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Lorraine L. Taylor
Fort Lewis College

William C. Norman
Clemson University

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The Influence of Mindfulness During the Travel Anticipation Phase on Search and Choice Behaviors, Search and Choice Outcomes, and Trip Evaluations

Introduction

The tourism marketplace is growing more competitive as technology and transportation have allowed tourists access to information about and transportation to reach many previously unattainable destinations. In order for destinations to stay competitive, the tourism marketers and managers must understand the processes and components of tourist decision making and trip evaluations. Variables that are often considered in the literature on travel planning and decision making include: the window of time spent planning in the planning horizon (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983), the number of destinations considered for the trip in the choice set (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989), and the variety of information sources sought (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The experience of planning the trip will result in outcomes related to whether the tourist enjoyed the planning experience and how confident they are that they selected the best destination for their trip.

Trip evaluations such as satisfaction and loyalty are also prevalent in tourism research. Many studies have empirically tested that tourists who are satisfied with their travel experience are more likely to be loyal and return to the destination again or recommend it to their friends and family (Chen & Tsai, 2007, Chi & Qu, 2008; Kozak, 2003; Prayag, 2008; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). These studies often look at satisfaction based on the tourists' experiences when they are in situ, or on site in the destination. However, the time spent in the destination is only one segment of the travel experience.

It has been proposed that the travel experience has five phases: the anticipation before departure, traveling to the destination, time on site in the destination, traveling home from the destination, and the recollection of the trip after returning home (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966). While it has been established that satisfaction with the experience at the destination can lead to satisfaction and loyalty, tourism research has not fully explored whether the tourist's experience in other travel phases also influences satisfaction as well as behaviors and attitudes that are indicative of loyalty.

People process information about travel and other consumption decisions based upon their existing level of knowledge about the place or product. Dual-processing theory in psychology provides a framework for understanding that people process information through a high-effort route or a low-effort route (Pearce & Packer, 2013). Langer (1989) describes the high-effort route as mindfulness and the natural inclination or propensity for a person to analytically process information that results in the creation of new categories, openness to new information, and awareness of more than one perspective. In contrast, mindless decisions through the low-effort route are often automatic and instinctual after only considering a single perspective (Langer, 1989).

Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to understand the influence that mindfulness during the anticipation phase has on the travel experience. Tourists were asked to indicate their level of mindfulness during the anticipation phase as well as other search and choice behaviors that took place during the phase and the outcomes of that phase. In particular, tourists were asked to report their

behavior for the following issues that have support in the literature as potential indicators as mindful behavior: how far in advance they began searching for information on the destination (Langer, 1994), the number of destinations they seriously considered for their trip (Carson & Langer, 2006), the variety of information sources they utilized while making their decision (Langer, 1989), how much enjoyment they experienced during the anticipation phase (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000), and how confident they were in their final destination choice (Kahneman, 2011).

Analysis was also completed to understand the relationships between mindfulness in the anticipation phase and satisfaction with the trip and loyalty to the destination. Examining the influence of mindfulness during the anticipation phase on satisfaction illuminates whether satisfaction is determined by the tourists based only on their experience in situ or whether the evaluation of satisfaction could begin earlier in the anticipation phase. Also, calculating the influence of mindfulness on loyalty reveals whether the behavioral and attitudinal dimensions of loyalty are determined only by their experience in situ or if loyalty could begin earlier in the anticipation phase.

One mediating and two moderating variables were included in the analysis to consider whether the strength of the influence of mindfulness during the anticipation phase is determined by how much of the trip was planned in advance, whether the destination selected had been previously visited by the tourist, and whether the tourist consider the area to be the primary destination for their trip. Perhaps the influence of mindfulness on search and choice behaviors and outcomes, as well as on satisfaction and loyalty is greatly impacted by whether the trip components were planned in advance or whether the tourists were still planning elements of their trip once they had arrived in the destination, as well as if the destination was novel and unfamiliar to the tourist compared to a place that they had visited in the past, and if the tourist was visiting the area as their primary destination or one of several places that they were visiting on their trip.

Despite the potential for this study to add to the body of knowledge on mindfulness, there are limitations to the results based on the survey administration. One such limitation is that two sites were selected for this study so that the data would not be taken from a single source. However, differences existed between the two site locations on key variables showing that there were inconsistencies between the travel experience for the two sample populations. For that reason, a dichotomous variable for the two sites where the data was collected was included in the analysis as a control variable to account for these differences between sites. Another limitation is that tourists were asked to evaluate their satisfaction and loyalty for their trip though some tourists had recently arrived in the destination, therefore making it more challenging to evaluate their satisfaction and loyalty when they had not experienced as much of the destination as tourists who happened to take the survey at the end of their trip and were able to better evaluate their overall experience. In order to control for the percentage of the trip that had been completed, the survey followed the procedure of Nawijn (2010) and asked the tourists how long their trip would last in days and which day of the trip it was at that moment. From the answers to these questions, the percentage of their trip that had been completed was calculated and included as a control variable when analyzing the model relationships for mindfulness and trip evaluations (e.g. satisfaction, behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty).

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to understand the influence of mindfulness in the anticipation phase. The research questions were the drivers for the statistical analysis.

1. Does mindfulness influence search and choice behaviors during the anticipation phase: the length of the planning horizon, the number of destinations considered, and the variety of sources utilized for decision making?
 - 1a. Are the relationships between mindfulness and the search and choice behaviors during the anticipation phase mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance?
 - 1b. Are the relationships between mindfulness and the search and choice behaviors during the anticipation phase moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination?
 - 1c. Are the relationships between mindfulness and the search and choice behaviors during the anticipation phase moderated by whether the area was considered to be the primary destination for their trip?

2. Does mindfulness influence search and choice outcomes during the anticipation phase: the level of enjoyment in planning, and the confidence in the final destination choice?
 - 2a. Are the relationships between mindfulness and the search and choice outcomes during the anticipation phase mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance?
 - 2b. Are the relationships between mindfulness and the search and choice outcomes during the anticipation phase moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination?
 - 2c. Are the relationships between mindfulness and the search and choice outcomes during the anticipation phase moderated by whether the area was considered to be the primary destination for their trip?

3. Does mindfulness during the anticipation phase influence trip evaluations: satisfaction, behavioral loyalty, and attitudinal loyalty?
 - 3a. Are the relationships between mindfulness during the anticipation phase and trip evaluations mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance?
 - 3b. Are the relationships between mindfulness during the anticipation phase and trip evaluations moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination?
 - 3c. Are the relationships between mindfulness during the anticipation phase and trip evaluations moderated by whether the area was considered to be the primary destination for their trip?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated to drive the statistical analysis for the relationships in each research question addressing the relationships in the model between mindfulness, search and choice behaviors and outcomes, and trip evaluations.

Research Question 1

H1: There is no significant influence of mindfulness on the length of the planning horizon

H2: There is no significant influence of mindfulness on the number of destinations considered

H3: There is no significant influence of mindfulness on the variety of information sources utilized

Research Question 1a

H4: The relationship between mindfulness and the length of the planning horizon is not mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance

H5: The relationship between mindfulness and the number of destinations considered is not mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance

H6: The relationship between mindfulness and the variety of information sources utilized is not mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance

Research Question 1b

H7: The relationship between mindfulness and the length of the planning horizon is not moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination

H8: The relationship between mindfulness and the number of destinations considered is not moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination

H9: The relationship between mindfulness and the variety of information sources utilized is not moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination

Research Question 1c

H10: The relationship between mindfulness and the length of the planning horizon is not moderated by whether the participant considers the site area to be their primary destination

H11: The relationship between mindfulness and the number of destinations considered is not moderated by whether the participant considers the site area to be their primary destination

H12: The relationship between mindfulness and the variety of information sources utilized is not moderated by whether the participant considers the site area to be their primary destination

Research Question 2

H13: There is no significant influence of mindfulness on the level of enjoyment in planning

H14: There is no significant influence of mindfulness on the confidence in the final choice

Research Question 2a

H15: The relationship between mindfulness and the level of enjoyment in planning is not mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance

H16: The relationship between mindfulness and the confidence in the final choice is not mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance

Research Question 2b

H17: The relationship between mindfulness and the level of enjoyment in planning is not moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination

H18: The relationship between mindfulness and the confidence in the final choice is not moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination

Research Question 2c

H19: The relationship between mindfulness and the level of enjoyment in planning is not moderated by whether the participant considers the site area to be their primary destination

H20: The relationship between mindfulness and the confidence in the final choice is not moderated by whether the participant considers the site area to be their primary destination

Research Question 3

H21: There is no significant influence of mindfulness during the anticipation phase on satisfaction

H22: There is no significant influence of mindfulness during the anticipation phase on behavioral loyalty

H23: There is no significant influence of mindfulness during the anticipation phase on attitudinal loyalty

Research Question 3a

H24: The relationship between mindfulness and satisfaction is not mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance

H25: The relationship between mindfulness and behavioral loyalty is not mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance

H26: The relationship between mindfulness and attitudinal loyalty is not mediated by how much of the trip planning took place in advance

Research Question 3b

H27: The relationship between mindfulness and satisfaction is not moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination

H28: The relationship between mindfulness and behavioral loyalty is not moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination

H29: The relationship between mindfulness and attitudinal loyalty is not moderated by whether the participant has previously visited the destination

Research Question 3c

H30: The relationship between mindfulness and satisfaction is not moderated by whether the participant considers the site area to be their primary destination.

H31: The relationship between mindfulness and behavioral loyalty is not moderated by whether the participant considers the site area to be their primary destination.

H32: The relationship between mindfulness and attitudinal loyalty is not moderated by whether the participant considers the site area to be their primary destination.

Conceptual Model

The following conceptual model shows the relationships that were measured in this study (Figure 1). First, the influence of mindfulness in the anticipation phase on search and choice behaviors (e.g. planning horizon, choice set, source variety) is considered. Second, the influence that mindfulness has on search and choice outcomes (e.g. enjoyment, confidence) is examined. Third, the influence of mindfulness in the anticipation phase on trip evaluations (e.g. satisfaction, behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty) is explored. These relationships are also tested for a mediation effect based on how much of the trip was planned in advance and moderating effects based on whether the selected destination had been previously visited and whether the site area is their primary destination.

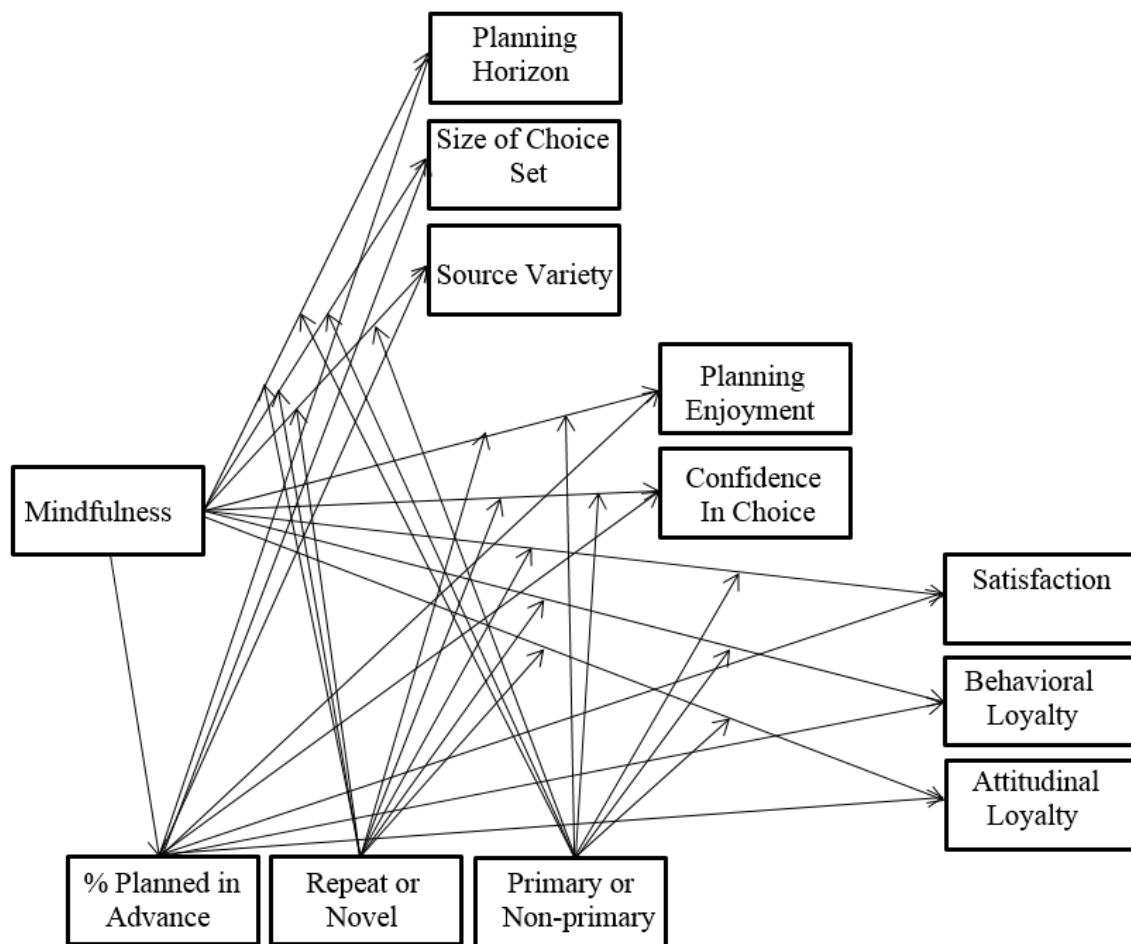


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Literature Review

Dual-Processing Theory

The basic principle of dual-processing explains that humans process information through one of two systems: analytic or automatic (Evans & Curtis-Holmes, 2005). Analytic processing is slow and methodical but likely to result in correct or logical decisions while automatic processing can result in bias because it uses fast short-cuts, or heuristics (Evans & Curtis-Holmes, 2005). There are many different models and theories found in psychology to describe essentially the same cognitive process, that decisions are made through one of two routes (Pearce & Packer, 2013). One is high-effort processing that is rational and extensive while the other involves low-effort processing that is rapid and shallow (Pearce & Packer, 2013; Smith & DeCoster, 2000).

Mindfulness

It has been argued that mindfulness is simply an applied variation of dual-processing theory (Moscardo, 2009). The analytical route, mindfulness, has been defined as actively processing available information through a heightened sensitivity to one's environment and openness to new information (Frauman & Norman, 2004; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). The automatic route, mindlessness, is associated with being trapped by categories and acting from a single perspective (Langer, 1989). Previous studies of mindfulness in tourism have been related to satisfaction and learning at tourist sites. Moscardo (1992) developed the Mindfulness Measure which is a seven item scale allowing tourists to indicate their degree of mindfulness while they are on site in the destination. Moscardo (1996) also developed a model of visitor behavior based on mindfulness and the influence of interpretation at heritage sites on the tourists' appreciation and understanding of the site. Since the initial conception, the model has been applied in research of heritage sites, interpreters, and attractions (Moscardo, 2009). Kang and Gretzel (2012) used experimental design to administer four different conditions within a podcast that was distributed to tourists at a national seashore in Texas. The results indicate that tourists assigned to the conditions associated with high mindfulness experienced greater social presence, learning, enjoyment, and escape (Kang & Gretzel, 2012). Another study looked at mindfulness as a predisposed cognitive style for visitors to four southeastern coastal state parks (Frauman & Norman, 2004). The results indicate that very mindful tourists had a preference for information sources during their visit that were involving, unique, and interactive (Frauman & Norman, 2004). Despite the relationship between mindfulness and information sources, previous studies focused on mindfulness at tourism sites and not during the anticipation phase when tourists are seeking and evaluating information sources.

The Anticipation Phase

A commonly used categorization of travel phases began in the recreation literature. The five phases by Clawson and Knetsch (1966) have been applied and modified in the leisure and recreation literature to better understand multi-phasic experiences. Hammitt (1980) surveyed the mood of visitors to a bog environment during all five phases. The results show that the experience was multi-phasic and that each phase can have its own level of enjoyment. Hultsman (1998) collected satisfaction data during all five phases of a competitive bike race and found that satisfaction levels were influenced in each of the phases and that phases may overlap (Hultsman,

1998). Ideally, research should be conducted during all five phases as exemplified in the studies above (Huberty & Ross, 2012). However, logistical limitations and procedural problems have led to research about the five phases where data is only collected during some and not all of the phases (Hammitt, 1980).

Search and Choice Behaviors

Search and choice behaviors may be influenced by the reputation of a destination and the impression a tourist has or acquires about a location during the anticipation phase. The information search stage is different for each tourist based on how much internal knowledge they have of the destination when the anticipation phase begins. The variety of sources and the amount of time devoted to search activity are considered information search in terms of “degree” (Fodness & Murray, 1997) and both variables are included in this study to better understand search behavior.

For each traveler, the information search process varies in duration based on the extensiveness of the external information search. This length of time is called the planning horizon (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983). Typically, the planning horizon is longer when the tourist is traveling far from home and for a long duration (Gitelson & Crompton, 1983). How far in advance the tourist began searching for information for their trip is included as a variable in this study and an additional mediating variable is included based on the amount of the planning that took place in advance compared to planning that took place after the trip had begun.

The literature implies that the goal of branding is for the destination to be on the short list of vacation choices. Purchasing tourism products and services is a process that includes many decisions and sub-decisions in different stages (Decrop, 2006) where information is accumulated and analyzed to help the decision maker narrow down their options of potential destinations to the one they ultimately choose. The number of destinations that were seriously considered in the choice set is included as a variable in this study to understand the tourists’ choice behavior.

It is not always the case that the result of the anticipation phase will be a trip to a new or novel destination. While some tourists may follow a decision making process that is rational and logical, others may employ a range of biases and emotion-charged heuristics that rely on information they’ve acquired through past experiences (Pearce & Packer, 2013). In this case, it is possible that a tourist may choose a destination where they have previously visited as opposed to choosing a new destination. Whether the tourists selected a destination where they had previously visited is included as a moderating variable in this study.

Search and Choice Outcomes

The outcomes of the anticipation phase are related to the application of mindfulness in the field of education. The role that the instructor plays in the establishment of a mindful learning environment has been studied (Houston & Turner, 2007; Ritchhart & Perkins, 2000) and results from these studies consistently indicate that inducing mindfulness can improve attention, memory, and increase curiosity and liking of the task (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). For this reason, a variable is included in the current study to measure how much the tourist enjoyed the planning process for their trip to be able to determine if mindfulness is related to the level of enjoyment the tourist experiences in the anticipation phase.

While it has been argued that active deciding may result in better decisions (Langer, 1994), there is debate in the literature about the limits to cognitive processing. A mindful decision maker is open to multiple sources that may have conflicting information (Carson & Langer, 2006) but there is a natural limit to how much information can reasonably be processed. However, limiting the amount of information that is processed when making a decision can result in overconfidence from the phenomenon called “what you see is all there is,” by too easily ignoring what one doesn’t know (Kahneman, 2011). The current study includes a variable that evaluates how confident the tourist was with their destination choice to understand if mindfulness and active deciding is related to higher or lower levels of confidence in their final choice.

Trip Evaluations

Satisfaction is defined as the consumer’s cognitive comparison of whether their experience exceeded their expectations (Oliver, 1980). This is rooted in disconfirmation theory explaining that if actual performance is better than their expectations, this leads to positive disconfirmation and the consumer is highly satisfied. A consumer who evaluates that the actual performance is less than their expectations will experience negative disconfirmation and be dissatisfied (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). It is recommended to include items to measure the attributes of transactional satisfaction such as accommodations, dining, attractions, and activities as well as an overall evaluation of satisfaction (Chi & Qu, 2008). This study includes a measurement of overall satisfaction and three transactional satisfaction scores to understanding the influence of each attribute on the evaluation of a destination.

Satisfaction has been studied along with loyalty and several studies have established that satisfaction and destination loyalty are positively correlated in the long-term (Oliver, 1999; Sanchez-Garcia, Pieters, Zeelenberg, & Bigné, 2012; Yoon, & Uysal, 2003) and satisfaction is a good predictor of repurchase behavior (Petrick, 2004). The more satisfied the customers are, the more likely they are to repurchase the product or service and to encourage others to become customers (Chi & Qu, 2008). In tourism, behavioral loyalty is often operationalized as repeat visitation or a recommendation to others, while attitudinal loyalty is determined in a measurement of the strength of affection toward a destination and composite loyalty combines the two (Yoon & Uysal, 2003). Loyalty and destination selection are both dynamic which can make their relationship difficult to quantify and Petrick (2004) explains that measuring both attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty is an effective approach which was utilized in this study.

Methods

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument included measurements of all variables in the model. Mindfulness as the independent variable was measured using a six-item scale from a modified version of the Mindfulness Measure (Frauman & Norman, 2004; Moscardo, 1992). The dependent variables for satisfaction, behavioral loyalty, and attitudinal loyalty were also measured using scales (Chi & Qu, 2008; Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010). These four scaled variables were treated as latent factors during data analysis.

Survey Sites

The author felt it was important to include multiple sites in the data collection to better support the validity of the results and avoid the limitation of collecting data from a single site. Charleston, South Carolina and Durango, Colorado were identified as popular tourist destinations. The sites were considered comparable because even though they were geographically diverse, they had similar features as tourism destinations such as offering a variety of natural, cultural, and heritage attractions within a region larger than a single city. The specific survey locations within each site were selected based on the opportunity to intercept tourists while they were in a natural waiting period after checking in at a tourist attraction, a carriage ride in Charleston and a train ride in Durango.

Data Collection

A total of 327 people were intercepted in Charleston as they were waiting for their tour and 311 people were intercepted in Durango as they were waiting for their tour. After calculating those who refused to participate, those who were unable to complete the survey before their tour began, and statistical outliers, the final adjusted response rate was 62.2% with a remaining sample size of 401 participants.

Data Analysis

A series of statistical techniques were used to analyze the data. Before hypothesis testing began, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) established whether the items for each scale were a good fit for their associated latent variables. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS 21 was used to analyze all of the hypothesized relationships including a control variable for the differences in the data between the two site locations and a control variable for the percent of the trip that had been completed at the time of the survey. The structural model exceeded the standards for the fit indices indicating the structural model achieved good fit. The results from model fit were Chi-square/df= 1.674, CFI= .980, NFI= .955, SRMR= .037, RMSEA= .041, and PCLOSE= .732. The model was then analyzed to determine the strength of interrelationships amongst the unobserved latent factors (Gallagher, Ting, & Palmer, 2008).

The structural model (Figure 2) includes: mindfulness (Mindful) as the independent variable, search and choice behaviors (Horizon, Choices, Sources) as dependent variables, search and choice outcomes (Enjoy, Confidence) as dependent variables, trip evaluations (Satisfaction, BLoyalty, ALoyalty) as dependent variables, the amount of the trip planned in advance (Advanced) as a mediator variable, and the site location (Site) and the percent of the trip that had been complete at the time of the survey (TodayPercent) as the two control variables. The site location was a control variable in all of the hypothesized relationships and the percent of the trip that had been completed at the time of the survey was included as a control for the relationships related to the influence of mindfulness on trip evaluations.

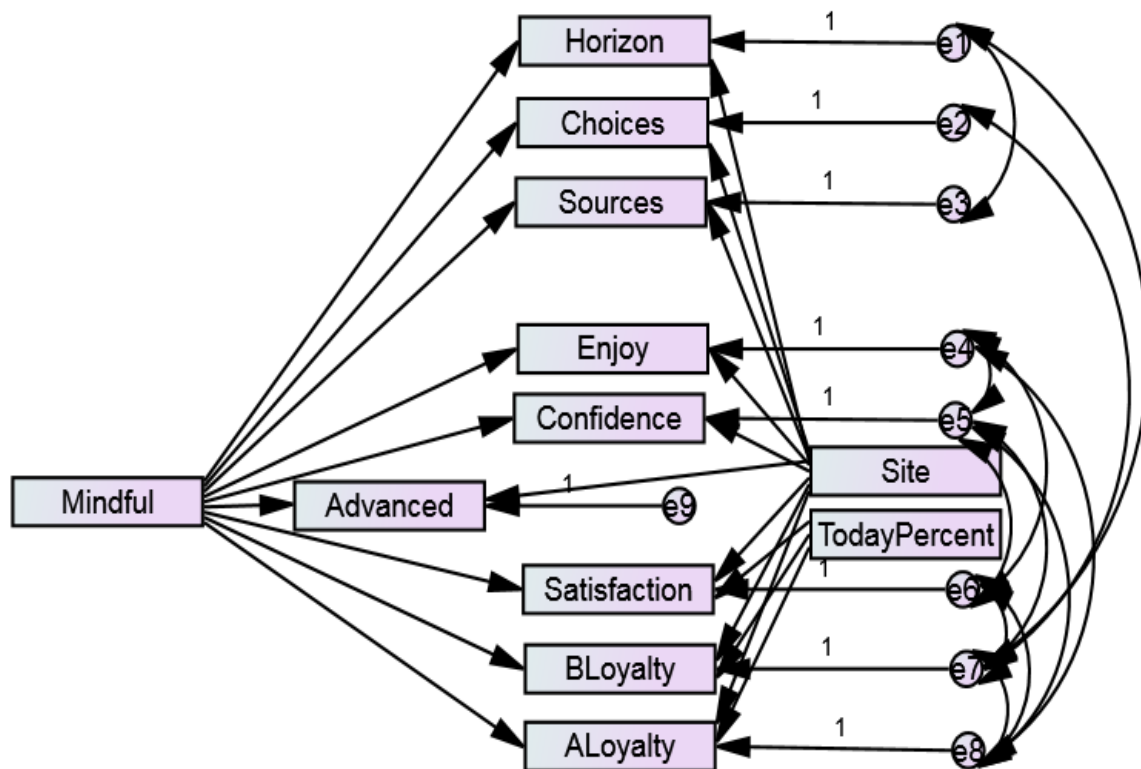


Figure 2. Structural Model

Results

The results of the hypothesis testing revealed that 11 of the 32 hypotheses were rejected by significance at a level of $p < .05$ (Table 1). Significant findings were found for: mindfulness and source variety (RQ1, H3), advanced planning mediating the relationship between mindfulness and the length of the planning horizon (RQ1a, H4), primary destination moderating the relationship between mindfulness and the length of the planning horizon (RQ1c, H10), mindfulness and the level of enjoyment in the planning process (RQ2, H13), mindfulness and the level of confidence (RQ2, H14), advanced planning mediating the relationship between mindfulness and the level of enjoyment in the planning process (RQ2a, H15), mindfulness and satisfaction (RQ3, H21), mindfulness and behavioral loyalty (RQ3, H22), mindfulness and attitudinal loyalty (RQ3, H23), advanced planning mediating the relationship between mindfulness and satisfaction (RQ3a, H24), and novel destination moderating the relationship between mindfulness and attitudinal loyalty (RQ3b, H29).

When considering the unmediated and unmoderated direct effects between mindfulness and the dependent variables, six of the eight hypotheses were significant revealing that mindfulness during the travel anticipation phase has a positive and significant influence the travel experience for source variety, enjoyment, confidence, satisfaction with the trip, behavioral loyalty to the

destination, and attitudinal loyalty to the destination. Five out of the 24 hypotheses testing mediation and moderation effects were significant: advanced planning on the relationship between mindfulness and the length of the planning horizon, the level of enjoyment, and the level of satisfaction; novel destination and the relationship between mindfulness and attitudinal loyalty; and primary destination and the relationship between mindfulness and the length of the planning horizon.

Table 1. *Summary of Hypothesis Testing*

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Mediating or Moderating Variable	Result
1	Mindfulness	Horizon		Fail to Reject
2	Mindfulness	Choice Set		Fail to Reject
3	Mindfulness	Source Variety		Reject
4	Mindfulness	Horizon	Advance	Reject
5	Mindfulness	Choice Set	Advance	Fail to Reject
6	Mindfulness	Source Variety	Advance	Fail to Reject
7	Mindfulness	Horizon	Novel	Fail to Reject
8	Mindfulness	Choice Set	Novel	Fail to Reject
9	Mindfulness	Source Variety	Novel	Fail to Reject
10	Mindfulness	Horizon	Primary	Reject
11	Mindfulness	Choice Set	Primary	Fail to Reject
12	Mindfulness	Source Variety	Primary	Fail to Reject
13	Mindfulness	Enjoyment		Reject
14	Mindfulness	Confidence		Reject
15	Mindfulness	Enjoyment	Advance	Reject
16	Mindfulness	Confidence	Advance	Fail to Reject
17	Mindfulness	Enjoyment	Novel	Fail to Reject
18	Mindfulness	Confidence	Novel	Fail to Reject
19	Mindfulness	Enjoyment	Primary	Fail to Reject
20	Mindfulness	Confidence	Primary	Fail to Reject
21	Mindfulness	Satisfaction		Reject
22	Mindfulness	Behavioral Loyalty		Reject
23	Mindfulness	Attitudinal Loyalty		Reject
24	Mindfulness	Satisfaction	Advance	Reject
25	Mindfulness	Behavioral Loyalty	Advance	Fail to Reject
26	Mindfulness	Attitudinal Loyalty	Advance	Fail to Reject
27	Mindfulness	Satisfaction	Novel	Fail to Reject
28	Mindfulness	Behavioral Loyalty	Novel	Fail to Reject
29	Mindfulness	Attitudinal Loyalty	Novel	Reject
30	Mindfulness	Satisfaction	Primary	Fail to Reject
31	Mindfulness	Behavioral Loyalty	Primary	Fail to Reject
32	Mindfulness	Attitudinal Loyalty	Primary	Fail to Reject

Discussion

Mindfulness has successfully been applied to the on-site phase previously, and this study reveals that mindfulness during the anticipation phase also has a significant influence on the tourists' evaluation of their travel experience. The key finding of this study was that the more mindful the tourists were during the anticipation phase, the more positive their trip evaluations were in terms of satisfaction, behavioral loyalty, and attitudinal loyalty. Consumers are playing an increasingly important role in the tourism industry as they are active participants of experiences rather than passive consumers of tangible goods. Tourists in particular are co-creating their travel experience in each of the travel phases (Prat & de la Rica Aspiunza, 2014). The anticipation phase is the point when destination managers have the opportunity to reach potential tourists with persuasive information before they have made decisions about their itinerary and spending. While all phases are necessary to understand, the anticipation phase is absolutely crucial to the success of tourism organizations because it is the only opportunity to convince the tourists to choose that specific destination over the competitors for that particular trip.

The theoretical contribution of this study is to highlight the potential for mindfulness to be influential in phases of the travel experience beyond the period of time that the tourist spends in the destination. Previous studies have indicated that mindfulness can be valuable in understanding the phase associated with the on site experience of the tourist (Frauman & Norman, 2004, Kang & Gretzel, 2012; Moscardo, 2009) and this study extends those findings to also include the anticipation phase. Future research should consider the impact of mindfulness within all phases of the travel experience. The results from the CFA also verify the literature suggesting that mindfulness, satisfaction, and loyalty are multidimensional variables though future studies are encouraged to validate and refine the existing scales.

The practical application of the findings can help inform decisions and strategies of destination managers and business owners to leverage the understanding that mindfulness during the travel planning process may result in higher degrees of satisfaction and loyalty. Satisfaction has been shown to result in business profitability (Kozak, 2003) and developing relationships with loyal tourists who make repeat visits is shown to be more efficient than convincing tourists to make their first visit (Oppermann, 2000). Destination managers may underestimate the long-term importance of providing information sources that engage tourists while they are still in the anticipation phase and are narrowing down their options. While there is a direct link between effective marketing that convinces the tourists to choose their destination over others, this study suggests that there is also an indirect link to satisfaction and loyalty from effective marketing that is used as a tool to induce mindfulness in potential tourists in the anticipation phase. If the goal is to develop long-term and profitable relationships with satisfied and loyal tourists, this study encourages destination managers to begin building those relationships with tourists before they have arrived in the destination by promoting mindfulness in the information sources that they are distributing to the tourists in the anticipation phase. Future research should design and test marketing strategies and promotional materials to better understand how to encourage mindfulness in tourists in the anticipation phase.

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