

A stylized illustration on a dark blue background. At the top, a sun with three triangles below it is centered. To the left, a thought bubble contains various icons: a smartphone, a laptop, a car, a house, musical notes, and a person. To the right, another thought bubble contains a sun, trees, and a landscape. In the center, a person is shown from behind, walking away from the viewer. Below the person, a small dog is walking. The background features several trees and a horizon line.

Exploring the Concept Mindfulness of Consumption

Sabrina Helm, University of Arizona, USA

Mind Full or Mindful?

Introduction: Motivation

- ▶ Hyper-consumption has been identified as one of the dominant drivers of environmental degradation and climate change.
- ▶ Hyper-consumption accelerates when individuals acquire and use a product/service for the sake of consuming and further intensifies when consumers (and producers) pay little attention to the natural environment from which the resources for goods and service production are drawn.
- ▶ Habituated consumption patterns or behavioral routines are a main driver of resource-inefficient consumption.



An Example: Food Waste



- ▶ Household food waste refers to losses of foods in households that were "potentially recoverable for human consumption" (Hodges et al., 2011, p. 38)
- ▶ Global food shortages pose a grave threat to humanity which is further challenged by population increase, drought and a changing climate. (UN, 2011; Escaler & Teng, 2011)
- ▶ Estimates on food wasted in the United States:
 - 40% of the total available food supply (Hall, Guo, Dore & Chow, 2009)
 - \$90-100 billion per year (Jones, 2006 cited in Parfitt & Barthel, 2010)
 - 34 million tons (EPA, 2012)
 - 25% of the total fresh water consumed in the United States is being used to grow crops that ultimately get discarded. (Hall et al., 2009)
 - 300 million barrels of oil were required to grow the food that was thrown away in the US in 2003. (Hall et al., 2009)
 - 1 billion dollars spent per year disposing of discarded food in landfills. (EPA, 2012)

Food wastage in the UK

An overview of the food that gets wasted in the United Kingdom



<http://foodfighters2013.wordpress.com/2013/02/03/fight-for-food-famine-and-food-waste/>

Consumers and Their Food Waste

- ▶ Consumers are waste averse and dislike the experience of throwing away food. (Bolton & Alba, 2012; Stefan, 2013).
- ▶ Demographic and cultural factors are related to food waste.
- ▶ Behavioral patterns drive increases or decreases in food waste volume for households: planning activities, inventory management and appropriate storage procedures. (Quested et al., 2013)



Consumer Routines and Food Waste

- ▶ Pre-shopping planning is negatively correlated with food waste as people who make (and stick to) shopping lists and evaluate current inventory before shopping tend to buy fewer unnecessary items. (Corrado, 2007; Stefan, 2011)
- ▶ Overbuying is a major contributor to overall food waste generation and is driven by:
 - shopping infrequently (less than once a week)
 - stocking up on bargains or discounted items
 - plentiful kitchen storage space including backup freezers
 - impulse shopping and
 - purchasing in bulk, particularly of perishable goods(Corrado, 2007; Stefan, 2011; Morisaki, 2011).
- ▶ Poor food storage techniques contribute to greater waste such as ad hoc refrigerator cleaning systems, the absence of food rotation techniques or storing goods in inappropriate containers. (Glanz, 2007)



Mindfulness: Motivation for Research Project

- ▶ More mindfulness of consumers engaged in consumption behaviors may help to break with established routines and lead to an adaptation or change in routines in direction of more sustainable consumption patterns.
- ▶ The goal of the current research is to better understand
how mindfulness may be conceptualized in the context of overconsumption and environmental sustainability (Mindful Consumption), and how increased consumer mindfulness can contribute to behavioral changes in consumption practices.



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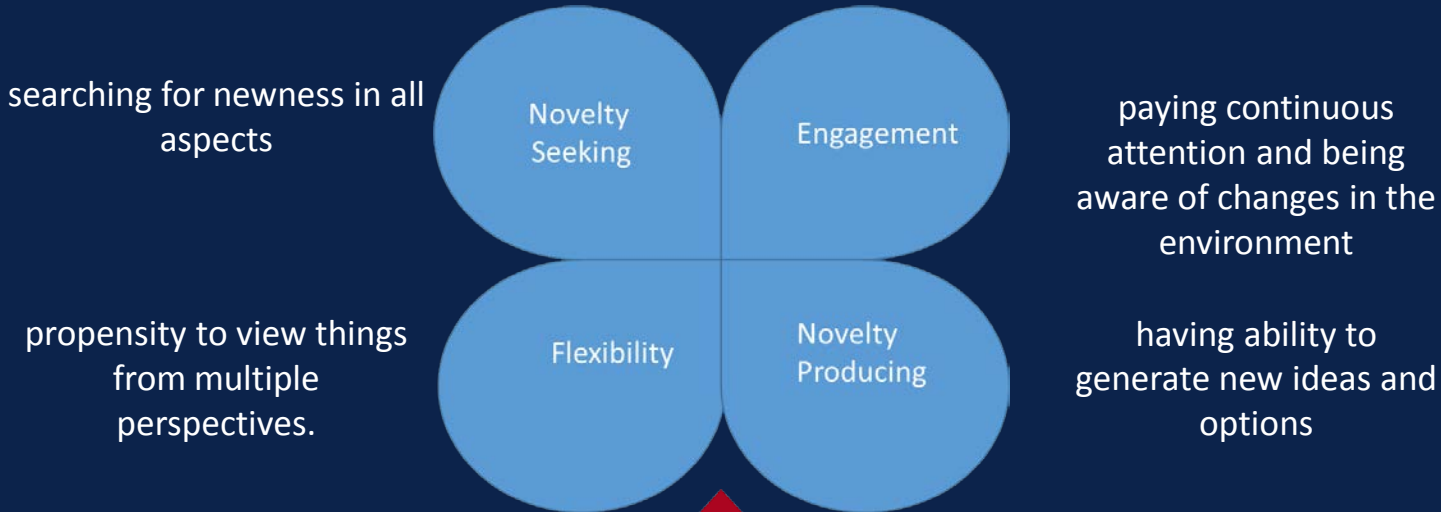
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Four Principles of the Socio-Cognitive Approach

Langer, 1992

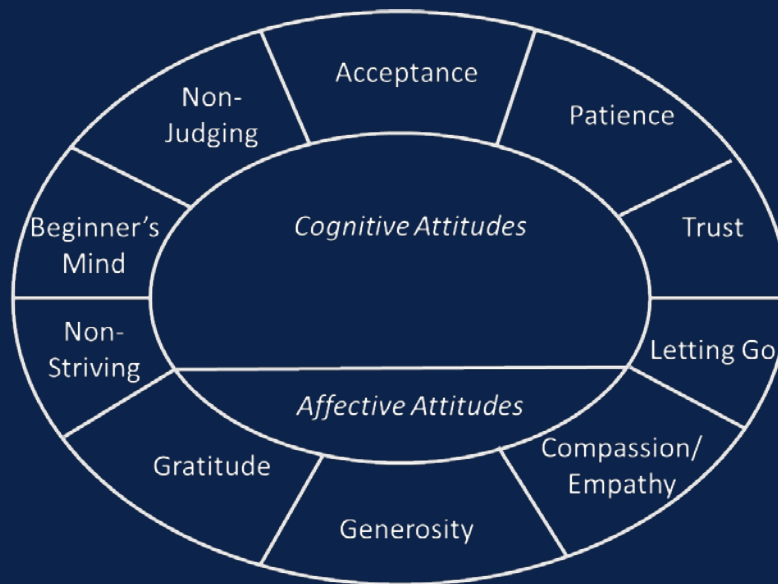
- ▶ Mindfulness is explained from the perspective of mindlessness (avoiding novelty or by being unaware of changes that occur).
- ▶ Mindfulness is characterized by flexible and open “mindset” and is defined as “a state of openness to novelty in which the individual actively constructs categories and distinctions.” (Langer, 1992; p. 289)



Affective/Cognitive Attitudes Inherent in the Eastern-Buddhist Approach

Kabat-Zinn, 2003

- Mindfulness is defined as the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.



Outcomes of Mindfulness

- ▶ Both socio-cognitive and meditation-based mindfulness have been found to lead to beneficial outcomes in
 - learning (Langer, 1997)
 - mental and physical health (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Grossman et al., 2004)
 - well-being (Langer, 2002; Brown and Ryan, 2003)
 - behavioral regulation (Shapiro and Schwartz, 2000; Bishop et al., 2004)
- ▶ It is further argued that mindfulness may tend to induce creativity, insight making, cognitive flexibility, self-acceptance, personal responsibility and authenticity in individuals. (Carson and Langer, 2006; Langer, 2006)



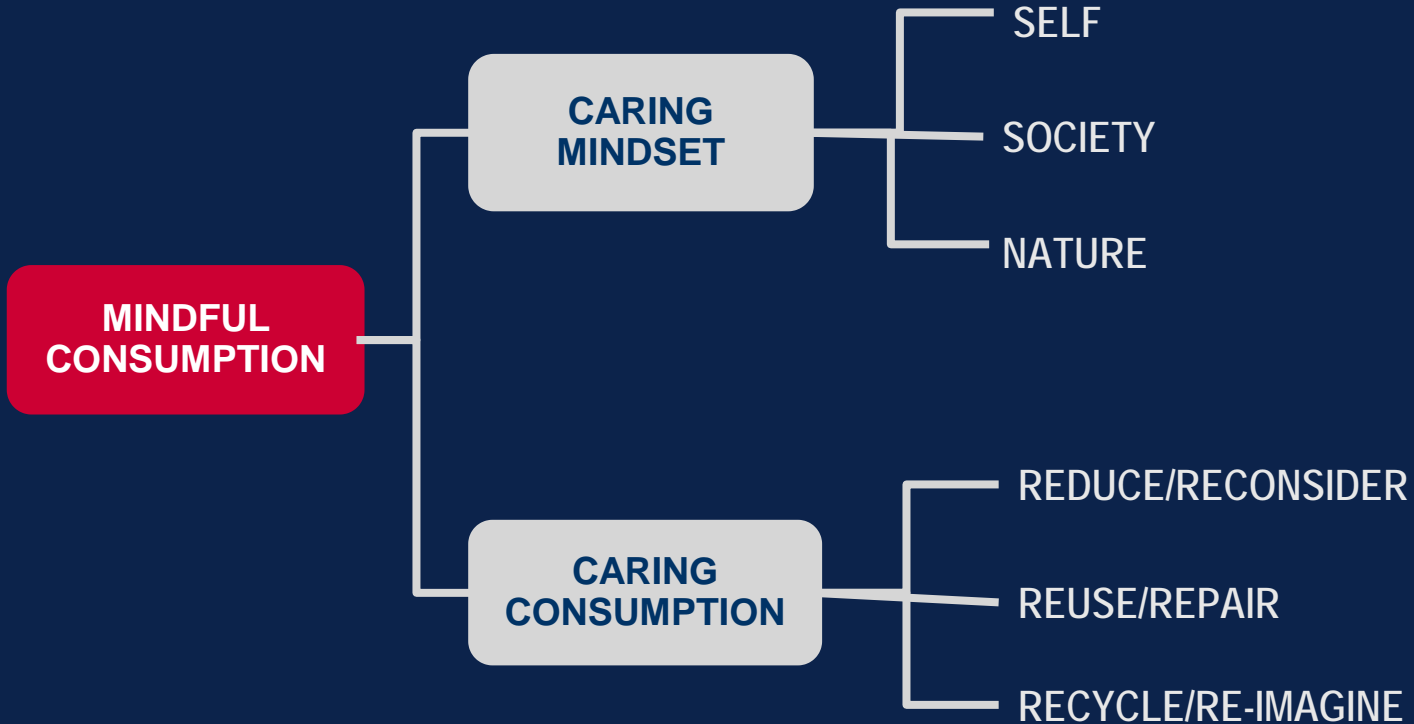
Mindful Consumption: A Working Definition

- ▶ Mindful consumption encompasses consumer behaviors where an individual with a compassionate concern towards self, community and environment, carefully attends to and be aware of his/her consumption needs, while adopting flexible options and novel approaches in the purchase, usage and disposal of goods in order to reduce his/her overall consumption.



Concept Components of Mindful Consumption

(Sheth et al. 2011)



Mindful Consumption and Hyperconsumption

- ▶ Mindful consumption relates to consumption avoidance and selective acquisition and usage of goods and services that avoids routine/habitation (overcoming auto-pilot behavior).
- ▶ While considering the extant sustainable options, a mindful consumer should also be able to generate his/her own sustainable alternatives relating to consumption and to adopt an impartial view of consumerist lifestyle.
- ▶ This may further drive them to avoid the consumer treadmill by finding novelty and value in things that they already own (consumption avoidance).
- ▶ More mindful consumers may have a tendency to take personal responsibility for consumption-related decisions which might ultimately lead them towards sustainable consumption.



A Stepwise Model of Behavioral Change

Dahlstrand and Biel, 1997

Barriers to Behavior Change

Activating values with regard to
environment and or community

Attending present behavior

Considering alternative solutions

Planning new behavior

Testing new behavior

Evaluating new behavior

Facilitators of Behavior Change





Mindfulness and Food Waste: Theoretical Implications



- ▶ Identify decision-making biases and routines that lead to food waste (planning activities, inventory management and appropriate storage procedures) as well as barriers, facilitators and points of intervention.
- ▶ Understand how mindfulness-interventions serve to break with routine.
- ▶ Do messaging, nudges, pledges, competitions increase food waste awareness and motivate consumers to change wasteful routines?
- ▶ Analyze the interplay of actors in production, retailing, consumption, waste.



Mindfulness and Food Waste: Managerial Implications

- ▶ Manufacturers' aggressive marketing tactics result in encouraging mindless consumption.
- ▶ Retailers' underpricing, bundle pricing, and other price-volume strategies increase food waste.
- ▶ Retailers need to find new ways to deliver value to consumers.
How can retailers aid consumers in reducing food waste?
(e.g., food purchase transparency; shopping lists; adaptive couponing)
- ▶ How can technological developments aid consumers in reducing food waste?
(e.g., online menu planning; IoT – “smart” fridge)
- ▶ How can decreased food consumption (increased household food efficiency) and economic development be aligned? (e.g., price increases to account for external effects vs. decreased purchase per household)



Mindfulness and Food Waste: Policy Implications

- ▶ How can decreased food consumption (increased household food efficiency) and economic development be aligned? (e.g., price increases to account for external effects vs. decreased purchase per household)
- ▶ What infrastructure developments lead to reduced or increased food waste on the household level? (e.g., composting; taxes/subsidies; legal frameworks such as expiration date labeling)
- ▶ Paradigm shift from optimization of agricultural production efficiency (with diminishing marginal utility) to optimization of household consumption efficiency.
- ▶ Is the concept of mindfulness of consumers aligned with current perspective on responsible consumers?



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“Everything is created twice, first in the mind and then in reality.”

Robin S. Sharma



Dr. Sabrina Helm

Associate Professor of
Retailing and Consumer Sciences

The University of Arizona
email: helm@email.arizona.edu