settings may be endowed with specific characteristics such as beauty that draws tourists’ attention as well as facilitates deeper non-conceptual insight. This will be discussed in Section 5.2.1.1.



The second feature of the non-conceptual insight mode is a stance of ‘*no elaborating with acceptance*’. No elaborating with acceptance involves being curious and welcoming of all thoughts about objects, including any disturbing sensations, thoughts or feelings and being open to the reality of the present moment without further elaboration (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a). For example, a tourist reflected on his past negative behaviour, such as poor interpersonal communication, when immersed in diving and sensed a harmony with the surrounding creatures. At that time, he was aware of the thought about disharmony but accepted it along with the possibility that he could improve his behaviour. This demonstrated acceptance of the experiences without trying to change, distort or avoid them, so that individuals are able to appreciate the experience even if condemnatory self-evaluations occur (Kang et al., 2013).

Mindful meditation is synonymous with insightful meditation based on self-observation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003a). Several authors have noted that introspection due to mindfulness training improves self-observation and leads to more effective behaviour change, including reduction of impulsive, maladaptive behaviours (Baer, 2003). De-automatisation is an alternative mechanism that allows introspection to provide a way of weakening previously established associative categories and other routine modes of behaviour (Kang et al., 2013). In both, the mind can disengage from habitual patterns of affective reactivity to allow a more reflective response to current experience (Dreyfus, 2011). Deeper non-conceptual insights are an important element employed in formal mindfulness interventions to prevent relapse due to negative emotions such as depression that have been applied in clinical psychology and meditation practices. For instance, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is designed to help attentional control (Baer, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a; Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Mason & Hargreaves, 2001) by guiding an individual to observe thoughts and feelings simply as mental events, without elaborating on or judging them, and allowing the objects to come and go in the mind. The concept used in cognitive therapy is to facilitate an attitude toward a detached or decentred view of one’s thoughts, so that thoughts are not considered equal to facts (Baer, 2003) and to prevent the escalation of negative cognitive thoughts toward ruminative thought patterns (Teasdale, 1999). The meditative mindful travel experiences identified here seem to facilitate similar functional experiences. This finding will be discussed further in Section 5.2.2 (antecedents of meditative mindfulness experiences).

In this mode, cognitive features are significant; nevertheless, being conscious of awareness still accompanies and interacts with the successive cognitive representations. The interchange between cognition and awareness consists of mental continuum processes in response to non-elaborative awareness. That is, the deeper the non-conceptual insight mode is, the more important is the manifestation of the ‘continuum of awareness’ (Wallace, 1999). In the mindfulness literature, non-

elaborative awareness is related to the idea of a ‘continuum of awareness’, that is, successive pulses of cognition and awareness, each lasting for a short period of time (Wallace, 1999, p. 176). This concept considers that the mind has a tendency to grasp or crave for and cling to certain sensations, perceptions, expectations, opinions and images of self (Mikulas, 2011) that then lead to further elaboration. A number of authors (Bishop et al., 2004; Diaz, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 2002b, 2003a; Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011; Teasdale, 1999; Wallace, 2006) have suggested that mindfulness interventions, such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy in clinical psychology can prevent both the proliferation of elaborative thinking and a relapse of disturbed emotions. In this study, meditative mindful tourist experiences shared the same non-elaborative thinking with an absence of a ‘clinging mind’ (self-centredness and rational judgment) (Gedun, 2007; Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). This highlighted the difference between a meditative mindfulness experience and a socio-cognitive mindful experience. The difference between meditative mindfulness experience and socio-cognitive mindful experience will be discussed in detail in Section 5.2.1.2.

### ***Stored Memories***

‘Stored memories’ is the third theme related to mode of thinking that was identified. All respondents had vivid recollections of the unfolding experience which was strongly linked to the perceived sensations. Specifically, the content of stored memories or information was found directly connected with the subjective affect, perceptions or representational forms. Auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory senses and mental feelings were recalled as the particular event was discussed during the interviews. The findings suggested that individuals possess the capacity to retain stored affective information clearly. A potential implication is that stored memories incorporate representations of affective sensations (Barrett & Bar, 2009) and the retentive nature of the awareness associated with stored memories is privileged by its non-conceptuality (Dreyfus, 2011). *When people are able to recall sensations derived from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling in a particular moment they would consider this a memorable experience.* This retentive ability is part of the cognitive processes connected to working memory (Dreyfus, 2011). Indeed recollection and memory is another name for mindfulness in Buddhism (Wallace, 1999) and means remembering the past clearly.

The stored memories did not appear to be linked to cognition. In addition cognitive knowledge acquired during the same experience was not well recalled (faded memory) by respondents or seemed unimportant to them. This may imply that knowledge derived from brochures, signs, or interpretative contents such as biological characteristics of plants or animals are relatively less well retained over a period of time.

### 5.2.1.3 Contrasting Socio-cognitive Mindfulness and Flow with Meditative Mindfulness

As outlined in Chapter 2, the concept of mindfulness overlaps with many other constructs in psychology. The most notable psychological concept that is sometimes confused with meditative mindfulness is the alternative concept of mindfulness defined by Ellen Langer (1992) and used in social psychology. This concept was first applied in tourism by Moscardo (1999) and later called socio-cognitive mindfulness (Pirson et al., 2012). A second psychological concept that overlaps with meditative mindfulness is ‘flow’, which was defined by Csikszentmihalyi (2000a). All three of these concepts are related to the concept of awareness, but the nature of awareness in meditative mindfulness is fundamentally different from socio-cognitive mindfulness and flow (Bishop et al., 2004; Mikulas, 2011; Schmidt, 2011). To further this study’s objectives of understanding the phenomenon of meditative mindfulness tourist experiences, it is necessary to clarify the relationship between each concept with awareness. These concepts are discussed and distinguished below.

#### *Deliberate (socio-cognitive mindfulness) vs. Non-elaborative awareness (meditative mindfulness)*

Fundamentally, socio-cognitive mindfulness and meditative mindfulness are different concepts in their underlying relationship to awareness: one requires conscious or deliberate awareness (socio-cognitive mindfulness) and the other is characterised by non-elaborative awareness (meditative mindfulness). The two concepts of mindfulness are contrasted in Table 5.2 and significant differences were found, including the mental processes involved and affect-related outcomes. Observations and respondent interviews are used below to illustrate the differences.

The first difference that was noted is that socio-cognitive mindfulness often takes place in educational contexts such as museums, visitor centres, heritage sites and nature-based settings. In most of these cases the visitor is engaged in a deliberate effort to understand an object, setting or event. Here the subjective awareness is active and effortful, demonstrating “a heightened state of involvement and wakefulness or being in the present” (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a, p. 2). In this situation, the tourist is alert, and thinking about the causes and consequences. That is, socio-cognitive mindfulness refers to a cognitive state that is sensitive to both the content and the creation of new categories (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a). Socio-cognitive mindfulness involves an awareness of multiple stimuli and openness to drawing novel distinctions. The mental process of socio-cognitive mindfulness involves goal-oriented cognitive thinking (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a) rather than being nonjudgmental with acceptance. Socio-cognitive mindfulness emphasises cognitive judgment, that is to say, evaluations of present-ideal discrepancies in relation to the visitor’s goals. The mental mode is most like ‘conceptualising/doing’ and is “dominated by relatively impersonal detached thoughts about the self or emotion (as objects)” (Teasdale, 1999, p.

S68). During the process, the individual has a tendency to grasp for goal-oriented strategies or cling to certain contents of the mind to deal with problems (Mikulas, 2011). In this aspect of socio-cognitive mindfulness, many of these components are related to the clinging behaviour of the mind such as changing mindsets, challenging assumptions, breaking sets, getting involved, and taking responsibility (Mikulas, 2011).

**Table 5.2 Distinguishing mental processes between two types of mindful tourist experiences**

	<b>Meditative mindfulness</b>	<b>Socio-cognitive mindfulness</b>
<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Non-elaborative awareness</b> <i>On purpose monitoring</i>	<b>Conscious / deliberative awareness</b> <i>Multiple perspectives</i>
<b>Cognitive styles</b>	De-centering / De-automatisation <i>Temporarily without thinking</i> <i>Deeper non-conceptual insight</i>	Cognitive judgment / Self-centeredness
<b>Mental processes</b>	Continuum of awareness in the present	Drawing novel distinctions while situated in the present
	----- Mindful being / experiencing	----- Conceptualising / doing
<b>Different characters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being aware of inner experiences</li> <li>• Not goal-directed</li> <li>• Unintentional, effortless</li> <li>• Getting distance from cognition</li> <li>• Quietening the mind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being aware of external stimuli</li> <li>• Goal-oriented</li> <li>• Active and effortful mode</li> <li>• Questioning</li> <li>• Continuous concentration</li> </ul>
<b>Affect-related outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relaxed in the here and now</li> <li>• Being at ease / being less tense</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alert to new information</li> </ul>

Source: Developed for this thesis

In contrast, the findings of this study indicate that meditative mindfulness combines awareness with different mental modes. A tourist may be aware of a problem but is not overly emotional (Mikulas, 2011). Meditative mindfulness embodies non-elaborative awareness with an acceptance that is clearly different from socio-cognitive mindfulness, which requires deliberate cognitive awareness (see Table 5.2). As discussed previously, there are two mental modes (‘temporarily without thinking’ and ‘deeper non-conceptual insight’) that embody non-elaborative awareness, while the third dimension of meditative mindfulness was also defined. These mechanisms are reiterated here to contrast with the alternative cognitive judgmental style of socio-cognitive mindfulness. The two mental modes of non-elaborative processing emphasise being aware of and blending cognition to the process of changing thoughts and feelings (meditative mindfulness), instead of focusing on the

objects' details in an attempt to modify them (socio-cognitive mindfulness) (Bishop et al., 2004; Kang et al., 2013)

Two main mental modes were noted in relation to meditative mindfulness. Here I am excluding stored memory and focusing on the two thinking modes. The first mental mode of 'temporarily without thinking' corresponds to non-elaborative awareness, which creates an absence of self-centred cognition. This study found that when tourists were in a meditative mindfulness state, they were totally immersed in the present moment. This mental mode allowed tourists to be at ease, relaxed and in harmony with their surroundings. Taiwanese backpackers commonly represented such an experience as 'being oblivious to oneself (忘我)' or 'a sense of emptiness (放空)'. During the mental process of meditative mindfulness, a tourist's sense of self was absent and they were not thinking or emoting— just being a neutral observer. The occurrence of being wholly immersed (being oblivious to oneself) was unintentionally experienced. The mechanism of 'decentring' enables tourists to step outside of their immediate experience (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 377), while 'de-automatisation' facilitates an "undoing of the automatic processes that control perception and cognition" (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 378). Therefore, the tourists' cognition was less goal-directed (Baer, 2003) than goal-oriented. Their state of mind was 'quiet with relaxed attention', so that the meditative mindfulness experience was directed toward the inner experiences of 'a sense of emptiness (a blank brain)' (放空). This implies being distanced from cognitions unintentionally and relaxing in the here and now (Mikulas, 2011; Reid, 2011). This mode also implies 'response flexibility' like 'pausing before acting', which allows one to put a space between the impulse and action (Siegel, 2009). Respondents discussed this phenomenon as a lack of consciousness of the self as distinct from the world, of forgetting the self/ego and being in harmony with the world during the times that they intently watched the objects, or were not involved in any prior pattern of thinking.

A second mental mode of 'non-conceptual insight' allowed tourists to have greater acceptance of their emotions and thoughts (Bishop et al., 2004; Nyklíček, 2011) and embodied the de-automatising function (Kang et al., 2013). The respondents emphasised that they thought deeply ('reflective thinking') and altruistically ('non-elaborative judgment with acceptance') to understand the reality of an object, and then to let the thoughts go (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). During introspective/reflective information processing the tourists used deeper thinking and reasoning. For instance, it was found that reflection allowed tourists to 'just know', rather than engage in purposeful thinking. The study identified that meditative mindfulness experience involves non-judgmental observation of inner experiences (Baer, 2003; Bishop et al., 2004; Howard, 2001) that blends with thoughts (deeper non-conceptual insight) and emotions (a less tense state and with

acceptance) in a continuum of awareness, and acceptance of one's emotions and thoughts (Bishop et al., 2004; Nykliček, 2011)

Essentially, the first mode of meditative mindfulness, which is being temporarily without thinking, facilitates emotional balance. This study revealed that this mental mode quietened the tourists' minds and made it easier for them to be aware (Mikulas, 2011). During the state of being mindful ('being oblivious to oneself' or 'blank brain'), the meditative mindfulness experience produced a sense of affective richness or timelessness. Respondents defined this as being at ease, of being less tense (more relaxed), involving joyfulness, deep satisfaction, tranquillity, peacefulness, solitude and harmony. Alternative states that included stillness, stability, and neutrality (an optimal state where the individual felt neither good nor bad) also unfolded in the respondents' reports. Visitors' emotions appear to be associated with psychological changes. To be precise, the meditative mindfulness experience was associated with non-elaborative awareness using present feelings and sensations as a present subjective self-experience. Consequently, meditative mindfulness facilitates emotional processing (Teasdale, 1999). To be specific, non-elaborative awareness with an attitude of acceptance helps tourists to switch to adaptive self-regulation strategies attributed to a function of mindful de-automatisation, which facilitates psychophysical wellbeing or emotional balance (Kang et al., 2013).

In contrast, the socio-cognitive mindfulness mode of conceptualizing or doing relates to cognitive judgment through continuous refinement and clinging to the 'doing mode' process. In addition, the mind is associated with self-centredness and rational judgment (Mikulas, 2011). The mechanism may prevent effective emotional processing and lead to depression, because ruminative and conceptual processing directly dominates one's implicational subsystem as a direct mode (Teasdale, 1999). The distinguishing mental processes between the two types of mindful tourist experiences are summarised in Table 5.2.

In summary, meditative mindfulness and socio-cognitive mindfulness represent two types of awareness (conscious/deliberative awareness vs. non-elaborative awareness) that trigger different processing modes (conceptualising/doing vs. mindful being) and mechanisms (self-centredness vs. de-centring/de-automatisation). As a result, different affect-related outcomes (high arousals, such as alertness/satisfaction vs. emotional balance, such as ease or relaxation) come from meditative mindfulness and socio-cognitive mindfulness tourist experiences.

Non-elaborative awareness, the third dimension of meditative mindfulness, which includes momentary non-judgmental acceptance of one's emotions and thoughts, also distinguishes meditative mindfulness from socio-cognitive mindfulness. Non-elaborative awareness involves

cognitive mental processes that allow perceptions that precede conceptualising, so that tourists only recognise an object rather than judge or elaborate on it. Therefore, tourists immerse themselves in objects and pay attention to their attending. Tourists engage in specific thinking modes, that is, either temporarily without thinking or deeper non-conceptual insight, or both thinking modes are successively followed by mechanisms of de-centring/de-automatisation. That is, meditative mindfulness is fundamentally different from socio-cognitive mindfulness.

*Paying attention to awareness (meditative mindfulness) vs. paying attention to action (Flow)*

The concepts of flow and meditative mindfulness share some similarities and there is a need to further research the relationship between them. While many authors have described feelings of flow in physical activities such as mountain climbing, there is little discussion of its overlap with related concepts such as meditative mindfulness. This section clarifies the concepts of flow and meditative mindfulness based on ‘perceived sensation’ and ‘relaxed attention’ (See Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3 Distinguishing mental processes between meditative mindfulness and flow**

	<b>Meditative mindfulness</b>	<b>Flow</b>
<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Paying attention</b> <i>On purpose monitoring</i>	<b>Paying attention</b> <i>Focus on action</i>
<b>Mental processes</b>	<b>Being aware of one’s awareness</b> <i>Perceived sensations &amp; Relaxed attention</i>	<b>Being aware of one’s action</b>
<b>Different characters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional awareness</li> <li>• Immersion</li> <li>• Starts with perceived sensations</li> <li>• Not goal-directed</li> <li>• Effortless</li> <li>• Relaxed attachment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full concentration</li> <li>• Seamless absorption</li> <li>• Starts with action</li> <li>• Goal-oriented/Goal-achieving</li> <li>• Effortful</li> <li>• Balance of challenge and skill</li> </ul>
<b>Immediately outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological calmness</li> <li>• Somatic relaxation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High arousal</li> <li>• Performance enhancement</li> </ul>

Source: Developed for this thesis

Firstly, this study found a mindful tourist’s awareness of the experience begins with perceived sensations, rather than a goal to be achieved. In leisure and recreation studies, flow is usually conceptualised as a state of arousal where a person is totally engaged in an activity in which the level of challenge matches the skills of the individual (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000a). However, in this study, paying attention, the first dimension of meditative mindfulness, is defined as the intentional awareness of sensations perceived during a relaxed body state. Underpinning this perception of

sensation, a mindful tourist is reflexively aware (aware of awareness) of these sensations. In comparison, a state of flow involves attention to those aspects of the experience that are central to an individual's goal and are related to an action rather than to perceived sensations.

In meditative mindfulness, paying attention to sensations leads to a kind of 'flow' state in response to a 'bottom-up' experience (Siegel, 2009) rather than the top-down goal-seeking which is found in flow. It is this absorption in the present moment sensation that enables tourists being in the present moment. However in meditative mindfulness, the 'flow bottom-up' experience is embodied in the mental process of paying attention in a way that is different from flow. Precisely, flow happens during concentration and focus on actions and the achievement of goals. Flow occurs, "when a person is aware of his or her actions but is not aware of his or her awareness of those actions" (Reid, 2011, p. 50). In contrast to flow, meditative mindfulness is "not the achievement of any particular state, but intentional awareness of what is, being aware of awareness" (Reid, 2011, p. 50). Thus, there is a difference in the nature of being aware of paying attention, which underpins both meditative mindfulness (i.e., being engaged in perceived sensations) and flow (being engaged in actions and balancing-challenges).

A second significant difference in paying attention that distinguishes meditative mindfulness from flow is relaxed attention. The results of this study indicate that meditative mindfulness involves paying attention to sensations in a relaxed way, and this is a situation commonly found while travelling. Tourists will often feel more relaxed, more flexible and less goal-oriented when backpacking. Such relaxed attention plays an important role in facilitating psychological calmness and somatic relaxation and enables the mental process of meditative mindfulness. If people are attending to a perception of an experience with relaxed attention, they appear to be less judgmental and more accepting. In contrast, flow is considered to involve full concentration, goal orientation, absorption, and a high-intensity task focus (Diaz, 2011). Other authors have suggested that "concentration is the very root of judgment, character, and will" (Mikulas, 2011, p. 3)," and the tendency to "grasp for and cling to certain contents of the mind" (Mikulas, 2011, p. 1). Thus, meditative mindfulness involves a relaxed attention that facilitates mental flexibility while flow has a goal focus.

The findings of this study have identified that in meditative mindfulness, paying attention is characterised by perceived sensations, purposeful monitoring, and relaxed attention. In a state of meditative mindfulness, backpackers appear more aware of their unfiltered experiential sensations, rather than those related to a goal or prior attitudes. That is, meditative mindfulness is characterised by a stable and relaxed attention, which is not found in descriptions of flow in the literature.



#### **5.2.1.4. Summary of Findings for Research Question 1**

This analysis found that meditative mindfulness states can be found in tourist contexts. There are subtle differences between the Eastern and Western approaches to understanding mindfulness and these are evident when contrasting meditative mindfulness and socio-cognitive mindfulness in tourism contexts. It also distinguishes meditative mindfulness and flow based on subtle differences in the nature of awareness embodied in the two concepts. Thus, this study is the first to identify the concept of meditative mindfulness associated with certain tourist experiences and hence has created an interdisciplinary link between Eastern and Western theory in the context of tourism experiences.

#### **5.2.2 Research Objective 2: Antecedents of Meditative Mindfulness Tourist Experiences**

The aim of Research Objective 2 (RO2) was to analyse the antecedents of the meditative mindful travel experiences in Australia. It was found that four main types of antecedents facilitate a meditative mindful state: relaxed attachment to travel, aesthetic appreciation, quietness, and curiosity-developing. Eight concepts were identified, as detailed in section 4.3. All the antecedents of meditative mindfulness experiences occurred when tourists were interacting with their surroundings and participating in a specific activity. “Aesthetic appreciation” and “quietness” were particularly associated with tourist attractions. Thus, three key ways (travel-induced relaxation, antecedents of tourism attractions including aesthetic appreciation and atmosphere of quietness, and tourist curiosity-developing) of enhancing meditative mindfulness are illustrated and discussed below.

##### **5.2.2.1 Travel-induced Relaxation**

Relaxed attachment to travel is a basic, foundational antecedent that facilitates meditative mindfulness in tourism contexts. In prior tourism studies, travel in itself is said to provide opportunities for relaxing, exploring new experiences (Li et al., 2013; Weiler & Yu, 2008), and pursuing fulfilling activities (Chen & Petrick, 2013; Currie, 2000; Filep, 2009; Kottler, 1997). This study supports this argument, and further suggests that relaxed attention is facilitated by the specific travel style of ‘backpacking’. Because backpacking is relatively non-institutionalised (Uriely, Yonay, & Simchai, 2002), this type of travel can help tourists to achieve a state of relaxed attention to perceived sensations (see section 3.3.2). Backpacking has been found to be a relaxing form of travel (Pomeroy, 2013) and this appears to help tourists more easily engage in meditative mindfulness. This may not be the only type of travel that leads to such a state of mind, but this study concludes that backpacking is an alternative way to enhance meditative mindfulness and can function as an informal mindfulness practice.

### 5.2.2.2 Antecedents of Tourism Attractions

This research found two characteristics of tourism attractions that foster meditative mindfulness: ‘aesthetic appreciation’ and ‘atmosphere of quietness’. These two characteristics are related to visual and auditory external stimuli that invite a tourist’s attention and facilitate awareness. These are discussed in detail below.

#### *Aesthetic Appreciation*

Firstly, ‘aesthetic appreciation’ of settings occurred when a tourist saw something beautiful that fully engaged their attention (Tooby & Cosmides, 2001). Three characteristics of ‘beauty’ (wonder, impermanence, and authenticity) that invite and facilitate attention were identified in many Australian destinations (as detailed in section 4.3.2). This study found that beauty was associated with vastness, uniqueness, transcendence, transience, purity or simplicity and captured tourists’ attention and heightened their awareness of objects, and even induced introspection. Specifically, mindful awareness was aroused by unexpected encounters with aesthetic visual stimuli. This was noted especially in natural settings as well as some cultural settings. Aesthetic feelings were manifested in response to mountains, the ocean, some mammals, classic architecture and the colours of sunrise, pure blue skies, and genuine outback scenery. These antecedents combined with the setting evoked tourists’ mindful awareness and allowed them to fully engage with their experience. This aesthetic stimuli was also found to contribute to a simultaneous deep sense of positive emotion, and was followed by an absence of instrumental knowledge or conceptualisation (see ‘temporarily without thinking mode/ absence of cognition’ in section 5.2.1). These aesthetic antecedents facilitated an intensified sense of interrelatedness and a weakened sense of self (being oblivious to oneself). As a consequence, an aesthetic experience was transformed into a memorable experience that was vividly recalled.

Some research supports a connection between aesthetic appreciation connected to nature-based experiences (Brady, 1998; Budd, 1996; Xu, Cui, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2012) and peaceful and relaxed attention (Tooby & Cosmides, 2001), attentional function (Keniger, Gaston, Irvine, & Fuller, 2013), heightened sensory awareness (Zylstra, 2014), and positive effects on emotions such as a sense of pleasure (Keniger et al., 2013; Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000; Zylstra, 2014). Tourist experiences in natural destinations triggered by aesthetic appreciations have been discussed using different terminology (e.g., aesthetic experience, spiritual experience, interpretive experience) based on various theoretical foundations (Xu et al., 2012; Zylstra, 2014).

However, previous tourism studies have focused on the relationship between interpretive information processing involving cognitive awareness/attention and the aesthetic experiences from

a certain nature-based site. For example, studies on the provision of interpretive materials facilitating tourists' attention have found that this enhances their experiences in national parks, and were based on an alternative aesthetic cognitive approach. The studies above include recommendations that tourists' aesthetic experiences be increased by using adjectival words, figurative or metaphorical descriptions, and exaggeration of the nature attractions (Xu et al., 2012); however, aesthetic appreciation during wildlife viewing can be cognitive (gaining knowledge about a penguin habitat) as well as be affective in nature (i.e., 'romanticism') (Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000). The prior studies based on cognitive responses to the aesthetic experiences are also more concerned with on-site or short-term effects, but few studies have examined aesthetic experiences and their capability to induce long-term memory.

This current study found that inviting attention and facilitating awareness can be readily evoked by certain aesthetic stimuli in such tourism settings and result in specific psychological outcomes such as peace, calmness or relaxation (discussed in Section 5.2.3). In addition, meditative mindfulness experiences motivated by aesthetic antecedents can be transformed to vivid and long lasting memories— some respondents recalled their experiences vividly when interviewed many months later. Thus, this study has demonstrated a link between attention, beauty, experience and psychological benefits. In short, aesthetics such as beautiful natural landscapes create visual fascination and enchantment capable of promoting transcendent states and a sense of wonder, as well as creating a connectedness to nature or the real world. These attributes were identified as contributing to the meditative mindfulness experience.

### *Atmosphere of Quietness*

An 'atmosphere of quietness' can be conceived as 'silence' embodied in tourism settings and activities, which fosters tourists' attentiveness to sensations and permits them to gain access to a deeper self. This study found that tourists' attentiveness to sensations can be activated through an 'absence of noise' and 'absence of normal light'. Examples include listening to one's breathing during snorkelling or diving and the quiet outdoors environment at night while camping in a national park. These contexts appear to sharpen tourists' awareness of their sensations. An atmosphere of quietness can settle tourists' minds and encourage them to be conscious of awareness, leading to a sense of relaxation and tranquillity (see Section 5.2.3). A quiet and calm environment with few distractions is a simple way to elicit relaxation, tranquillity and mental calm (Benson, 1974; Benson & Corliss, 2004; Smith et al., 1996). A quiet environment in natural destinations invites introspection and awareness of the environment.

Thus, being quiet without the stimulus of cognitive information processing evokes tourists' attention and facilitates a meditative mindfulness state. This suggests that meditative mindfulness is different from the socio-cognitive approach to mindfulness. In previous studies, socio-cognitive mindfulness has focussed on how various stimuli can enhance experiences in tourism settings and with hosts. Socio-cognitive mindfulness research in tourism contexts has tended to focus on visitor learning (Moscardo, 1999) whereby interpretation tools ( e.g., tour guide's interpretation, signs, brochures) have been applied as interventions in visitor centres (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986), heritage sites (McIntosh, 1999; Moscardo, 1996), wildlife zoos or national parks (Frauman & Norman, 2004; Woods & Moscardo, 2003), or festival venues (Van Winkle & Backman, 2009). While there is some suggestion that the socio-cognitive approach to mindfulness can be applied to non-learning situations (Murphy, Benckendorff, Moscardo, & Pearce, 2011), this study is more concerned with perceiving sensations, inviting attention and awareness of the environment. Thus, the findings suggest meditative mindfulness is fundamentally different from socio-cognitive mindfulness which has been used in previous tourism studies. This finding is further supported by clinical psychology and neural science studies examining the effects of mindfulness meditation on brain activity as well as psychological functioning (Siegel, 2009; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006).

In clinical psychology and neural science studies, placing oneself in a quiet place and focusing on breathing without thinking is a way to improve attention is used in formal meditative mindfulness exercises such as meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2002b). In meditative mindfulness exercises, an individual sits in silence for a period of time to learn mindfulness. Mindful attention/awareness can help an individual to expand 'bottom-up' awareness of the world, instead of being constrained by prior learning and responses in the form of 'top-down' constraints. This mental activity has been identified in functional brain studies (Siegel, 2009) and leads to relaxation (Benson, 1974; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Specifically, during silent meditation, mindful awareness can integrate information processing in the left and right brain hemispheres. Meditative mindfulness helps the brain's top-down apparatus in ordering and making sense of incoming sensory information by enhancing the left hemisphere's labelling ability so the world can be mapped out more easily by the right hemisphere (Siegel, 2009).

Thus, an 'absence of noise' and 'absence of light' implies a low intensity of stimuli and cognitive information processing from the external world, thus reflecting the studies in clinical psychology and brain science. Based on these findings and arguments, it can be concluded that in the tourism context, meditative mindfulness can be activated in an atmosphere of quietness, and hence a low cognitive information processing environment. Such quiet situations can create more possibilities for experiencing sensations.

### **5.2.2.3 Tourist's Curiosity**

Curiosity motivates tourists to be more aware of their current experiences, as has been discussed in clinical psychology studies (Kashdan, Afram, Brown, Birnbeck, & Drvoshanov, 2011; Lau et al., 2006; Ronald, 2003a, 2003b) and tourism studies ( e.g., museum visitors 'learned for fun' during educational leisure experiences (Packer, 2006). The findings of this study reveal tourist's curiosity can be encouraged by 'increasing novelty' and 'reducing cognitive information'. Tourists were found to be open to perceived sensations and engaged in present moment experiences with curiosity. Tourists tended to purposefully pay attention to experiences in order to see what new information 'could be', or learn something by themselves, in some sense reverting to a 'beginner's mind' (Ronald, 2003a), with a sense of wonder but without making judgments or elaboration (Kingwell, 2000). This is quite different from a cognitive mode of thinking. Although an individual tourist's curiosity depends on their character or attitudes, the findings from this study suggest that meditative mindfulness can be facilitated by encouraging backpacking (implies low expectations), and increasing opportunities for natural encounters (implies low artificial and interpretative stimuli) which have not been highlighted in the tourism literature.

This study found two ways to encourage meditative mindfulness. The first is 'increasing novelty'. Increased novelty in travel contexts comes from going to new destinations, as well as flexible or non-pre-planned travel. The latter provides opportunities for exploring new experiences (Currie, 2000; Kottler, 1997). The second, 'reducing cognitive information', suggests mindful curiosity involves being actively interested in knowing about one's experience of the objects, but this 'knowing' moves beyond cognitive evaluation to simply observing the reality of the object. The curious mind will return to its primary focus of attention rather than refine the 'knowing' cognitively (Dunne, 2011). The use of interpretative information as a socio-cognitive mindfulness strategy is effected by identifying tourists' attention-inviting or awareness-facilitating. This study deepens our understanding of how, through meditative mindfulness strategies, mindful awareness can be triggered by minimising the stimuli of interpretive materials and weakening expectations (see Section 5.2.2.2 Antecedent of 'atmosphere of quietness').

### **5.2.3 Research Objective 3: Consequences of Meditative Mindfulness Tourist Experiences**

The third objective of this study was to understand the perceived experiential benefits derived from meditative mindful travel experiences. It was found that meditative mindfulness leads tourists to gain specific benefits. Two main types (psychological and physical experiential benefit) of positive

consequences were identified among backpackers (as detailed in Section 4.4). These outcomes are not mutually exclusive and are often intertwined.

### **5.2.3.1 Psychological Experiential Benefits**

The first type of benefit, psychological experiential benefits, may be affective and cognitive.

Affective experiential benefits were identified as the most important benefits that tourists gained from attending a certain event whilst travelling, and were most noticeably associated with mental ease and had emotional balance. Tranquillity, relaxation and joy were most significantly associated with mental ease and had a role in affecting tourists' emotional balance. Emotions aroused here are similar to mild positive moods, and rarely involve high arousal. The outcomes of slowing down, stress release, and wellbeing are important longer-term outcomes for tourists. The mechanism of mental processes associated with meditative mindfulness to this point infers that tourists are temporarily in a mode of not thinking which involves an absence of cognition ( e.g., being oblivious to oneself), because meditative mindfulness facilitates a 'response flexibility' (Mikulas, 2011; Reid, 2011; Siegel, 2009) that can help individuals toward a state of mental ease.

Cognitive experiential benefits were also noted and related to remembering (cognitive recall) and reflection. Generally but not necessarily, these responses were induced after the affective outcomes. This finding is based on the mental mode of deeper non-conceptual insights (as detailed in Section 5.2.1.1). Meditative mindfulness was remembered vividly, and these recollections were also related to inner feelings, sensations and knowing about the object itself, rather than instrumental knowledge. Memories of interpretative information, on the other hand, faded and were not significant in this study. Reflections produced in response to meditative mindfulness included connection and interrelations among oneself, others, tourism contexts, and the world. Thus, meditative mindfulness provided opportunities to awaken tourists' insights as well as to transform tourists' thinking to be more mature and open to different situations.

Based on the discussion of the psychological benefits revealed in this study, mental ease appears to lead to a state of tranquillity and relaxation rather than to cognitive benefits. It is interesting to note that meditative mindfulness makes a greater contribution to emotional balance and affective benefits. On the one hand, this finding is different from previous tourism studies based on socio-cognitive mindfulness which stressed that cognitive benefits resulted in higher levels of learning and satisfaction (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). On the other hand, this finding is similar to clinical psychology meditative mindfulness practices studies, such as relaxation (Nyklíček, 2011), affective balance (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006), prevention of a proliferation of negative thoughts (Kuan, 2008), wellbeing (Teasdale, 1999), and mental health (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

### **5.2.3.2 Physical Experiential Benefits**

Physical experiential benefits are related to physical sensations, symptoms and improved performance. Meditative mindfulness leads to immediate physical relaxation (muscular relaxation and comfortable breathing), and later to improved physical resilience (better quality of sleep and reduced fatigue). It appears that the immediate symptoms are similar to some symptoms of the 'relaxation response', a state of mental calm wherein blood pressure drops, heart and breathing rates slow, and muscles become less tense (Benson, 1997) that are found in clinical meditative mindfulness applications (Carruthers & Hood, 2011). The follow-up effects revealed in this study are akin to its therapeutic functions (Walsh, 1983) which have been attributed to some tourism setting or landscapes (Williams, 1998).

## **5.3 Contributions**

This study has presented the first empirical study of meditative mindfulness in a tourism context based on a theoretical foundation. After reviewing two concepts of mindfulness: meditative mindfulness and socio-cognitive mindfulness, this research examined the occurrence, antecedents and consequences of meditative mindfulness in backpacking tourism experiences. The following addresses the key contributions of this study and its findings from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

### **5.3.1 Theoretical Perspective**

This research contributes to the body of knowledge in the area of meditative mindfulness studies applied to tourism. An examination of the conceptual framework for this study identified a number of gaps in knowledge about meditative mindfulness. Contributions of this research to meditative mindfulness theory building have been identified and clarifications relating to this theory have been provided. These are summarised below.

#### **5.3.1.1 Understanding Meditative Mindful Travel Experiences**

This thesis makes four contributions to the understanding of meditative mindful experiences in tourism. Firstly, this research breaks new ground by empirically identifying the phenomenon of meditative mindfulness in tourism. A review of the literature identified that there was a lack of knowledge about the nature of experiences associated with meditative mindfulness as it relates to tourism and a lack of understanding of how tourists may engage in experiences more mindfully (Chen et al., 2014) Thus, this study uses a meditative mindfulness construct as a lens to explore a specific type of experience and the conceptual framework is based on the Eastern notion of

meditative mindfulness as discussed by Kabat-Zinn (2003a) and Bishop et al. (2004). An operational definition of meditative mindfulness associated with the tourist experience has been provided, and the constructs of meditative mindfulness have been detailed. This new perspective on mindfulness opens many new possibilities for further interdisciplinary research. The identification of meditative mindfulness connected to tourism experiences suggests that travel may have therapeutic benefits, and supports prior research on wellness and tourism (Kelly, 2010; Voigt et al., 2011).

Secondly, this study is the first attempt in tourism to identify the linkage between meditative mindfulness and its antecedents. The study findings suggest that meditative mindfulness antecedents include natural settings and participating in specific activities, rather than being limited to interpretative material interventions (Moscardo, 1996, 1999; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Woods & Moscardo, 2003). It has been claimed that cognitive information processing as a tool of socio-cognitive mindfulness is important to help identify the enhancing of tourists' mindfulness in a specific context through learning (Frauman, 1999; Frauman & Norman, 2004; Moscardo, 1996; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Van Winkle & Backman, 2009; Woods & Moscardo, 2003), but little attention has focused on other antecedents that can help tourists to mindfully engage with their experiences.

Nevertheless, as discussed in Section 2.3.2.2, an emphasis on the affective processing of interpretation that facilitates significant and meaningful experiences has been observed in environmental education and psychology studies. This thesis develops this literature by linking meditative mindful experience and environment interpretation. Natural settings communicate beyond simple cognition leading to deeper appreciation (Ashbaugh, 1970; Howard, 1998; Hughes & Morrison-Saunders, 2005; Tilden, 1957), through low intensity on-site interpretation (e.g., national park tree-top walk) (Hughes & Morrison-Saunders, 2005), or even an absence of interpretation (e.g., sunset-watching at Uluru) (Howard, 1998). Similarly, this thesis, in providing a broad exploration of antecedents of meditative mindful experiences, did not prescribe any types of information processing. Noticeably, the results demonstrated that most triggers featured abstract representations (e.g., aesthetic appreciation) and low intensity or even absence of stimuli (e.g., atmosphere of quietness). This type of trigger reflects affective manifestations, and was identified as awakening to a deeper appreciation and contributing to a state of calmness or harmony. Environmental interpretation studies do not seek to explain how appreciation is activated by the nature-based experience. This thesis indicates potential triggers associated with meditative mindfulness, particularly in relation to nature-based tourism settings, and suggests an affective pathway for environmental stimuli.



Thirdly, the study has also extended knowledge about the linkage between meditative mindfulness and its consequences. The experiential benefits of meditative mindfulness (e.g., low affect arousal, memory, mental health) have not been previously identified in tourism studies. Early tourism research suggested that satisfaction and learning were important onsite outcomes in response to tourist experiences, and that the consequences can be increased by providing socio-cognitive mindfulness stimuli because interpretation services enhance effective communication (Frauman, 1999; Frauman & Norman, 2004; Moscardo, 1996; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Van Winkle & Backman, 2009; Woods & Moscardo, 2003). However, little attention has been paid to the immediate (e.g., mental ease, cognitive responses, physical relaxation) and transformed effects (e.g., emotional balance, mature judgements and physical resilience) in response to the meditative mindful experience.

By applying meditative mindfulness theory to the backpacking context, this study has identified experiential benefits linked to meditative mindfulness, such as a state of tranquillity and relaxation involving 'response flexibility' (Mikulas, 2011; Reid, 2011; Siegel, 2009). The findings further indicate that meditative mindfulness has transformational effects and can support or be transformed into memory of the past, prospective memory of the present and future (Kang & Whittingham, 2010; Wallace, 2006) and working memory (Jha et al., 2010) (as proposed in Section 2.3.2.2).

Other transforming benefits such as mental ease and wellbeing are similar to the outcomes of formal mindfulness practices as previously discussed in clinical psychology and mind-body medicine studies (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a; Kuan, 2008; Nyklíček, 2011; Teasdale, 1999; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). The implication here is that meditative mindful travel experiences offer an interesting therapeutic perspective of wellbeing that incorporates the mind (psychological benefits including affection and cognition) and body (physical benefits), similar to an Eastern concept of health. The Eastern approach adopts a holistic conceptualisation of health that integrates the body, mind, spirit, emotion and environment in a state of harmonious equilibrium between the physical and mental health of the person and the external environment (Chan, Ying Ho, & Chow, 2002; Ng, Yau, Chan, Chan, & Ho, 2005).

Fourthly, this research is the first to empirically establish a model of meditative mindfulness in tourism (see Figure 4.7), which conceptually links meditative mindfulness to its antecedents and consequences. This meditative mindfulness model is different from previous tourism studies based on socio-cognitive mindfulness theory. The model provides a theoretical framework of the meditative mindfulness process that will be useful for future tourism studies that underpin a comprehensive fundamental knowledge of the phenomenon of meditative mindfulness. Meditative mindfulness theory is borrowed from Buddhist traditions and clinical medicine studies, and this

study has provided support for its integration into tourism. The implication here is that tourist experiences may be explored more holistically to provide a deeper insight into the mental and spiritual dimensions of tourist experiences as well as provide a firm theoretical basis for the claims made in some areas of the environmental psychology and education literature.

### **5.3.1.2 Related Theories and Concepts**

#### *Clarification of the differences between meditative mindfulness and socio-cognitive mindfulness*

The study has opened up discussion and clarification of the psychological constructs of meditative mindfulness and socio-cognitive mindfulness. Based on Eastern philosophy, results suggest that the nature of mindfulness is related to self-awareness and intentional awareness (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a; Levesque & Brown, 2007; Ryan et al., 2007 ; Scheick, 2011), and is centred on the perception that precedes conceptualizing (Weick & Putnam, 2006) ; whereas socio-cognitive mindfulness is more related to flexible awareness of external events than to inner experiences that emphasise cognitive thinking (Langer, 1991; Moscardo, 2008; Weick & Putnam, 2006). A careful analysis of the nature of meditative mindfulness and socio-cognitive mindfulness as well as the differences between these two related concepts has been detailed in this study, and a theoretical position underpinning the basis of meditative mindfulness has been applied logically to elicit meaningful discussions. In addition, this comparative review of the two conceptual mindfulness theories helps in understanding the different consequences of mindful experiences, such as perceived calmness in relation to meditative mindfulness, and perceived learning in relation to social-cognitive mindfulness. The clarification of different theoretical foundations provides opportunities to inspect different perspectives of discussions and developments by future academics in tourism.

The findings in this research have identified that meditative mindful tourists display their awareness of objects related to their current experiences, and that this may involve internal feelings or external stimuli. This study has clarified and provided examples of the differences in mental modes between meditative mindfulness ('mindful being') and socio-cognitive mindfulness ('conceptualising/doing') which builds on the work of Teasdale (1999). An implication here is that the mental processes of meditative mindful experiences are more complex than prior discussion in tourism studies would suggest. Thus, it is important for future research to be aware of subtle differences between socio-cognitive mindfulness and meditative mindfulness in processing modes and outcomes.

### *Clarification of the differences of constructs between meditative mindfulness and flow*

The findings indicate that some characteristics of meditative mindfulness are similar to flow in a tourism context; however, the findings also identify differences between the two related concepts. Prior to this study, no empirical research had demonstrated this difference in terms of the shared core concept—awareness. In this study, paying attention (construct of awareness) differentiated between the two perspectives of meditative mindfulness and flow. Flow is a state of arousal that occurs when there is a balance between one's skills and full engagement in a particular activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000a) and contributes to happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

This study identified the nature of attention (awareness) in various tourism contexts and found that meditative mindfulness tourists are more flexible and less goal-oriented in their attention. Hence they are able to confront different situations flexibly, while flow requires attention to action. This finding supports the work of Reid (2011). Specifically, this study has discussed theoretical viewpoints and research on the concepts of meditative mindfulness and flow, and explored how these concepts are relevant to tourism engagement which may help future researchers in developing deep and meaningful tourist experiences involving meditative mindfulness and flow.

#### **5.3.2 Practical Implications**

The results of this study are relevant to the understanding and refinement of tourist experiences, and also carry implications for policy and practice; in particular, for tourism operators who are interested in catering to tourists' desires in relation to pursuing this type of experience in modern society. For tourists, a practical implication of this study is that meditative mindfulness experiences provide a way to reduce stress and provide intrinsic satisfaction. For tourism operators, a better knowledge of meditative mindfulness experiences may help these operators to satisfy consumers' specific needs, design more effective promotions, and provide those meaningful experiences required by customers in the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

##### **5.3.2.1 Tourist Perspectives**

This study has found that meditative mindfulness experiences may result in personal benefits for tourists. As pointed out at the beginning of this study, psychological issues such as over-work and stress challenge many people in postmodern society (Kleinman, 2004; Schroevers & Brandsma, 2010). This study has identified that informal meditative mindfulness experiences that occur during travel provide a useful and practical means of producing a sense of wonder and rejuvenation that may meet contemporary tourists' intrinsic desires. A mindful traveller may experience improved mental health and a sense of fulfilment due to their transformative experiences (Currie, 2000;

Kottler, 1997). Previous tourism literature has suggested that backpacking can contribute to one's feelings of wellbeing (Cohen, 1979a; Petrick & Huether, 2013; Pomeroy, 2013). This thesis has provided a psychological framework for this phenomenon underpinned by the Eastern notion of mindfulness and Western therapeutic studies (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2003a; Kang & Whittingham, 2010). This theoretical platform offers insights into how travellers can achieve personal transformative benefits. The findings of this thesis have identified that transformative benefits are similar to those achieved from formal mindfulness training, and are more likely to occur during leisure and outdoor recreation (Williams et al., 1992). The implication here is that meditative mindfulness experiences create opportunities for building one's ability to connect with the external world and create personal rejuvenation.

### **5.3.2.2 Operator Perspectives**

The findings of this thesis also have implications for the presentation and management of tourism products and attractions in niche markets like ecotourism or wellness tourism. An understanding of the antecedents of unique meditative mindfulness experiences may be usefully applied in experience design, destination marketing and management, and policymaking. The empirical results from this thesis suggest that meditative mindfulness is different from socio-cognitive mindfulness, derives different stimuli (as detailed in Section 5.2.2) and provides different experiential benefits (as detailed in Section 5.2.3). Socio-cognitive mindfulness experiences are derived from cognitive-based interpretation within a specific site where cognitive information processing may influence sensory perceptions. However, this study suggests that meditative mindfulness-related stimuli are embodied in the beauty, wonder and purity of natural landscapes, unique wild animals, fascinating characters, and cultural authenticity which attracts the tourists' attention and awareness. This often leads to a sense of relaxation and tranquillity. For instance, this study found that meditative mindfulness tourist experiences mostly correspond to eco-travel, nature appreciation, wildlife observation and adventuring. The implication is that development of meditative mindfulness supports nature-based tourism, ecotourism and slow travel (Dickinson, Lumsdon, & Robbins, 2011). Knowledge of meditative mindfulness will help in creating an engaging tourist experience thereby supporting marketing, promotion and destination positioning, and contributing to the development of successful tourism strategies and policy. Destinations may create, for example, ecological places where people can sit and appreciate the beauty around them. Mindful tourism products may include, for example, information processing in different ways, through placing sensory elements in new combinations, by evoking imagery, and hence offering fresh and novel possibilities to experience. In addition, there are potential opportunities to bridge the roles of antecedents from a theoretical perspective (as discussed in Section 5.3.1.1) into empirical applications in environmental

interpretation as well as in mindful tourism product design. For example, an application of a low intensity on-site interpretation is encouraged as a useful trigger to facilitate tourists' mindful awareness to engage in the experience. Affective interpretative interventions may create more inner satisfaction for tourists. One example is 'Yatra walking' – silent walking around natural or sacred spots, simple accommodation such as camping and slow travel. The aim of this kind of product is to provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy the present moment without anxiety for the future and create connections between oneself and the environment. Above all, this study has found that mindful travel provides mental ease and leads to wellbeing and tranquillity. In short, this study suggests that emphasising authentic natural stimuli and reducing cognitive information may lead more quickly to meditative mindfulness and to contribute to people's wellbeing.

#### **5.4 Delimitation and Limitations of the Research**

The generalisability of the model of meditative mindfulness experiences in tourism has several delimitations and limitations that must be noted. In this thesis, the respondents were limited to Taiwanese backpackers in Australia, and the interview questions asked respondents to recall an impressive experience underpinned by sensations perceived through recollection. People who travelled to other destinations and non-backpacker tourists (such as group tours, business tourists) were excluded from the study. Thus, this study's findings were restricted to Taiwanese backpackers' experiences in Australia. Moreover, the experiences identified in this study were identified using a sensation-based model of information processing (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 2002b; Siegel, 2009; Teasdale, 1999). Meditative mindfulness experiences may be similar to other kinds of experiences such as spiritual experiences (Sharpley & Jepson, 2011), transformative experiences (Kottler, 1997), therapeutic experiences (Lea, 2008) or clinical experiences (Dunne, 2011). However, this study is limited to achieve a clear focus for exploring meditative mindfulness experiences, and only offers limited insights into related concepts such as socio-cognitive mindfulness and flow (as detailed in Section 5.2.1.2).

This study used a qualitative research approach due to its exploratory nature and limited timeframe. Ideally, an exploratory sequential mix-method approach is needed to provide a better understanding of meditative mindfulness experiences. To some extent this was addressed by the large number (77) of meditative mindfulness experiences identified. The model of meditative mindfulness tourist experience provides a framework to support further qualitative and quantitative research.

A second limitation is due to the potential bias introduced by cultural differences and psychological meanings associated with meditative mindfulness experiences of Taiwanese visitors. As mentioned above, all respondents were Taiwanese tourists and experiences were limited to Australian settings

and stimuli. The respondents were chosen based on replication logic and for theoretical purposes. Thus, the findings of this research can be regarded as indicative only and must take into account the validity of interpretability in a cross-cultural context (Van de Vijver & Poortinga, 1997). This conceptual framework should be used with caution in other cultural contexts.

A final limitation is related to the data collection. Two sites were chosen to conduct the semi-structured interviews, and participation and observation took place in Brisbane and Uluru, respectively. As the purpose of the qualitative data collection was to explore the phenomenon of meditative mindfulness experiences in tourism, the researcher met interviewees personally in different backpacker hostels and the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. While these interviews were at specific sites, interviewees' recollections related to significant experiences across multiple sites in Australia. Thus, comparison of intervention stimuli and activity participation in response to meditative mindfulness experiences was not possible in this study. Further research with meditative mindfulness in specific tourism contexts or into respondents' experiences that are limited to one site may possibly provide other types of findings in our understanding of the meditative mindfulness tourist experience. Additionally, it may be that the interview method used here prompted recall and future research may investigate this possibility using other techniques.

### **5.5 Directions for Future Research**

Future research is encouraged in order to consolidate the results of this study. Firstly, the findings of this thesis could be extended through a follow-up quantitative research study. This may investigate on-site meditative mindfulness experiences at a fixed site, analysing perceived feelings (Russell, 1989), or discussing the implicit psychological outcomes between affection and cognition (Russell, 2012). This type of research will provide a deeper understanding of how the mental processes involved in meditative mindful tourist experiences have been transformed. Secondly, the sample selection in this study was specifically limited to backpackers as the first study in the tourism field. Future studies are recommended to see whether this type of mindfulness occurs in other types of tourism contexts.

Thirdly, research could be conducted to compare different related concepts of tourist experiences of socio-cognitive mindfulness and flow with meditative mindfulness. This study used the Eastern notion of meditative mindfulness to explore the phenomenon of meditative mindfulness experiences (as detailed in Section 5.3.1.1). While socio-cognitive mindfulness and flow, which involves awareness/attention are similar to meditative mindfulness (as discussed in Section 5.3.1.2), little empirical research has distinguished these overlapping phenomena in a tourism context. There remains a need to develop more empirical research to validate and compare the relationship

between tourist experiences which are associated with meditative mindfulness, socio-cognitive mindfulness and flow. This may be difficult as the relationships among the three types of tourist experience modes (meditative mindfulness, socio-cognitive mindfulness and flow) may be complex and interwoven.

Lastly, there is scope for cross-disciplinary investigation of 'mindful travel' as an alternative therapeutic path that facilitates mental health and wellbeing. The findings show the experiential benefits derived from meditative mindfulness seem to connect to one's mind and body in a manner similar to formal mindfulness practices (as detailed in Section 5.2.3.2). Previous tourism studies have suggested that tourism settings and recreational activities embody various therapeutic benefits and may influence tourists' behaviour changes, such as through a therapeutic landscape (Lea, 2008), beauty/nature appreciations (Brady, 1998; Budd, 1996), rock climbing (Steinberg, 2011), fitness holidays/spiritual retreats/wellness tourism (Kelly, 2010; Little, 2012; Voigt et al., 2011) and tourist-wildlife encounters (Zeppel, 2008). Moreover, this study has identified that meditative mindfulness tourists can adopt different thinking modes that lead to mental ease, as has been discussed in non-tourism studies. For example, neuroscience studies have suggested that meditative mindfulness as an integrative process, promotes wellbeing in body, mind, and relationships through integration information processing in the left and right brain hemispheres (Siegel, 2009); behaviour and therapy research has argued that emotional processing mechanisms help to mediate the therapeutic effects and prevent negative affect (Teasdale, 1999); and clinical psychology programs have developed mindfulness interventions to improve physical and mental problems (see Section 2.3.2.2). Further development which may be derived from this study's findings may be possible through collaborative research that links tourism and other related fields such as environment psychology, mind-body medicine, or neuroscience studies, as well as Eastern perspectives of meditative mindfulness theory.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview Guide I: Screening Questions Interview (Chinese version)

#### 訪談綱要 I: 篩選(過濾)訪談

篩選(過濾)訪談目的:在於判別台灣背包客在澳洲的旅行體驗是否處於全神貫注或某種冥想專注(meditative mindfulness)的經驗狀態。請您回想以下提問:當您在澳洲旅行時,有否在哪一個特殊情境會出現類似的經驗?請您真實立即地回答。這答案無關好或不好,重要的是-這是您個人在澳洲的旅遊體驗。

##### ➤ 專注/意識

1. 您在澳洲背包旅行時,是否有感覺深刻的體驗呢?這些感覺可以包括不同的感官感受(如:視覺、聽覺、嗅覺、味覺、觸覺、內心感受等)。是哪一種特殊的情境,令您全神貫注於某些感覺?請試以說明。(比方說,某一當下,你很專注於旅行時的周遭環境)

*例如(參考):*我會注意到自然或環境中的視覺因子變化,如顏色、形狀、紋理、光影等(視覺);我能注意到不同的聲音(聽覺);我能注意到一些人事物的氣味(嗅覺);我會注意到風吹過了我的髮稍、在特定的情境或風景區,我感覺到我的身體變化或移動,也許是步行、爬山、運動、或其他活動(觸覺);我能注意到某些食物味道(味覺);我能注意到內心感受。

##### ➤ 當下

2. 您所提到的那個特殊情境,您是否很專注於那當下每一時刻?為什麼呢?

*例如(參考):*當下我能完全放開自己;當我覺察到我心不在焉時,我可以再次和緩地回到現在(指當下);我感到我的體驗是處在現今此地(活在當下);我了解那種自我的感覺,並未感到迷茫;我能完全專注於當時正在做的事或活動,再無其他。

##### ➤ 暫不做判斷,欣然(坦然)接受

3. 關於上述您提到的那一特定情境,在那當時,您是否會對您那時的感受或想法給予是非判斷?或去評價這份體驗是否有其價值?或無用?為什麼呢?

*例如(參考):*我會自責我自己無理或不適當的情緒;我提醒自己過去的不是;我試圖評價過去不當的思緒。

## 訪談綱要 II: 衍伸(半開放式)提問

### 前因: 全神貫注的旅行體驗

1. 在第一部份的提問，您提到了那一當下的狀態，可以請您舉出一例：您在澳洲背包旅行時，感觸深刻的旅行體驗情境嗎？為什麼它令您有如此深刻的感覺？
2. 請您再具體描繪此一特定狀態時您的感覺以及思緒。或是您有圖像化照片、部落格等有照片、資訊、或是故事可提供參考嗎？

#### *例如(參考):*

*圖像中是否表現出你所參與的活動、以及所處的環境氛圍，或是哪些因子(如獨自旅行、結伴旅行、旅行動機等)觸動您全神貫注？*

3. 你曾經練習或接觸過正式的正念/內觀技巧、訓練、或是有老師指導的相關課程嗎（如靜坐、或瑜珈等）？如果您曾經有此經驗：
  - I. 您練習多久了？一般你都在哪裡做這項活動？比如：養生中心、療癒工作坊、佛寺。
  - II. 您認為治療性的正念內觀訓練課程對您此趟澳洲背包旅行有助於旅行體驗嗎？

### 結果(正面效果): 全神貫注的旅行體驗

4. 您覺得這類全神貫注的旅行體驗對您有正面影響嗎？請描述一下是什麼樣的好處？指在旅行當下，以及旅行回來之後。

#### *例如(參考):*

*意義、內心寧靜、安靜、學習、正面情緒、紓壓、減緩痛苦、開創生活價值、自我覺察及關注他人、健康、建立關係、同理(情)心、智慧、啟發、有目的性的、或是滿足感。*

5. 您如何意識到這體驗(正向的轉化)改變了你呢？對您重要嗎？

### 其他

6. 您當時的那次的澳洲旅行是何時？期間多久\_\_天？
7. 是否還有其他您在澳洲旅行的體驗案例或建議，可再提出分享呢？
8. 受訪者基本資料（例如：那次旅行是固定行程安排？或是較隨興的行程？自己1人旅行？或是有隨行同伴\_\_位？等等）。



### Appendix C: Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI)

The purpose of this inventory is to characterize your experience of mindfulness. Please use the last \_\_\_ days as the time-frame to consider each item. Provide an answer for every statement as best you can. Please answer as honestly and spontaneously as possible. There are neither ‘right’ nor ‘wrong’ answers, nor ‘good’ or ‘bad’ responses. What is important to us is your own personal experience. (Walach et al., 2006, pp. 1552-1553)

1	2	3	4
Rarely	Occasionally	Fairly often	Almost always

1. I am open to the experience of the present moment.
2. I sense my body, whether eating, cooking, cleaning or talking.
3. When I notice an absence of mind, I gently return to the experience of the here and now.
4. I am able to appreciate myself.
5. I pay attention to what’s behind my actions.
6. I see my mistakes and difficulties without judging them.
7. I feel connected to my experience in the here-and-now.
8. I accept unpleasant experiences.
9. I am friendly to myself when things go wrong.
10. I watch my feelings without getting lost in them.
11. In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting.
12. I experience moments of inner peace and ease, even when things get hectic and stressful.
13. I am impatient with myself and with others.
14. I am able to smile when I notice how I sometimes make life difficult.

## Appendix D: Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS)

Please rate each of the following statements using the scale provided. Write the number in the blank that best describes your own opinion of what is generally true for you. (Baer et al., 2004, p. 196).

1	2	3	4	5
Never or very rarely true	Rarely true	Sometimes true	Often true	Very often or always true

Item number and categorized content are listed as below:

### ***Observe items***

- 01. I notice changes in my body, such as whether my breathing slows down or speeds up.
- 05. I pay attention to whether my muscles are tense or relaxed.
- 09. When I'm walking, I deliberately notice the sensations of my body moving.
- 13. When I take a shower or a bath, I stay alert to the sensations of water on my body.
- 17. I notice how foods and drinks affect my thoughts, bodily sensations, and emotions.
- 21. I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face.
- 25. I pay attention to sounds, such as clocks ticking, birds chirping, or cars passing.
- 29. I notice the smells and aromas of things.
- 30. I intentionally stay aware of my feelings.
- 33. I notice visual elements in art or nature, such as colours, shapes, textures, or patterns of light and shadow.
- 37. I pay attention to how my emotions affect my thoughts and behaviour.
- 39. I notice when my moods begin to change.

### ***Describe items***

- 02. I'm good at finding the words to describe my feelings.
- 06. I can easily put my beliefs, opinions, and expectations into words.
- 10. I'm good at thinking of words to express my perceptions, such as how things taste, smell, or sound.
- 14. It is hard for me to find the words to describe what I'm thinking. \*
- 18. I have trouble thinking of the right words to express how I feel about things. \*
- 22. When I have a sensation in my body, it's difficult for me to describe it because I can't find the right words. \*
- 26. Even when I'm feeling terribly upset, I can find a way to put it into words.
- 34. My natural tendency is to put my experiences into words.

***Act with awareness items***

- 03. When I do things, my mind wanders off and I'm easily distracted. \*
- 07. When I'm doing something, I'm only focused on what I'm doing, nothing else.
- 11. I drive on "automatic pilot" without paying attention to what I'm doing. \*
- 15. When I'm reading, I focus all my attention on what I'm reading.
- 19. When I do things, I get totally wrapped up in them and don't think about anything else.
- 23. I don't pay attention to what I'm doing because I'm daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted. \*
- 27. When I'm doing chores, such as cleaning or laundry, I tend to daydream or think of other things. \*
- 31. I tend to do several things at once rather than focusing on one thing at a time. \*
- 35. When I'm working on something, part of my mind is occupied with other topics, such as what I will be doing later, or things I'd rather be doing. \*
- 38. I get completely absorbed in what I'm doing, so that all my attention is focused on it.

***Accept without judgment items***

- 04. I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions. \*
- 08. I tend to evaluate whether my perceptions are right or wrong. \*
- 12. I tell myself that I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling. \*
- 16. I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn't think that way. \*
- 20. I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad. \*
- 24. I tend to make judgments about how worthwhile or worthless my experiences are. \*
- 28. I tell myself that I shouldn't be thinking the way I'm thinking. \*
- 32. I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn't feel them.\*
- 36. I disapprove of myself when I have irrational ideas.\*

Ps.\*: Reverse-scored item

## Appendix E: The Modified Four Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (modified-FFMQ)

*Podcast tour study* (Kang & Gretzel, 2012, p. 452)

Please read each question carefully before answering to the best of your ability. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential. What you have to tell us is important and we thank you for your help.

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement regarding your park experience. While taking the audio tour:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree			Strongly agree	

### *Sub-dimensions and items of mindfulness*

#### *Attention items*

- ◆ I could pay attention to what I was doing.
- ◆ It was easy for me to concentrate on what I was doing.
- ◆ I was able to pay close attention to the environment.

#### *Present-focus items*

- ◆ I was open to the experience of the moment.
- ◆ I was able to focus on the moment.
- ◆ Part of my mind was occupied with other topics, such as what I will be doing later, or things I'd rather be doing.

#### *Awareness items*

- ◆ I noticed my surroundings when walking in the park.
- ◆ I was aware of smells and sounds and feelings such as the wind blowing in my face.
- ◆ I was attentive to my movements.
- ◆ I was aware of other people in the park.
- ◆ I could describe how I felt and thought at the moment.

#### *Non-judgment items*

- ◆ I tended to make judgments about whether my thoughts were good or bad.
- ◆ I made judgments about how worthwhile or worthless my experience was.
- ◆ I tended to evaluate whether my perceptions about the park were right or wrong.

## Appendix F: Taiwanese Working Holiday Makers in Australia

**Table: The numbers of Taiwanese working holiday makers in Australia**

<b>Total Working Holiday (Subclass 417) Visa Grants by Citizenship</b>					
<b>Citizenship</b>	<b>2005-06 PY</b>	<b>2006-07 PY</b>	<b>2007-08 PY</b>	<b>2008-09 PY</b>	<b>2009-10 PY</b>
Belgium	765	894	976	1,223	1,298
Canada	6,828	7,078	8,090	8,737	8,217
Cyprus	7	8	5	25	15
Denmark	1,212	1,396	1,142	1,220	1,294
Estonia	220	362	521	1,248	1,387
Finland	882	1,007	928	1,060	997
France	6,125	8,210	11,005	16,250	18,172
Germany	12,089	15,688	17,438	20,319	20,880
Hong Kong	658	1,209	1,535	2,715	3,713
Ireland	12,554	13,518	17,120	22,786	14,833
Italy	2,454	3,241	3,568	4,632	5,481
Japan	9,415	11,707	10,599	9,324	8,089
Korea, Republic of	24,077	28,560	32,635	39,506	34,870
Malta	102	109	94	97	67
Netherlands	2,771	3,344	3,590	3,988	4,034
Norway	611	680	694	727	925
Sweden	3,548	3,995	3,914	4,398	4,210
Taiwan	739	2,311	6,132	9,240	10,188
UK	28,821	31,211	34,145	40,182	37,056
Other*	57	84	17	19	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>113,935</b>	<b>134,612</b>	<b>154,148</b>	<b>187,696</b>	<b>175,739</b>

\*These are cases where the visa applicant has dual nationality and the visa approval has been recorded against the non-WHM eligible nationality.

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Australian Government, 2011

## Appendix G: Sites for Data Collections in Brisbane and Uluru

Data Collection Sites - 1	Locations around Brisbane / Websites
<b>Brisbane Eco Inn</b>	17 Mallon St., Bowen Hills, QLD 4006, Australia 110 Klumpp Road, Upper Mt Gravatt QLD 4122, Australia <a href="http://ecoinn17.pixnet.net/blog">http://ecoinn17.pixnet.net/blog</a>
<b>Could 9 Backpackers Resort</b>	350 Upper Roma Street Brisbane, QLD 4000, Australia <a href="http://www.visitbrisbane.com.au/Travel/Products/ProductView.aspx?id=600">http://www.visitbrisbane.com.au/Travel/Products/ProductView.aspx?id=600</a>
<b>Chill Backpackers</b>	328 Upper Roma Street, Brisbane, QLD 4000, Australia <a href="http://www.chillbackpackers.com/">http://www.chillbackpackers.com/</a>
<b>Brisbane City YHA</b>	392 Upper Roma Street, Brisbane, QLD 4000, Australia <a href="http://www3.yha.com.au/hostels/qld/brisbane-surrounds/brisbane-backpackers-hostel/">http://www3.yha.com.au/hostels/qld/brisbane-surrounds/brisbane-backpackers-hostel/</a>

Data Collection Sites - 2	Locations around Uluru / Websites
<b>Alice Springs YHA Backpackers Hostel</b>	Cnr Parsons Street and Leichhardt Terrace, Alice Springs, NT 0870, Australia <a href="http://www.yha.com.au/hostels/nt/central-australia/alice-springs-backpackers-hostel/">http://www.yha.com.au/hostels/nt/central-australia/alice-springs-backpackers-hostel/</a>
<b>Haven Backpacker Resort</b>	3 Larapinta Drive, Gillen, Alice Springs, NT 0870, Australia <a href="http://www.alicehaven.com.au/">http://www.alicehaven.com.au/</a>
<b>Ayers Rock Campground</b>	Yulara Drive, Yulara NT 0872, Australia <a href="https://www.ayersrockresort.com.au/accommodation/ayers-rock-campground">https://www.ayersrockresort.com.au/accommodation/ayers-rock-campground</a>
<b>Kings Canyon Caravan Park &amp; Campground in Kings Canyon Resort</b>	Luritja Road, Watarrka National Park, NT 0872, Australia <a href="http://www.kingscanyonresort.com.au/Holiday-Park.aspx">http://www.kingscanyonresort.com.au/Holiday-Park.aspx</a>

## Appendix H: Ethical Clearance Approval



School of Tourism

CRICOS PROVIDER NUMBER 000258

1 February 2013

Ms. I-Ling (Lynn) Chen  
s42611349  
iling.chen@uqconnect.edu.au

Dear Lynn,

RE: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

I have examined your Application Form for Ethical Clearance for your study entitled: 'An exploration of mindfulness and its experiential benefits: Taiwanese backpackers in Australia'.

In regard to your application for ethical approval:

- You will conduct face-to-face interviews with 50 Taiwanese individuals travelling in Australia, who meet the criteria to be categorized as a backpacker, and who agree to be interviewed for the purposes of your study. Both males and females will be included in your sample.
- Please ensure that all the people interviewed for your study are aged 18 years or older.
- I am pleased to note that on the information sheet you have emphasized that the respondents involvement in the study is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the process at any time without penalty if they so choose.
- I am pleased that you have emphasized on the consent form the rights of the prospective respondent, and more particularly that their responses will be kept confidential and stored in a manner appropriate for this form of research activity.
- You have also included in the consent form a section that has to be signed and dated by the interviewee that also gives permission for you to digitally record the interview. It is imperative that you ensure that each of your prospective respondents read the information sheet and sign the consent form before commencement of the interview proper.

I have also examined the questions that you intend to ask respondents and I am happy to inform you that there are no other ethical considerations that warrant further attention. I give you permission to proceed to collect data in consultation with your supervisors.

Good luck with your data collection!

Shane Pegg PhD  
Assistant Post Graduate Co-ordinator

## Appendix I: Research Project Information Sheet



### Research Project Information Sheet

Many thanks for your interest in this study. The information sheet provides you with information about this project and your right of participation. If you have any concerns, please feel free to ask or contact the following:

**Project Title:** An Exploration of Mindfulness and its Experiential Benefits: Taiwanese Backpackers in Australia

**Investigator:** Ms. I-Ling (Lynn) Chen (PhD Candidate)

**Supervisors:** Associate Professor Noel Scott, Dr Pierre Benckendorff

#### *The purpose of the study*

This project aims to provide an understanding of the phenomenon of backpackers' present moment experiences associated with meditative mindfulness when engage in a particular event during their journey. This study explores this phenomenon of the relationship between the theoretical and empirical aspects of meditative mindfulness that occur during backpackers travelling in Australia. If you agree to take part, the researcher will ask you to answer some questions. As a backpacker, you will be asked to recall and to describe, your mindful tourist experiences in terms of describing what situations led you to be involved in a mindful experience on your Australian journey, and whether any benefits accrued from this experience. There is not any right or wrong answer – I just want to hear your stories about a particular situation during your travel. The discussion will take about one hour at the most.

#### *Participation and withdrawal*

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without prejudice or penalty. If you do not want to take part, you do not have to give a reason and no pressure will be applied to change your mind. If you withdraw from this study, the information provided by you will be deleted, will not be included in the study, and will not be used for any reason and any purpose. Even if you have taken part, you also have the right to pull out of the discussion at any time you, up to when data is pooled, without prejudice.

#### *Confidentiality and Security of data*

When the interview commences, the researcher will ask for your permission to audio-record the discussion, in order to avoid gaps or omissions in this conversation. All the information you provide will be confidential and used for academic purposes only. The records will be transcribed and stored with a number on the password-protected computer. If, at any stage, the researcher would like to



quote your particular expressions, a systematic identifier will be used instead of your identity. Once the researcher's thesis is completed, all the records of your interview, including audio material, interview transcripts and field notes, will be destroyed. In short, your anonymity is assured and all information will remain confidential to the researcher and her supervisors.

### ***Risks***

Participation in this study should involve no physical or mental discomfort, and no risks. If, however, you should find any question or procedure to be invasive or offensive, you are free to refrain from answering, or to discontinue participation in the interview.

### ***Ethics Clearances and Contacts***

This study adheres to the Guidelines of the ethical review process of the School of Tourism, The University of Queensland. Please read the Research Project Information Sheet, you are then free to ask any questions if you are not sure. If you agree to take part, please sign the consent form. This form will not be used to identify you; it will be filed separately from all other information. If, you want any more information about the study after the interview has taken place, you can contact or leave a message with the researcher (Ms. Lynn Chen, +61 4 20 622 262, email: [iling.chen@uqconnect.edu.au](mailto:iling.chen@uqconnect.edu.au) ). If you have any further questions, you may contact the Ethics Officer of the University who is not involved in the project (Associate Professor Ian Patterson, +61 7 3346 7308, email: [ian.patterson@uq.edu.au](mailto:ian.patterson@uq.edu.au) ).

Thank You Very Much for Your Participation and Time!

**An Exploration of Mindfulness and its Experiential Benefits:  
Taiwanese Backpackers in Australia**

**Participant Consent Form**

- I have read the Information Sheet for this project and understand the nature of the research and my role in it.
- The following interview will focus on my views about the phenomenon of my mindful travel experiences and experiential benefits arising from my backpacker's travel.
- The researcher for this study is Ms I-Ling (Lynn) Chen (PhD Candidate) from the School of Tourism at The University of Queensland. I understand that she can be contacted via email at [iling.chen@uqconnect.edu.au](mailto:iling.chen@uqconnect.edu.au), or via telephone during business hours on +61 7 3346 0682; mobile on +61 420 622 262.
- I understand the information I provide will remain confidential to the researcher and her supervisors, and the results of this interview will be reported in the researcher's doctoral thesis, conference presentations and journal articles based on the research.
- Any quotes that are used in any resulting work will be anonymously attributed. Most importantly, any descriptors that could result in my identification will be removed to protect my anonymity.
- With my permission, the interview will be audio-recorded for later transcription. Any comments I make during the interview and later that I decide I do not want included in any resulting work will be deleted in full. I understand that the recording will be destroyed after the transcript is approved, and that the transcripts will be securely stored for a period of five years at The University of Queensland.

I have read and understood the information above, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that participation is voluntary and agree to participate in this interview, knowing that I can withdraw at any time. I have been given a copy of this form to keep for my own records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Full Name of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## Appendix K: Example of Interview Transcript

Participant [24]: Scuba diving in Great Barrier Reef, Queensland, Australia	
<b>Created: [Instance 50]</b>	2013/8/8 AM 11:52:40
<b>Created By:</b>	LYNN CHEN
<b>Modified:</b>	2013/8/9 AM 04:47:09
<b>Modified By:</b>	LC
<b>Embedded in project?</b>	Yes
<b>Format:</b>	WAV
<b>Duration:</b>	25:10.2
<b>Size:</b>	9 MB
<b>Transcript Entries:</b>	26

No.	Timespan	Content
1	0:11.5 - 0:34.4	<i>Have you experienced sensory consciousness, such as visible forms, sound, odour (smell), flavours, touch and mental objects, on your Australia backpacking travel? And how? (Could you give me an example of the kinds of situations that have triggered your perception?)</i>
2	0:29.4 - 0:33.7	Yes, it was a strong perception of tactile consciousness.
3	0:32.8 - 1:46.0	It was my first time to do scuba diving (深潛). Basically, I have a little problem of becoming sick from claustrophobia (幽閉恐懼症).  While I was in the activity of scuba diving, I cannot hear sound from my surroundings, but only from my own breathing. Under the deep water, I could not talk because of the diving. The only way I can communicate with my surrounding is with my posture/gesture. That is, I can concentrate more on a specific sensation or concentrate my mind on what I was doing when other consciousness was dissociated. So, I paid all my attention to the scuba diving.
4	1:46.0 - 3:58.2	<i>(Could you describe more about this situation because I have never experienced diving?)</i>  Yes. I wore an under water diving frog mirror, so I could clearly see what was in front of me. The environment of the deep ocean was very, very quiet. No sound from there, even the sea, but only my own breathing and the sound from air bubbles in the water associated with my breath. Furthermore, I was disoriented in my directions, such as up and down, or left and right. However, I was aware of the pull from my coach because my position of depth

No.	Timespan	Content
		<p>was controlled by him.  <i>(Did you feel you were walking in the ocean?)</i>            No, I was floating in the ocean. It was in Cairns.</p>
5	3:58.2 - 4:00.0	<p><i>(Did you join a tour package?)</i>            Yes.  <i>(Did you remember where it was or what the product was?)</i>            Uhm... I forget the name of that area, but it was in the area of the Great Barrier Reef.</p>
6	4:03.3 - 4:09.9	<p><i>(How long did your diving last?)</i>            Around 30 minutes. It was an experience of diving.</p>
7	4:09.9 - 5:09.4	<p><i>(Except for the perception of tactile consciousness, you have mentioned that you could see in front of you? Could you describe what you saw - the perception of visualisation? )</i>            Yes, there were beautiful corals and fishes. The fishes were colourful with slight neon, more shiny than my previous imagination. It looked like luminescence in a dark, deep ocean.</p>
8	5:09.4 - 6:18.8	<p><i>(Wow... it is called diving.)</i>            It was like a deeper diving. I was floating in the water but not on the ground under the ocean.  <i>(Tell me why did you not sink to the ground?)</i>            That is because I was attached to specific heavy scuba diving equipment. The diving suit was inflatable, so I would not sink down to the bottom in the ocean. At the same time, I was tied to lead bricks, so I was in the water, not floating on the water.</p>
9	6:18.8 - 7:07.6	<p><i>(Wow... I have experienced snorkelling, but never experienced the scuba diving before.)</i>            I have experienced snorkelling before but there are different feelings between snorkelling and scuba diving. For my personal experience, scuba diving makes you more aware of directions, such as moving up and down, shifting right and left. The best difference is that I can look upward towards the surface. Ha ha!</p>
10	7:07.6 - 8:32.2	<p><i>(Please describe what you have seen in detail)</i>            I was approaching lots of coral, fishes with stripy dark blue but they were shiny and looked like tropical fishes, and some precious fishes.</p>
11	8:32.2 - 9:43.1	<p>The experience of scuba diving was kind of a situation I have experienced before. That was a jail-visit at Port Arthur in Tasmania. There was a very small room of punishment for criminals in Port Arthur. The room was an isolated space, pretty dark, quiet, with very good soundproofing. I could not see</p>

No.	Timespan	Content
		<p>anything when I was going into the punishment room. Once the door of the room was closed, people inside cannot feel any light, no sound, and no sights at all. The phenomenon is similar to doing scuba diving alone. However, I was not scared with the dark the environment when I was doing the scuba diving. It was a feeling of 孤獨 solitude (or loneliness), but it was like some sense like natural relaxation and calmness. Ha ha.</p>
12	9:43.1 - 10:06.5	<p><i>(So, were you scuba diving alone? Or were you with a companion?)</i> No, I was not diving alone. In fact, I still can see other people doing scuba diving next to me in the water. However, I ignored where they were because I cannot communicate with others through talking; I may communicate with them only via gesture. So, it was like I was alone, a feeling of solitude (or loneliness).</p>
13	10:06.5 - 12:00.7	<p><i>(Can you talk about the perceived experience from your scuba diving?)</i></p> <p>Hum... it was kind of fantastic and a very special experience for me..... because the world does not only exist only for humans like myself, but also the creatures around us.</p> <p><i>(The feeling is positive? or negative, such as the fear you mentioned coming into the punishment room?)</i></p> <p>It was positive! It had different outcomes. For the room, it was too narrow to turn my body; people cannot sit comfortably, as if one is trapped inside a small cabinet. So, it was terrible, and made me scared. However, for the scuba diving, even if a feeling of solitude (or loneliness) is perceived, I still can see other creatures in the ocean.</p>
14	12:00.5 - 12:33.1	<p><i>(How was the state of your mind?)</i></p> <p>It was quite positive and unusual! Normally, people won't involve themselves in a state of isolation where they are without people, with no one to talk to as well as no socialization.</p>
15	12:33.1 - 13:09.5	<p><i>(That means in a quiet environment, no communication? What did you feel or experience?)</i></p> <p>I will more specifically think deeply or reflect on my inner self.</p>
16	13:09.5 - 14:44.9	<p><i>(For example?)</i></p> <p>I would think more about my own problems, such as my behaviour. I was on my Australian journey and did not make contact with others. Therefore, I was reflecting on myself whether my family members missed me. At the moment, I was involved in a state of no socialization. However, it triggered me to reflect on the relationship of communication.</p>

No.	Timespan	Content
		<p><i>(You mean contact with your friends, family?)</i></p> <p>I mean I would take more notice of the harmony of interpersonal relationships, whatever, in Australia, or in Taiwan.</p>
17	14:44.9 - 16:26.0	<p><i>(Did you see sunshine in the ocean?)</i></p> <p>Yes, I can see the sunshine above me when I raised my head. Basically, it was dark when I looked down into the ocean. Besides, there were some faults in the seabed. <i>(Did you fear?)</i> Ha ha.... initially, I would be astonished if I fell into the faults, whereas I was floating in the sea actually.....</p>
18	16:26.0 - 17:04.8	<p><i>(Can you describe your feeling in detail?)</i></p> <p>Pleasant, then I felt calmness from my mind (平靜) while I was swimming ahead slowly and slowly, floating in the sea.</p> <p><i>(Why did you feel calm at that moment?)</i></p> <p>Um....I don't know... ha ha.....</p>
19	17:04.8 - 17:36.7	<p><i>(Was there any other feeling perceived?)</i></p> <p>Um..... (No answer).</p> <p><i>(OK, well... you mentioned the solitude or loneliness—how was it compared with calm?)</i></p> <p>It was not a kind of loneliness like when you are left by someone; it was kind of a calm of solitude. It was a positive feeling. I was more precious at that present moment.</p>
20	17:36.7 - 19:41.1	<p><i>(Were you thinking of other things that disturb you and made you want to stop your scuba diving at that moment?)</i></p> <p>No. I was not thinking too much at that moment. To be specific, I had done my scuba diving in the day, whereas I hoped to visit again in the night. And then I did a midnight scuba diving actually. I was set up with an electric torch while scuba diving in the night. You can hear different sounds. The experience of midnight scuba diving has made me experience more consciousness than the day's diving because the surroundings in the night was darker. Most fishes' colours in the night looked more reflective during the day.</p>
21	19:41.1 - 20:32.5	<p><i>(When was your travel?)</i></p> <p>In April, 2010. I have been in Australia for a working holiday for half a year.</p>
22	20:32.5 - 21:05.1	<p><i>(Did you have any companion?)</i></p> <p>With my partner, a close girlfriend. However, when I was scuba diving, I almost forgot where she was (she was on the same activity as I was at the same time, and she was just next to me).</p>

No.	Timespan	Content
23	21:05.1 - 22:00.9	<p><i>(Has the travel experience influenced you after this trip?)</i></p> <p>Yes, I would spend time to be alone with myself. It is like seeking an experience/feeling of “being oblivious of myself 放空 (or a perception of selflessness or forget oneself)”. For instance, drinking a cup of coffee alone, to reflect on what I am doing, and then what I am going to do. Personally, I used to dislike a state of solitude or loneliness; whereas, now, I am willing to spend time to face myself as well as to get along with myself after the experience of scuba diving.</p>
24	22:00.9 - 23:25.8	<p><i>(What the experiential benefits perceived from this experience?)</i></p> <p>My brain works more clearly than before. I would know what I want. That is, get along with myself via a state of solitude, then “being oblivious of myself 放空 (or a perception of selflessness or forget oneself)”. I would try to put down negative thoughts or something bad. Let trouble or disturbed stuff derived from work go. I have felt nothing when worries or depression have passed once I am in a state of being oblivious of myself.</p> <p><i>(It is amazing, isn't it?)</i></p>
25	23:20.9 - 25:10.0	<p><i>(Have you compared the travel experience in Taiwan and within Australia?)</i></p> <p>Well, I never have experienced scuba diving in Taiwan. It was my first time to do scuba diving in Australia.</p> <p><i>(Can you swim?)</i></p> <p>Yes, I can. I suppose I will try to pass the exam of certificate of professional scuba diving in Taiwan.</p>
26	24:37.9 - 25:10.0	<p><i>(Have you practised or heard of formal mindfulness practices?)</i></p> <p>No. no yoga, Tai-chi but I have practised Taekwondo in Taiwan.</p>