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The role of mindfulness in tourism: Tourism businesses' perceptions of mindfulness in Dubai, UAE

Abstract

Mindfulness is the ability of an individual to actively process information surrounding them with the aim of using that information to draw distinctive or novel conclusions. By facilitating mindfulness, businesses can benefit from having a stronger competitive advantage, increased loyalty, and provide a more meaningful experience to their customers. Mindfulness is a state of awareness that can be encouraged in individuals regardless of their mental state or demographic characteristics; almost a universal tool to enhance individuals' memories and well-being. Mindfulness literature relating to tourism is brief and often has considered individual sites from a quantitative perspective. In efforts to reduce this gap, a qualitative study was conducted, interviewing tourism business managers throughout Dubai to obtain their insights. The emerging themes facilitated the generation of a model providing an alternative perspective to Moscardo's (1996) model by placing the impetus of creating mindfulness on the individual and the provision of personal interactions. The model additionally stressed the importance of stimulating mindful tourists, in order to allow businesses to benefit from a combination of hard, financial, benefits and soft, experiential, benefits. Such insights can provide tourism-related businesses with a competitive advantage which will not only improve the businesses' financials, but also improve customers' perceptions, memories, and interest in the business.

Key words: mindfulness; mindlessness; tourism; businesses; Dubai

Introduction

Who are we? How do we eat? What do we eat? Why?! A number of questions arise regarding cross-cultural interactions where tourism could provide insight. Tourism brings economic benefits to destinations and provides incentives for jobs and businesses, but also provides less tangible offerings to destinations; opportunities to explain who we are, where we are, why do we do this, why do we not do that. It is these more intangible offerings that will be considered. In many cases when tourists travel, they behave in a *mindless*, almost irrational manner, failing to heed warnings, not remembering information offered at attractions, and may behave in a manner deemed not acceptable at home, let alone anywhere else (see Leach, 2008). However, on other occasions, the sites visited by tourists offer more interactive and relevant information where the tourist is now able to remember more, is more satisfied with the site, becomes concerned for the sites' well-being and future sustainability, and is more considerate of their own behaviour. The tourist is now behaving in a more rational manner, and the site is benefiting from *mindfulness* (Langer, 1989, 1992; Moscardo, 1996). Moscardo (1996) explains that a colleague once entered the classroom in which she taught in a previous semester and began lecturing students on geology, when they were meant to be studying anthropology with a different lecturer. It was 20 minutes before a student queried this. In this time, the lecture acted mindlessly by

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failing to check in which room she had to be, and the students acted mindlessly by taking notes on an irrelevant topic (p. 381).

Apart from facilitating a more understandable behaviour in tourists, many researchers have found that mindfulness can improve satisfaction, information recall, promote sustainability, and improve visitor's appreciation and understanding (cf. Barber & Deale, 2014; Frauman & Norman, 2003; Moscardo, 1996; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). Mindfulness is a relatively new topic under study, with only a 35-year history and, as such, there is very little mindfulness literature pertaining to tourism (Frauman & Norman, 2003, 2004; Lengyel, 2015; Moscardo, 1996; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). Fewer studies still have focused on businesses' actions to facilitate mindfulness, both of which did so through non-invasive observation (Henderson, 1997; Pearce, 2009). This represents a large gap in the literature especially since most research focuses on the tourist, researching if they are mindful, and what affects their predisposition to be mindful (cf. Frauman & Norman, 2003, 2004). The focus on Dubai tourism businesses' understanding of mindfulness has provided a research context to address the broader theoretical understanding of tourist mindfulness. From this purpose, this research questions 'What role does mindfulness play in helping tourists remember their interactions with tourism businesses in Dubai?'

This paper begins with a literature review to explore the current knowledge base of mindfulness and its impact on memory. This is followed by an explanation of the qualitative research methodology that was adopted. The data analysis suggested that a number of 'Hard' and 'Soft' benefits were available to businesses by creating a mindful customer, wherein the role of the individual and staff were considered to be vital. The paper concludes by placing this research in context with existing literature and explaining the industry implications of this paper's findings.

Literature review

Mindfulness has been defined as active processing (Frauman & Norman, 2004, p. 381) of relevant and important information (Henderson, 1997, p. 43) with focused attention on the information to generate new ideas about the situation (Moscardo, 2009, p. 101). When one is mindful, one is aware that there is more than one perspective on a given situation (Langer, 1993, as cited in Moscardo, 1996).

Mindfulness and memories

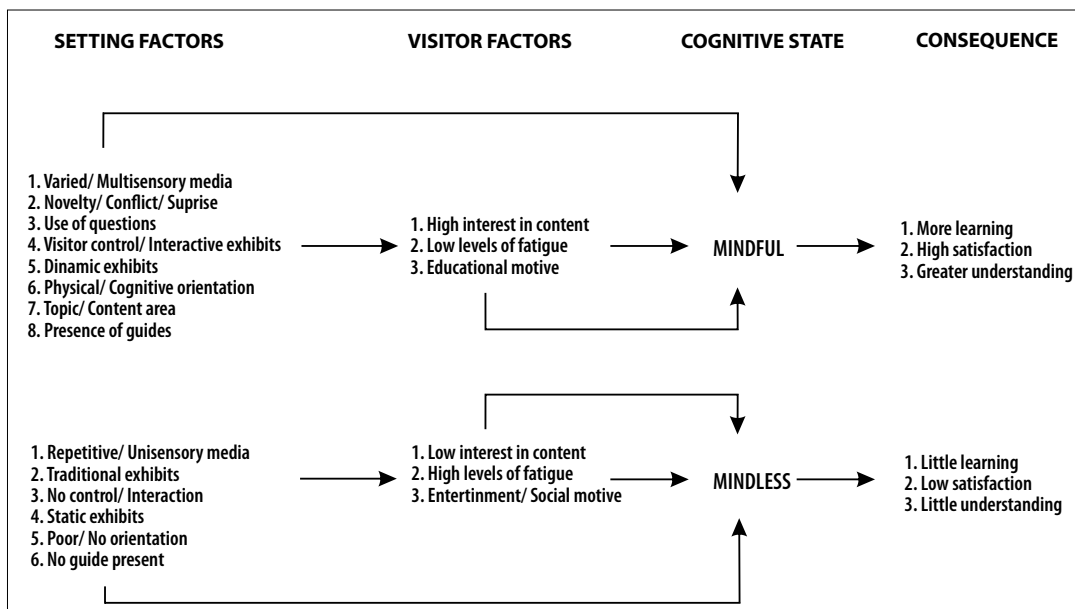
Mindfulness has been found to have a positive impact on individual's memory recall and individuals' application of such memories (see Frauman & Norman, 2003, 2004; Langer, 1992; Moscardo, 1996; Moscardo, 2009). Regarding memories specifically, Anderson and Shimizu (2012) explained that if individuals remembered more, it created a feeling of greater belonging to a community. From a tourism perspective, a greater sense of belonging can create a tourist who is more interested and concerned for the wellbeing of tourism sites and a tourism destination as a whole. Additionally, by having greater influence over customers' memories, businesses can effectively be controlling what customers associate with said business, and how they view it (see Pappu & Quester, 2006).

Mindfulness in tourism

Moscardo (1996) created a model (Figure 1) based on a review of tourism-related literature, to explain how mindfulness can have an influence on the tourist. This model will be utilised in this study to generate qualitative questions and lay the foundations to further develop the understanding of mindfulness. This model concisely demonstrates the on-site factors that influence tourists' level of mindfulness; the site, the visitor, and the resulting benefits. This therefore provides a clear and succinct base upon

which the understanding of mindfulness can be developed. In the first situation, the site provides various 'Setting factors' including: varied/multisensory media, novel experiences, dynamic exhibits, perceptions of visitor control, physical and cognitive orientation, guides, and encourages questions. Multisensory media can include: audio-visual presentations, models, and displays (Moscardo, Woods & Saltzer, 2004). When this is combined with the mindful features of the tourist, such as: interest in the topic, desire to learn, and low levels of fatigue, the tourist will be mindful. This results in more learning, satisfaction, and better understanding. On the other hand, if the site is repetitive, has no guides, has poor orientation, static or traditional exhibits, and the tourist is not interested or is tired, mindlessness will result. In this case, there is limited learning, understanding, and satisfaction. In order for mindfulness to result, not all the setting factors have to be provided; various combinations of factors, or even one particular factor alone could be sufficient to promote mindfulness (Henderon, 2007; Moscardo, 2009), depending on the site in question.

Figure 1
Mindfulness model of visitor behaviour and cognition at built heritage sites



Source: Moscardo (1996, p. 383).

Setting factors

The first stage of Moscardo's (1996) model stresses the importance of the actual site in stimulating mindfulness in the visitor (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). In general, sites which promoted more customer interaction and participation were more successful at stimulating mindfulness (Frauman & Norman, 2003). The importance of enjoyment with regards to mindfulness was detailed by Moscardo and Pearce (1986) when they explained that mindfulness was moderately related to enjoyment, suggesting that the more visitors enjoy their experience the greater their information recall, knowledge, and motivation.

The method of conveying information is also of great importance. Moscardo (1996), for example, suggests novelty and surprise can encourage a stated of mindfulness. Providing interesting information, (Frauman & Norman 2004; Moscardo, 1991, 1996), and new information (Frauman & Norman, 2003, 2004; Langer, 1989; Moscardo, 1996, 2004, 2009) have also been highlighted as important considerations to promote mindfulness. Pearce (2009) focussed entirely on this dimension when

considering the use of humour to promote visitor comfort and concentration. While visiting a variety of tourism sites, Pearce noted that mindfulness helped tourists to appreciate the message the site was attempting to convey.

In terms of the type of information provided, correlations have been found between the provision of historical and conservation information, and mindfulness, although the exact reason for this occurrence has not been speculated upon (Henderson, 1997; Moscardo, 2009; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). That is, when historical information is provided it would appear that mindfulness was more likely to result. Focussing specifically on history, Henderson (1997) conducted observational studies around a number of war-heritage sites in Singapore and drew conclusions for each site regarding their ability to provide effective interpretative or mindful insights. Henderson visited war museums and memorials where she claims "War is perhaps a subject which demands the most sensitive of approaches to avoid accusations of trivialisation...with a minimum of interpretation sometimes more likely to challenge and create the desired effect..." (p. 47). For example, Changi Prison chapel and Museum provides some very simple displays with pictures, sketches, and memorabilia being displayed. At a different site, this may be seen as not facilitating mindfulness. However, this site was among the best at facilitating mindfulness largely because it was the actual site of the prison, and the chapel was the one built by the prisoners (p. 44). The fact that this site was successful at promoting mindfulness demonstrates how a variety of mindfulness-stimulating factors can be, and sometimes, need to be facilitated for mindfulness to occur (Moscardo, 2009). Additionally, these factors need not be particularly expensive or complicated, where relatively 'simple' provisions can be just as effective.

Summarising the overall impact of the Setting factors, Patterson and Bitgood (1988) claimed that the appearance of the site, can be enough to stimulate mindfulness. For all Setting factors, it is important to remember that the nature of the site may play a significant role. Frauman and Norman's (2003, 2004) study of national parks suggests that tour guides and site aesthetics do not significantly contribute to mindfulness, while in other studies tour guides and site aesthetics may be seen as significant to the site's service.

Visitor factors

As well as creating a site which can stimulate mindfulness, the visitor must be considered; what can be done to affect visitors on an individual level and what is the impact of the individual's mindfulness predisposition. On an individual level, Washbourne and Wagar (1972, as cited in Moscardo & Pearce, 1986) found that there were specific interests in violence which seemed to ease the facilitation of mindfulness (cf. Henderson, 2007). A similar notion seems to exist with regards to information that is interesting to the viewer (Frauman & Norman, 2004; Moscardo, 1996; 2009; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). It is, however, the specific focus on violence which is interesting, appearing to be present regardless of various demographics.

In Frauman and Norman's (2003) study, greater importance was attributed to Visitor Factors over Setting Factors in many cases. The visitor factors described included individuals' mindfulness predispositions, desire to learn about the location, desired 'entertainment-orientated benefits', 'level of openness to the experience', and 'pre-trip information gathering'. Frauman and Norman (2003) found that these elements were more effective than interpersonal relationships, implying that the tourists' state of mind is more important than interpersonal interactions when stimulating mindfulness (cf. Willson & McIntosh, 2007; Pearce, 2009).

Moscardo (1996) related mindfulness to interpretation, explaining that mindfulness and interpretation were closely correlated (see Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). This suggests that sites which attempt to

provide information interpretation services will often benefit from promoting mindfulness concurrently. For this interpretation, and mindfulness, to occur, the individual should be encouraged to pay greater attention, should have a desire to experience displays and tours, and should be interested in the topic.

Consequences

Mindfulness has been related to a number of various benefits for the individual and the site. Here, contrary to Setting factors and Visitor factors, there is less disparity in opinions. From the perspective of the Setting, mindfulness helped to improve visitors' awareness, understanding, support for the site (Frauman & Norman, 2003; Moscardo, 1996), and information recall, learnt knowledge, and enjoyment (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986). Moscardo (1996) further explained that facilitating mindfulness could help with the control of carrying capacities, since mindfulness has the ability to influence tourists' interpretation of sites and displays (Henderson, 2007; Moscardo, 1996), it is possible to help control tourists' access to and movement within sites (McArthur & Hall, 1993, as cited in Moscardo, 1996). This can help preserve sites by ensuring that sites' respective carrying capacities are not exceeded.

On a similar note, Willson and McIntosh (2007) found that when mindfulness occurred, tourists felt they gained "engaging experiences" (p. 86), allowing tourists to be satisfied. This notion was often related to tour guides (cf. Frauman & Norman, 2003) providing value-added services, or the provision of educational experiences. Frauman and Norman (2003) concurred with much of the aforementioned sentiments and related this to a common business need; economic, physical, and environmental sustainability (Barber & Deale, 2014). That is, they found that mindfulness benefited locations by increasing tourists' awareness and concern for the sites, and therefore helped with their continued well-being.

Research method

For this study, a qualitative methodology was chosen (cf. Willson & McIntosh, 2007), following a constant comparative method wherein extant literature was reviewed and continuously compared to the data in order to develop a structured theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). From the literature, potential questions were proposed for use in face-to-face interviews. The literature was reviewed pre, during, and post data collection to ensure maximum comparisons were possible (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Additionally, this process helped with the process of theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Theoretical sampling allows for a more detailed reflection of data, to help with understanding and questioning the integrity of the data (Boeije, 2002). Many studies that have studied mindfulness have utilised qualitative interviews or reviews of secondary sources (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Moscardo, 1996; Henderson, 1997; Pearce, 2009), however, only two studies reviewed (Henderson, 2007; Pearce, 2009) explored mindfulness from the perspective of the business. There is, therefore, much that can be learnt from businesses about mindfulness. Additionally, there is a general lack of a destination-wide study, with only Moscardo and Pearce (1986) coming close by examining 17 centres around the UK.

This study was conducted in the city of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, a tourism hub for the Middle East. In 2013, Dubai was estimated to have received over 9 million tourists, second only behind Saudi Arabia with 15 million (WTO, 2015). These are remarkable figures considering the lack of a guaranteed tourism inflow, as is the case with Saudi Arabia and the yearly Hajj. The ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashed al Maktoum, is a very action-driven leader who constantly wishes to push Dubai forward in all regards. Such a case can be seen with His Highness' ambitious target of 20 million tourists by 2020 (Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing [DTCM], 2013). The popularity of Dubai and the strength and innovativeness of its leadership can

give this study a focus and audience to which potential results could prove relevant. Tourism businesses in Dubai will be encouraged and willing to pursue innovative measures to encourage tourists to visit Dubai and their individual business. This can therefore provide a potential audience to which this study's results could be considered.

According to Creswell (2009) qualitative researchers must "Identify...purposefully selected sites or individuals" (p. 178). In this study, businesses involved at each stage of the 5A's: Access, Accommodation, Activities, Amenities, and Attraction (Stone & Smith, 2006), were targeted. This ensured that businesses involved at all stages of the tourist experience offered some insight. A purposeful sample was selected which included a total of 7 General managers, Marketing, or Operation managers in two hotels, two tour companies, one dive centre, one shopping mall, and one events management company. Participants were contacted by e-mail and asked to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted up until the point that saturation was reached and no new themes emerged (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 145). Saturation was reached by the sixth interview with the seventh interview confirming saturation. The following questions were asked to each and designed to elicit maximum insight into businesses' perceptions of tourists' memories:

1. When tourists visit Dubai, what do you think they remember?
2. What do you think tourists remember about your business (products, services, experience)?
3. What do you think can be done to help tourists remember their visit and learn about Dubai?
4. What kind of tourists do you think remember the most from their experience with your business?
5. Why do you think it is important for tourists to remember their experience?

The interview questions focussed on memories and were designed to follow Moscardo's (1996) model. Each question considered businesses' perceptions of tourists' memories through 'Setting factors' (Questions 1 and 2), 'Visitor factors' (Questions 3 and 4), 'Cognitive state' (Questions 3 and 4), and 'Consequence' (Question 5).

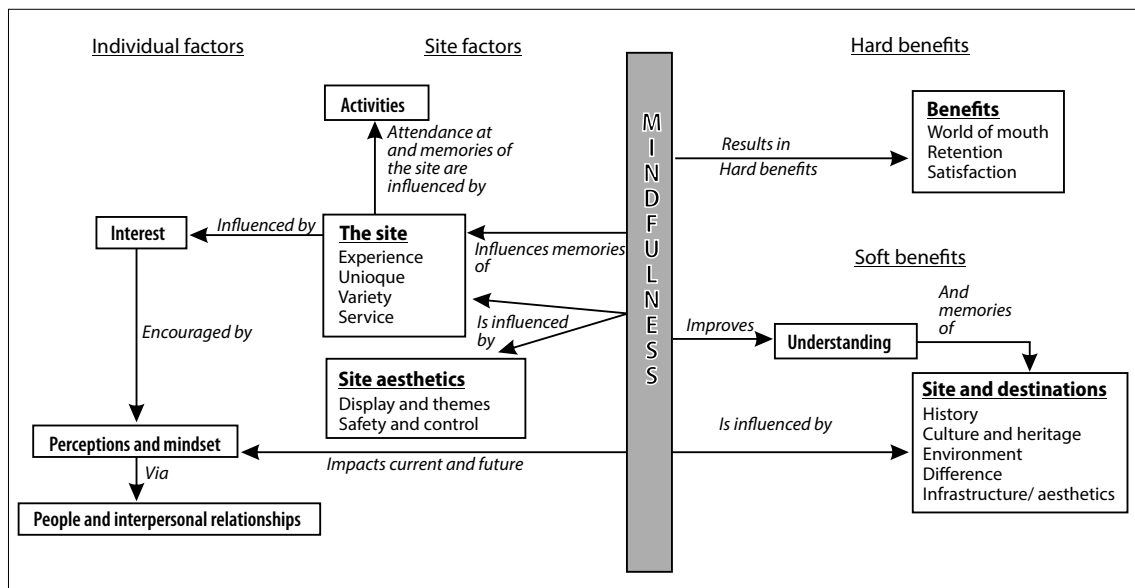
When analysing the transcriptions, a combination of emerging and predetermined codes were used. Topics which participants repeated frequently or stressed as important were recorded as emerging themes. Pre-determined themes, on the other hand, occurred when participants discussed themes which were similar to the literature. Coding in this manner helped to allow for comparisons across interviews and literature sources. The analysis process followed the six steps proposed by Creswell (2009, pp. 185-189): organising, reading, analysing and coding the data, developing descriptions, and drawing interpretations. The transcriptions were analysed while interviews were still taking place to allow for possible development and improvements in the interviewing process and to help uncover the point of saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Nevertheless, the interview process remained the same, with no areas discovered that required adjustment. The transcriptions were read multiple times to extract maximum insight from the participants' thoughts. The data was then analysed using the described emerging and pre-determined themes. Themes were then described according to the participant's perceptions on the matter to arrive at a 'theme dictionary', explaining what each theme meant in the context of the participants' perceptions. At this point, themes were then delimited, whereby elements of the emerging theory and themes were reduced to uncover any underlying concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The final step was to draw interpretations, wherein themes were examined individually and were compared to each other and the literature in order to place the research in context. The creation of a concept map was beneficial here as it enabled more detailed interpretations to be drawn about mindfulness and to understand the linkages between the various themes.

Research findings

The demographic profile of the interviewees comprised of 4 men and 3 women, between the ages of 30-50. One participant was South African, while the other 6 were British. All but one had a university-level education, the one exception having a high school-level education. Nineteen different themes were found, with the most frequent being People and interpersonal relationships. From the findings of the interviews, the following concept map was developed, as seen in Figure 2.

The model indicates that mindfulness influenced tourists' memories of the site through the experiences they had at the site, its unique features, the variety of facilities and the services offered at the site. Attendance at the site was then driven by the activities offered. Both the Site and Site aesthetics had a role in stimulating Mindfulness. Furthermore, Perceptions and mindset were built on People and interpersonal relationships and were also stimulated by Mindfulness. These Perceptions encouraged Interest, further affecting the role of the site. Mindfulness then resulted in Hard benefits - Retention, word of mouth, and Satisfaction – and Soft benefits – Understanding, Improved memories of history, Culture and heritage etc.

Figure 2
Mindfulness concept map



Individual factors

A theme of *Interest* emerged as an Individual factor and was used to describe the tourists' interest in the site they were visiting. Interest was often related to surprise or uniqueness in a more descriptive sense. That is, participants described situations as 'interesting' when they were explaining situations that were unique or surprising. Participant V described an activity in which they took tourists to a local individual's house where the individual explained the history and culture of the country. Participant V explained that this "fascinates people" and linked this fascination to promoting learning in the tourists. Participant VII explained that when tourists travel and recite their stories, their topics will focus around those of interest "...the biggest story that you'll be sharing, not from a bragging perspective, but just because it's interesting, will be the experiences that you had on holiday..."

Perception and mindset was another theme that emerged in relation to the factors that affected individuals and their mindful predisposition. Participants explained that individual sites as well as Dubai as a whole tried to build expectations in the mind of tourists which were then used to encourage tourists to visit and governed what they experienced in the destination or at the site. Perceptions also covered a monetary consideration. That is, tourists' perceptions of value; whether an experience was seen as value for money, and whether it was more or less expensive than expected. This perception was often seen as a direct memory or as a means to create memories about a site. If a site was thought of as especially expensive or inexpensive, it seemed to stimulate greater memories of the site.

People and interpersonal relationship was the most common theme arising from the interviews, particularly evident in question 2 which asked what factors can help tourists to remember their experiences. After reciting a story Participant V had experienced, they were asked why they remembered these details, to which they replied "...I think it's the person, I think it's who's delivering it. I think you could have Joe Blogs trying to deliver the same information but I wouldn't even remember half of it..." Participant VII agreed, saying "The key element of then delivering that [a service or a product] is then the people..." Other features of this included "Human interaction", "Honesty" (Participant VI) and "Friendliness" (Participant IV). Participants often described individuals as being key memories in the mind of consumers; not only are people important in promoting memories, but people are also remembered

When discussing people, the multinational nature of Dubai also arose in the context of both staff and visitors, stimulating memories, and being a memory. Participant I introduced the multinational nature of Dubai as an independent variable in influencing tourists' memories; because tourists have come from so many different countries they were "...amazed by some of the shops we have here. They've never come across these shops...or services..." In this case, the multinational nature was evident through tourists' different origins which created memories, as opposed to awareness of a multinational society which stimulated memories.

Site factors

The aforementioned theme of *People and interpersonal relationships* was a common discussion when describing what would help tourists to remember their visit, question 3, along with themes including *Displays and themes and Safety and control*. Participants described these as factors that would help tourists to remember their interaction, as well as being a memory in themselves. In addition, participants also believed that tourists would remember the *Activities, the Experience, Uniqueness, Variety*, and the *Service*. These themes occurred when participants described what they thought the tourist would remember about Dubai, question 1, and interactions with their business, question 2.

The second most frequently mentioned theme, related to the *Activities* available and undertaken in the destination. This included sub-themes such as shopping, entertainment, tours and excursions, learning, and questions. Out of these sub-themes, shopping was the most frequently mentioned. Entertainment covered generic activities and actions which tourists could participate in to be entertained "...everything seems to be here, from the entertainment, from the nightclubs, to the bars. And a lot of things that people are looking for." (Participant I). Various tours, excursions and other forms of physical activities were often described by participants as demonstrating the differences amongst tourists' origin and Dubai; the presence of such a wide variety of special activities, not available at home, helped tourists to remember the Dubai experience as well as the specific activity in question. Another prominent sub-theme of *Activities* was *Learning*. Learning was strongly related to activities by providing a medium to learn about the site and the destination as a whole in terms of its culture, history, and way of life

"[tourists would learn] how to do Henna, learn about the Arabic artists." (Participant II). When participants described 'Questions', they often referred to the provision of activities designed to give tourists the opportunity to ask questions. In this situation, Questions were a proactive provision with the aim to actively encourage questions.

The site

A theme relating to *Experience* also arose out of participant's discussions, particularly in relation to the site itself. Participant IV explained that "...I think people remember experiences, not just...seeing something, but things that...they can take part in." This thought was then further defined in relation to extremes when discussing tourists' memories "I think they remember extremes of experiences..." (Participant VI).

Another theme described the *Uniqueness* of Dubai. This 'uniqueness' was often related to the experiences, buildings, and sights in Dubai. Participant V described the nature of certain buildings such as the Burj Khalifah and Burj Al Arab in the light of them being iconic structures both in the sense of what they represent; the tallest building, and the 'most luxurious' all-suite hotel in the world, respectively, and the manner in which they were constructed "...Burj Al Arab when it was built in '99 you know, no one's ever put a Kevlar surface on the front of a hotel" (Participant V). The uniqueness of Dubai was also expanded to explain the variety on offer, that is, Dubai offers a variety of facilities that cannot be found anywhere else in the world (Participant I).

Service was another theme that arose when participants discussed more specific elements of tourists' experience. When the interviewees referred to service, it was mostly regarding the customer service provided on site, yet they disagreed on Dubai's level of service quality.

Also under the topic of Site factors was the theme of *Variety*, which participants used to describe a range of facilities available "...there is certainly a huge selection of shops. Probably the largest range that you will find anywhere in the world." (Participant I). This Participant also commented on activities in this respect "...there's always other things happening, there's always some sort of entertainment, some sort of event..."

Site aesthetics

When explaining the appearance and layout of various sites, the Displays and themes used and presented at the site were popular topics of discussion. Participant I described displays as a specific attraction to explain and represent the culture and heritage of the destination "We are looking to give them [the local population] back in terms of displays and sort of working areas...working on the heritage and the culture side of Dubai..."

Another theme which emerged in relation to specific sites or the whole destination was *Safety and control*. This theme was largely focussed on convenience and comfort for the traveller. The fact that sites or destinations were perceived as safe enabled travellers to absorb and remember more about the destination. This view was also extended to control; when participants had a feeling of control, they remembered more about their experience because they were able to create their own experience "...I think passengers appreciate the fact that they're free to make up their own mind and do the tour in their own time; they're not being herded from [place to place]..." (Participant VI).

Hard benefits

A common theme discussed by participants in relation to the benefits of mindfulness was *Word of mouth*. When participants spoke about word of mouth, they stressed its importance and the forms in which it can appear "Word of mouth is very strong wherever the tourists come from they're bound to go back show the pictures, tell the stories of what they got up to..." (Participant I).

Participants often discussed the theme of *Satisfaction* as a benefit of mindfulness and related it to tourists' experiences at the site and the destination. This theme often emerged in the form of describing fun, enjoyment, and pleasurable experiences at sites. Participant III explained that if tourists "...had a good time, they enjoy it, they are more immune to bad press." Satisfaction occurred in conjunction with learning as well as opposed to learning. Furthermore, participants directly related stronger memories to repeat business "[If tourists remember their experiences] it might attract them to come back..." (Participant II)

Soft benefits

One theme which emerged from the interviews concerned *Understanding*. Understanding was often related to forming impressions, creating news, and imparting insight. Participants explained how certain sites such as Burj Khalifah created news about the destination as a whole, which was then able to promote knowledge about the destination. Further to this, participants described how certain sites helped to create a deeper appreciation and more insight about a destination "... [The Jumeirah Mosque] really gives you a lot of understanding and insight... it does foster a lot of understanding..." (Participant III). In this context, it was the availability of tours at the Jumeirah Mosque which was seen as promoting such understanding. A further corollary to this was provided by Participant VI when they explained that particularly harsh criticism and 'Dubai-bashing' was due, in no small part, to "...the lack of understanding, the lack of knowledge about Dubai..." The implication being that with knowledge and understanding comes greater appreciation and tolerance.

History was often referred to in the discussion of specific sites and displays offering historical information. From this angle, exposure to the site or destination's history was offered to travellers. This seemed to be a common discussion amongst participants, exposing tourists to the history of a site or a destination a whole. Participant IV described how part of their role to tourists was to "...[teach] them about the history..." of the destination during their stay. Teaching tourists about history was seen as a positive outcome of facilitating mindfulness.

When participants discussed *Culture and heritage*, they often spoke about aesthetic appearances of culture rather than a deeper, tacit view of culture and heritage. For example factors such as the architecture, the way of life and the style of dressing were common areas of focus. Yet, interestingly, mosques were only mentioned in the sense of providing a tour and not in relation to culture, nor their abundance in Dubai. On the occasions when a deeper view of culture emerged, it was often linked to specific sites such as Heritage village or Dubai museum.

Memories relating to the *Environment* also emerged out of the participant's discussions. The interviewees often referred to the desert, the weather, the heat, and the beaches when discussing the Environment. Participant III combined differences with the environment by saying that tourists would remember "...the diversity of...the...desert to the ocean, to the shopping malls, to the Old Dubai..." Participant VII claimed that, in relation to what tourists remember "Dubai is probably the most important bit. Because the destination itself is built and the product, the offering that we're giving to the tourist is there."

Difference was another theme participants mentioned when they discussed tourists' memories and the influences upon their memories. The interviewees thought that tourists would remember the "...different way of life" (Participant I) and the fact that "...Dubai's a true melting pot of nationalities..." (Participant III).

Another theme which emerged from the interviews related to *Infrastructure*. When talking about *Infrastructure*, the buildings and roads of Dubai were prominent in the participants' responses, along with

structures such as Jumeirah Beach Hotel, Al Qasr, Dubai Mall, Ibn Battuta, Mall of the Emirates, Ski Dubai, Burj Khalifah, Burj Al Arab, and the Atlantis. Often when these were mentioned they were related to "*the glitz and glamour side of Dubai*" (Participant IV) or the "*modernity of Dubai*" (Participant VII). In some cases infrastructure was seen as a preventer of mindlessness, and not necessarily a stimulator of mindfulness. Participants described how the infrastructure in Dubai was effective and efficient, thereby allowing tourists to focus on some of the more obvious *Differences* and *unique* elements which themselves promoted mindfulness.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to gain insight into what businesses thought of mindfulness in terms of the effect upon memory recall and the corresponding impact to the business. From a general overview, participants explained that facilitating greater memory recall was beneficial to the site in terms of delivering the message more effectively (Frauman & Norman, 2003, 2004; Henderson, 2007; Pearce, 2009) and being able to become financially sustainable (Frauman & Norman, 2003; Moscardo, 1996). Participants provided elements that described factors relating to the Individual, the Site, Hard benefits and Soft benefits. The developed model closely follows that of Moscardo (1996) with only minor differences between the two models, relating to the initiator, the relationship between the factors, and the focus on the benefits.

In terms of the initiator, Moscardo's (1996) model seemed to place more emphasis on Setting factors and provisions at the site before the individual, whereas participants in this study appeared to stress individuals as being the initiators of mindfulness, through Interest, and Perceptions and mindset. At face value, this could demonstrate a small but, nevertheless, interesting discrepancy; if it is the site which initiates mindfulness then it suggests that more sites have the ability to kick-start the mindfulness process. If, however, the start lies with the individual, it does not matter how many individuals are targeted by a single site. More sites need to be involved to start to change individuals. In Moscardo's situation, the site is more influential in expanding the target market. In the case of this study, the site is more restricted at increasing this 'mindful' target market. In this case, a growth in the target market has to come from elsewhere. From a staff perspective, Frauman and Norman (2003) found that the interpersonal relationships between staff and visitors were not a significant factor when determining visitors' propensity to mindfulness. The interviewees, however, believed that staff at the site were a vital component in stimulating mindfulness. The importance of staff and visitors' interpersonal relationship was also reflected on by Pearce (2009) in relation to the use of humour at stimulating mindfulness. Pearce's (2009) study could offer a reason as to why this study and that of Pearce disagree with Frauman and Norman (2003) on this matter; the nature of the site. As Henderson (1997) explained, the simplest of approaches may be sufficient to stimulate mindfulness, depending on the nature of the site. This could be the case for Frauman and Norman's (2003) study; that interpersonal relationships simply do not match the site. The interviewees in this study felt that interpersonal relationships are important from a destination-wide perspective. This could suggest that interpersonal relationships play a varying role at specific sites, but for a whole destination, it is required. More research is required here to develop understanding into this area.

Frauman and Norman (2004) discussed the increased importance of the individual visitor, in that individuals had different predispositions towards mindfulness. This study appears to adhere to Frauman and Norman's findings on this occasion, in that the individual's mindful predisposition is likely to influence their receptiveness of the mindful displays offered at the site. That said, this discrepancy

could simply be due to the nature of the study. Moscardo's study focussed on one particular site, whereas this study had a greater focus on a destination-wide perspective. If this is taken into account, it is possible to suggest that on an individual site-level, it is possible for a specific site to influence the size of the 'mindful' target market. However, when considering a whole destination, the drive to affect the size of this target market has to come from a more individualistic focus.

The relationship between the factors also appeared to be slightly different between Moscardo's model and the one generated from this study. Moscardo's model appears to show more direct and simple relationships from Setting factors moving to Visitor factors, Cognitive state, and finally Consequence. In this study conversely, the relationships appeared more interlinked with Individual and Site factors affecting each other, influencing and being influenced by mindfulness. On the benefits side, Hard and Soft benefits emerged as results and, to a certain extent, influencers of mindfulness at the same time. This offers the view of mindfulness as a more complex web as opposed to a 'simple' linear relationship.

The final difference that seemed to appear related to the differentiation of benefits. Moscardo's findings spoke to more generic findings of learning, satisfaction, and understanding. In this study, participants described many benefits which could be realised by improving memory recall, which were split into Hard and Soft benefits. Businesses therefore did see a real benefit from mindfulness. One thing which was particularly interesting in terms of the benefits was the very positive tone participants had. This was best shown when participants discussed word of mouth; participants only seemed to discuss this in a positive context and stayed clear of negative word of mouth. Participants rarely discussed a negative consequence of improving memories and when negative points were mentioned they were never attributed to improved memory recall or efforts to improve memory recall.

When discussing activities, participants described how participating in various activities would impact individual's mindfulness. In this case, participants seemed to believe that it was largely the activity which created a mindful individual. In the literature, however, this theme was not left so broad. The literature discussed how there were specific factors about the activities which had to be present in order to create a mindful individual; novelty, surprise, dynamic displays (Moscardo, 1996), involvement, variety (Frauman & Norman, 2003, 2004), and even humour (Pearce, 2009). Participants did describe many of these factors, but did not relate them specifically to the activities being undertaken. Instead, they emphasised these points much more when discussing the site; the sites should be varied, unique etc.

Conclusion

The provision of mindfulness enables businesses to influence what tourists remember about a destination, be it country or site-specific. Ryan (2002) has claimed that tourism research has yet to understand or study why tourists behave irrationally. By facilitating mindfulness, it could be possible to reduce this irrationality and allow tourists to learn more and become interested in the site. This stimulated interest can result in more care at the site and a drive to ensure the site's survival (Frauman & Norman, 2003; Moscardo, 1996).

In the literature, few previous studies had undertaken a qualitative approach to understand the mindfulness phenomenon, and fewer still had targeted the sites themselves. The few that did target sites often took a passive approach and observed what was occurring at the site, but not necessarily why it was happening or management's reasoning behind the provision. This study was designed to fill this gap in the literature by interviewing the management of tourism businesses in Dubai to understand their perspective of mindfulness. From these interviews, a total of 19 different themes arose, the most

common referring to People and interpersonal relationships. The themes often supported what already exists in the literature but added further dimensions and different perspectives that are important to consider. These differences could suggest a fundamental difference in the nature of mindfulness, or the different nature of Dubai, or the fact that this study considered businesses throughout an entire destination, as opposed single sites often used in the literature.

The results show much support for the literature, although they do place certain elements in a different light and emphasise different levels of importance. The model developed in this study closely relates to the one developed by Moscardo (1996), with many similar focal points. However, the main differences relate to the fact that the findings from this study suggest that it is the individual that is the initiator in the process (see Frauman & Norman, 2004) and not the site, as Moscardo's (1996) model seems to suggest. Additionally, the relationship between the various elements stimulating mindfulness appeared more web-like in this study, rather than the more linear model provided by Moscardo. Finally, the participants in this study seemed to differentiate between hard and soft benefits, to a much greater extent than previous literature.

The results indicate that tourism business in Dubai, do find a use for mindfulness and do believe it to be a useful provision. Participants described how mindfulness, by stimulating improved memories, could create positive word of mouth, promote retention and satisfaction, and improve understanding of the site and country's history, culture, environment, unique aspects, and appearance.

For businesses, particularly involved in tourism, this study confirms much previous literature and demonstrates that mindfulness is not solely a western phenomenon, but one that is being experienced also in the Middle East. From the findings of this study, it can be seen that participants do believe that mindfulness has an influence on the visitor and can be used to help the site achieve its purpose e.g. teaching, but also become profitable and promote future business and repeat business.

The fact that businesses have been researched in this study also adds valuable industry perspective to the theory. Businesses may not use the term 'mindfulness' to describe their actions, but their plans and provisions fulfil the provisions of mindfulness. With this knowledge, other businesses can better plan their sites, staffing, and displays etc. in line with mindfulness literature.

This study also adds an additional caveat for businesses. Mindfulness is good and effective at promoting learning, satisfaction, and repetition but, if this study's findings are found to be generalizable, mindfulness is also dependent upon the individual visiting the site and their predisposition to mindfulness (Frauman & Norman, 2004). Therefore, by simply providing the facilities, businesses should not expect to instantly benefit from mindfulness. More needs to be done to create mindfully-predisposed visitors and then attract them to sites. In this case, some form of business syndication to create mindful customers would benefit all businesses and requires that as many businesses as possible participate. This will not only be beneficial for individual businesses through providing their own mindful provisions, but may also help to promote more long-term and wide-reaching mindfulness within potential visitors. Mindfulness can then become a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby businesses' provision of mindfulness creates more mindful customers who then seek businesses' mindful facilities.

Limitations

The fact that all the interviews were conducted in Dubai limits the generalisability of this study. Some key differences have been noted between this study and the literature, however, it is unknown whether these have occurred because of the nature of Dubai itself. An international replication of this study would help to suppress the uncertainty. The limited number of participants could be seen as a

potential problem for this study. Future studies could increase the number of participants involved. That said saturation was reached by the sixth interview, with the seventh being conducted to confirm saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Further interviews would have added little extra insight into the reported findings.

Future studies

Further studies could focus on replicating this found here both within Dubai and in an international context to further justify the results of this study and to measure what, if any, impact the nature of Dubai has had on the results. Additional studies could also consider quantifying these findings to measure their generalisability, both from a business and tourist perspective. A more detailed look into the role played by the various mindfulness-stimulating factors would be beneficial, to better understand their exact nature and influence. For example, this study, along with Pearce (2009) disagreed with Frauman and Norman (2003) about the exact nature of interpersonal relationships at influencing mindfulness. It has been proposed here that it is the nature of the site that has caused this discrepancy. However, this requires more specific consideration. Many studies have often focussed on discussing mindfulness with a specific focus on tourists and tourism businesses, but the impact on general businesses would be interesting to discover. That is, can mindfulness be stimulated by supermarkets and to what end?

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Submitted: 28/10/2015

Accepted 07/03/2016