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Rubin, Simon D.; Lee, Woojin; Paris, Cody Morris; and Teye, Victor, "The Influence of Mindfulness on Tourists' Emotions, Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty in Fiji" (2016). *Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*. 54. <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2011/Visual/54>

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## **The Influence of Mindfulness on Tourists' Emotions, Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty in Fiji**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Positive tourist experiences are crucial for the continued success of tourist destinations around the world. In the literature, mindfulness theory has emerged as a vehicle for studying the factors that influence tourist experiences (e.g. Moscardo, 1996). The purpose of this study is to test an adapted mindfulness model using data from a survey of tourists in Fiji. Hypothesized relationships were examined between: (1) the antecedent concepts to mindfulness (novelty seeking motivation and mindful oriented services) and mindfulness, (2) mindfulness and tourists' emotions, and (3) the influence of tourists' emotions on tourists' satisfaction and destination loyalty. The results indicate a good fit of survey results with the adapted model. In addition to furthering the literature on mindfulness theory, the results of this study have implications for tourism development and marketing. Future researchers should seek to replicate the model in other unique destinations and settings.*

**Keywords:** *mindfulness, tourism, tourist experience, destination marketing, Fiji.*

## INTRODUCTION

It is increasingly important to recognize the factors that enable the tourist to engage and have a meaningful experience of the destination (Kang, Gretzel & Jamal, 2008). Mindfulness theory has been applied to the understanding of tourists' experiences in recent decades (Frauman & Norman, 2004; Moscardo, 1996, 2009; Pearce 1987; Pearce, 1996). This term has been adopted by psychologists to help understand the complexities of the alert mind. Langer & Moldoveanu (2000) describe mindfulness as actively absorbing new sensations and information from the surroundings in order to remain in the present with regard to mental processes. In other words, as long as a person is inundated with new stimulation, the person will remain mindful. This is because new stimuli initiate critical thinking processes in the mind in order to create new routines or scripts for behavior (Moscardo, 1999).

In the tourism industry, mindfulness theory has been used to enhance the experience of tourists, which in turn, contributes to the promotion and marketing of destinations (Moscardo, 2009). Experience is affected when a destination creates an atmosphere that combines unique features with services that provide a clear sense of information about the features and encourage visitor participation (Moscardo, 1999). Kang, Gretzel and Jamal (2008) noted several different perspectives of the mindfulness concept in the literature, for example, mindfulness as a temporary state of mind induced by meditation or as a mental process evoked by an event or experience. Langer (1992) defined mindfulness as an active cognitive operation, which explained how people process perceptual inputs from the external environment when creating new categories and developing multiple perspectives (Chatzisarantis & Hagger, 2007; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Alternatively, it has been argued that that mindfulness can be perceived as the ongoing psychological experience processes and the quality of consciousness itself involving self-regulation of attention and present-focus (Brown & Ryan, 2003, 2007, Bishop, Lau, & Shapiro, 2004). Recently, Moscardo (2009) claimed that mindful tourists are able to easily recall settings and features because of the clarity and vividness of the experience (Brown & Ryan, 2003), which could suggest that mindful tourists become more capable of recommending the experience to others (Moscardo, 2009). Previously, Moscardo's (1996) mindfulness model of visitor behavior had been used in multiple settings (i.e. Heritage, natural environments, wildlife-based tourism, and built tourist attractions) in order to explain the effects of mindfulness on tourist experience and behavior. Using an adaptation of Moscardo's (1996) model, the purpose of this study is to test the hypothesized relationships between: 1) the antecedent concepts to mindfulness (novelty seeking motivation and mindful oriented services) and mindfulness, 2) the impact of mindfulness on tourists' emotions, and 3) the influence of tourists' emotions on tourists' satisfaction and destination loyalty.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Mindfulness has been considered to facilitate increased awareness of inner and external experiences that in turn can affect behaviors (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In the present study two antecedents of mindfulness (novelty and mindfulness-oriented services) and three subsequent outcomes of mindful tourists (emotion, satisfaction and loyalty) were examined in order to explore the applications of mindfulness theory to the understanding of the tourism experience

and tourist behavior. The literature portrays mindfulness as a concept that can be successfully adapted and applied to explain tourist behavior. The review of the literature suggests that novelty and mindfulness-oriented services at a destination affect the mindfulness of visitors; in turn, mindful visitors hold emotions that affect their feelings of satisfaction and loyalty (the likelihood of returning to a destination or recommending the destination).

Novelty is a term that describes an unusual object or situation that is new to the observer (Moscardo, 1999). According to Moscardo's mindfulness model (Moscardo, 1996; Woods & Moscardo, 2003), novelty seeking is directly related to the mindfulness of tourists. The inherent act of giving attention to new external information has been shown to provoke mindfulness states in people (Moscardo, 1999). Novelty is defined in the tourism industry as: thrill, change from routine, boredom alleviation, surprise, seeking, and escaping (Lee & Crompton, 1992; Snepenger et al., 2006). These characteristics of novelty force tourists to mentally analyze a destination's uniqueness, which helps them recall similar experiences and absorb the new/novel information. There is another prerequisite known as mindfulness oriented services, which is a corroborated predictor of mindful tourists (Moscardo, 1996).

Mindfulness oriented services (i.e. brochures, educational signs, and legible maps) allow tourists to become more involved in their travel experience. According to Moscardo (1996) and Frauman & Norman (2004), people are most likely to be mindful when they have an opportunity to control and influence a situation, when they believe the available information is relevant to them, and/or when there is variety, novelty or surprise in a situation. By utilizing certain orientation services, such as: (1) helping visitors find their way around, (2) providing product variability and (3) presenting information by telling a sensible story (Moscardo, 1999), destinations will be better able to market themselves to visitors who will remember and cherish their experiences.

A goal of tourism companies and travel market research is to evoke emotions in tourists (Yu & Dean, 2001). It has been shown that once mindful, a person will retain emotions (Brown & Ryan, 2003) for new script development (Carson & Langer, 2006; Epstein, 1999; Langer, 1989, 1997). "Mindful tourists will be more likely...to enjoy their visits" (i.e. positive emotions) (Moscardo, 1996, p. 382), which are good predictors of overall satisfaction (Moscardo, 1996; Yu & Dean, 2001) and loyalty (Yu & Dean, 2001). Satisfaction and loyalty are dependent on tourism experiences driven by positive emotions (Yu & Dean, 2001). Satisfaction can be thought of as an evaluation of benefits and sacrifices that incorporate cognitive and affective components (Yu & Dean, 2001), which may lead to greater appreciation for a destination (Moscardo, 1996). Thus, a satisfying travel experience, mediated by mindfulness and tourist's emotions, permits the retention of memories and opinions about a destination, which can lead to tourist's satisfaction and loyalty.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The questionnaire was composed of six dimensions measuring a conceptual model: antecedent concepts (novelty seeking motivation and mindful oriented information service), mindfulness, tourists' emotion, tourists' satisfaction, and tourists' loyalty of the destination of Fiji. All items were measured using likert-type scales and were adapted and modified based on

the previous studies. The scales included: 1) novelty seeking motivation (1=not at all important 5=extremely important) (Jang & Feng, 2006); 2) mindful oriented service (1=not at all important 5=extremely important) (Frauman & Norman, 2004); 3) an evaluation of mindfulness (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) (Frauman & Norman, 2004); 4) the extent how tourists felt (emotions) when they are traveling in Fiji (5-point semantic differential scale) (Bigne, Andreu & Gnoth, 2005); 5) tourists' satisfaction with their visit to Fiji (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree)(Lee, Lee, Lee & Babin, 2008); and 6) tourists' destination loyalty intention for Fiji (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) (Lee, Lee, Lee & Babin, 2008).

The questionnaire was administered in June 2009 at two Coral Coast Hotels, a hotel in Nadi, and in the departure lounge of the Nadi Airport. A purposive sampling procedure was used, and every third person was approached. Out of 250 people approached only 10 people declined to complete the survey. Additionally, six other surveys were unfinished, as the participants had to leave before they completed the full questionnaire. The usable sample size for this study was 234 indicating a response rate of about 94%. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were utilized.

## RESULTS

The hypothesized relationships were tested by means of structural equation modeling (SEM) using Amos 17.0 (Arbuckle, 2007). According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988)'s recommendation of a two-step procedure, the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of six main constructs were established before testing the structural model. First of all, the internal consistency reliability (ICR) of each construct was measured by computing the composite reliability coefficients. Bagozzi and Yi (1989) suggested that all composite reliabilities should be above the .60 cut-off value. As shown Table 1, the internal consistency reliability values ranged from .76 (Mindfulness) to .92 (Loyalty). Since none of the values for all six constructs (novelty seeking motivation, mindfulness oriented service, mindfulness, emotion, satisfaction and loyalty) indicated less than .6, the scales were reliable (see Table 1).

Table 1. Reliability, Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity of Constructs

|                            | Novelty seeking motivation | Mindful oriented service | Mindfulness | Emotion    | Satisfaction | C.R | A.V.E. |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|-----|--------|
| Novelty seeking motivation | <b>.74</b>                 |                          |             |            |              | .85 | .54    |
| Mindful oriented service   | .45**                      | <b>.71</b>               |             |            |              | .88 | .51    |
| Mindfulness                | .49**                      | .60**                    | <b>.64</b>  |            |              | .76 | .41    |
| Emotion                    | .22**                      | .50**                    | .27**       | <b>.83</b> |              | .93 | .69    |
| Satisfaction               | .21**                      | .52**                    | .25**       | .57**      | <b>.82</b>   | .89 | .67    |
| Loyalty                    | .17*                       | .48**                    | .32**       | .48**      | .59**        | .92 | .79    |

Note: C.R. is Composite Reliability, A.V.E. is Average Variance Extracted, \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ . Square root of average variance extracted (AVE) is shown on the diagonal of the matrix; inter-construct correlation is shown off the diagonal.

Table 2. Goodness-of-Fit Indices

|                   | $\chi^2/df$ | CFI        | IFI        | GFI        | RMSEA      |
|-------------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Measurement Model | 1.75        | .93        | .93        | .92        | .057       |
| Structural Model  | 1.76        | .93        | .93        | .92        | .057       |
| Suggested Value*  | $\leq 3$    | $\geq 0.9$ | $\geq 0.9$ | $\geq 0.9$ | $\leq .08$ |

Suggested values were based on Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham (2006).

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the model's six dimensions; each dimension was measured using a multi-dimensional scales such as novelty seeking motivation, measured by five items, mindful oriented service by seven items, mindfulness by five items, emotion by six items, satisfaction of destination by four items and loyalty of destination by three items. As shown in Table 2, the proposed measurement model was found to fit data well. In addition, The convergent validity of the scales were confirmed since the CFA outputs indicated that all factor loadings were greater than .60 and were statistically significant (Bagozzi and Yi, 1989). The discriminant validity of factors was also evaluated by the average variance extracted (AVE). According to Fornell & Larcker (1981), it was claimed that the square root of AVE of an each construct should exceed the inter-construct and the other constructs in the model for a satisfactory degree of discriminant validity (Gefen & Straub, 2005). As shown Table 1, it was found that the measurement scale met the requirement of discriminant validity for the current study.

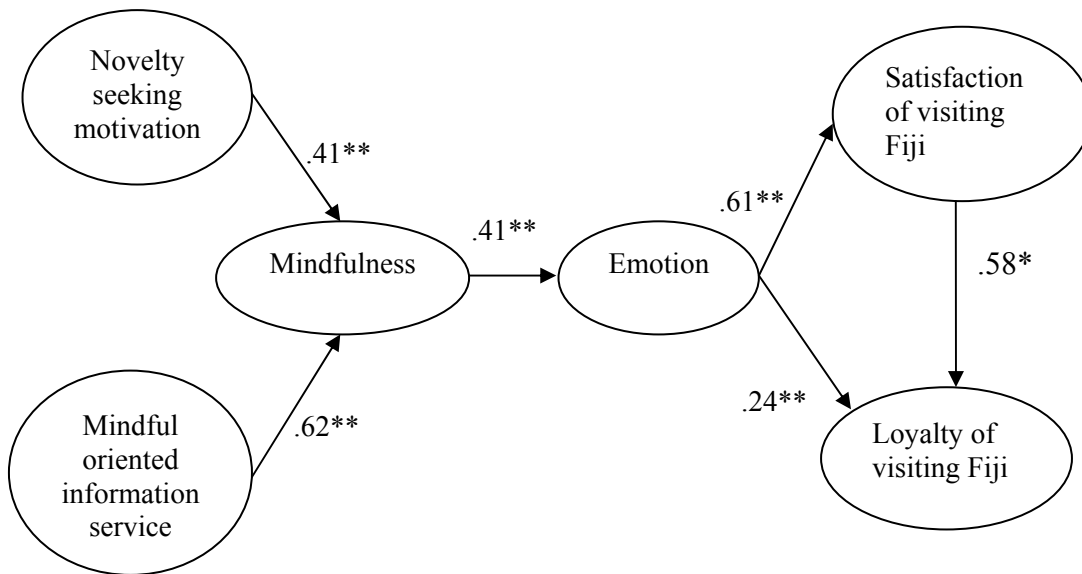


Figure 1. Estimates of the Structural Model

The structural model was tested. In the context of reasonable fit for the model, all of the goodness-of-fit measures in the study fell into acceptable ranges as shown Table 2. ( $X^2/df=1.76$ , CFI=.93, GFI=.92 IFI=.93; RMSEA=.057), thus it can be acclaimed that the structural model for this study provided an excellent fit to the data. Moreover, the regression coefficient of each proposed path coefficient was positive and significant as shown in Figure 1, which indicated that all hypothesized relationships between constructs were supported in this study. More specifically, novelty seeking motivation and mindfulness oriented service had a significant effect on the mindfulness of tourist in Fiji ( $\beta=.41$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $\beta=.62$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The increased mindfulness indicated the strength relationship with emotions in tourist's experience in Fiji ( $\beta=.41$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The generated emotion had a significant impact on tourist's satisfaction of Fiji and loyalty to Fiji ( $\beta=.61$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $\beta=.24$ ,  $p<.01$ ). In addition, tourist's satisfaction of Fiji had an effect on tourist's loyalty to Fiji ( $\beta=.58$ ,  $p<.01$ ).  $R^2$  values measure the predictive power of the structural model, while path loadings indicate the strength between independent and dependent variable. For the current research, the model explained 72 % in "mindfulness", 17% in "emotion", 38% in "satisfaction of Fiji" and 56% in "loyalty to Fiji".

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this paper make several important practical and theoretical contributions. First, this study further develops the mindfulness concept by adapting the mindfulness model and applying it to tourists in Fiji. Fiji is a particularly unique case, as most tourists have a pre-determined vision of what the destination is like (sun, beaches, and tropical). Fijians also have a unique culture that they are proud of, which can be a pull for tourists. The model developed in this paper suggests that the novelty motivations are an important contributor to a mindful visit. For marketers, focusing on the novel experiences that individuals can have in Fiji can be a way to leverage these novelty seeking tourists. Future studies should examine if novelty seeking tourists are different from 'resort' tourists in Fiji. The mindful orientated services are also an important part of the model for industry to focus upon. The tourism industry in Fiji can focus on developing 'mindful orientated services'. One potential success story could be the Sigatoka River Safari, which provides a diverse range of experiences on one tour including a jet boat ride up the incredibly scenic Sigatoka River that includes 360s in the boats and stops to hear stories from the lively captains. The ultimate destination of the boat trip is Fijian villages where the visitors are shown around, experience a real kava ceremony, eat a locally prepared lunch, and dance, sing, and interact with village members. Similar unique trips could contribute to the mindful state in tourists in Fiji.

As an industry it could be beneficial to create situations for mindfulness to develop, as the results of this study also indicate that mindfulness influences emotions of tourists which influence their destination loyalty intention for Fiji, as well as have a strong influence on the tourists' satisfaction with their trip. The emotion, resulting from level of mindfulness, of the respondents had a stronger influence on satisfaction than on destination loyalty, but the impact of satisfaction on destination loyalty was quite strong. This suggests that individuals' emotions influence on destination loyalty intention is mediated by satisfaction with the destination, and that tourists emotion is likely not the only indicators of satisfaction.

Overall this study provides some unique insights into the concept of mindfulness and tourist behavior. Future studies should seek to replicate the model in other unique destinations and setting.

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