

From Mindless to Consumer to Mindful Citizen: Reimagining Consumer, Societal and  
Environmental Sustainability.

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## Abstract

"Mankind is challenged, as it has never been challenged before, to prove its maturity and its mastery - not of nature, but of itself. Therein lies our hope and our destiny" ~ Rachel Carson

Increasingly governments, policymakers, organisations, academics and citizens of advanced societies have a pressing mandate to consider solutions to what could be considered one of the 21st century's biggest problems - unsustainable consumption (UC). Overconsumption, UC or mindless consumption is a global epidemic leaving citizens, societies, and the planet in disarray and far short of wellbeing and health (Bahl, Milne, Ross, Mick, Grier, Chugani, Chan, Gould, Cho, Dorsey and Schindler, 2016). Mindful consumption (MC) on the other hand represents a citizen mindset of caring for self, community and nature which manifests behaviourally in the tempering of overconsumption which is both self-defeating and environmentally unsustainable (Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas, 2011).

Although sustainable consumption and mindfulness research have seen significant increases in recent years, empirical studies at their interface are limited, lack conceptual integration and are methodologically challenged (Fischer, Stanzus, Geiger, Grossman, Schrader, 2017). The association between sustainable consumption research (SCR) and mindfulness lacks integration, is fragmented throughout different disciplines and has yielded a mere seven empirical publications as of 2017; one qualitative, five quantitative,

and one mixed method. Based on a recent systematic literature review (SLR) by Fischer et al, (2017) and seminal mindfulness work in other fields (Greenberg, Shapiro, Mischoulon, Lazar, 2016) this research deductively assumes four potential modalities of mindfulness as antidotes to mindless consumption: aiding in the disruption of routines, promotion of increased inner and outer congruence, nurturing of non-materialistic values and the encouragement of pro-social behaviour. Considering the global significance of understanding ways to promote MC, this study attempts to consolidate and extend existing SCR, broaden its scope and add depth and clarity around the connection of sustainable MC and mindfulness. Additionally, this study seeks to explore and understand mindfulness as an antidote and how cultural influences play a role in this dynamic interaction across a representative sample of self-reported mindfulness practicing citizens, who have successfully curbed or eliminated persistent behaviours that are detrimental to themselves, their families and communities and the planet at large. While the focus of the study is primarily on citizen consumers, it will additionally consider the role that marketing and a materialistic society plays in mindless consumption.

Findings suggest that MC is strongly correlated with the long-term cultivation of both mindfulness and connection. Mindless consumption as a cognitive-behavioural pattern is mediated by increased connection to self, others and nature through the mechanism of mindfulness. In other words, the power of mindfulness lies in its ability to facilitate connection, serving to satisfy human needs that were previously fulfilled through negative consumption habits. Further, the study revealed that primary drivers of mindless consumption are the learned need for rewards and instant gratification, over

reactivity to external stimuli and a general unawareness to unconscious materialistic beliefs and attitudes. Through learning how to respond less reactively to circumstances of the mind and the environment, one has greater agency and choice. Findings support that mindfulness aided in general detachment from conventional social practices, increased selflessness and offered a greater sense of peace, contentment and well-being. The study offers insights to citizens, marketers and those concerned with issues of sustainability.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Overconsumption, UC or mindless consumption is a global epidemic leaving citizens, societies, and the planet in disarray. An individual's habits and routines mold their consumption patterns (Schäfer Jaeger-Erben, and Bamberg, 2012) and are culturally ingrained in wider social norms that often include unquestioned conventional standards for consumption behaviours (Spaargaren, 2003). Prevailing materialistic social practices, built on economic models of perpetual growth and unlimited resources may be the status quo; however, it is leaving citizens, communities, and the planet far short of wellbeing and health. Several conceptual and methodological limitations have been noted with current SCR and mindfulness research: definitional challenges, methodological shortcomings in empirical approaches and sample selection have been considered as limitations to existing research in the field (Fischer, Stanzus, Geiger, Grossman, and Schrader, 2017) making it difficult to draw useful and practical conclusions for citizens, businesses, non-profits, governments, and policymakers.

Through querying a specific representative sample of citizens, this research specifically explores evidence and themes on how citizens' behaviour and mindsets can be more effectively influenced towards sustainability through the cultivation of mindfulness. In addition, through examining citizens' experiences and narratives over a significant length of time, the data offers a more detailed assessment of the themes

considered in current research, and more broadly "how" materialism in a culture perpetuates the opposite of wellbeing and is a pre-cursor to mindless consumption.

Drawing on the stakeholder view, the consumer-centric sustainability (CCS) framework (of which I propose be called citizen-centric sustainability framework), SCR, consumer research theories, sustainable business models and new emerging research on mindfulness this research attempts to phenomenologically explore how members of a social group experience (think and feel) western culture and materialistic values that include messages like "you are not enough", "get more, do more, be more" which resultingly lead to a variety of mindless consumption behaviours and patterns. MC is about consuming in a way that is optimal, non-compulsive and implies a degree of consideration for self, community, and planet (Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas, 2011; Bahl et al., 2016). As a result of being more conscious, connected and aware of "potentially accessible cognitive-behavioural processes underlying consumption that have become relatively automatic" (Rosenberg, 2005), mindfulness practices can facilitate increased agency and less reactivity to external cultural provocations (Rosenberg, 2005; Bahl et al., 2016). Persuasive marketing methods can be less tempting and sensitivities to them can be minimized when citizens are mindful (Rosenberg, 2005).

Seminal studies in neuroscience have demonstrated significant correlations between mindfulness practice and structural changes to the brain's grey matter in areas concerned with emotional responses, decision making which suggest long lasting-changes in both cognition and emotion (Hölzel, Carmody, Vangel, Congleton, Yerramsetti, Gard, Lazar, 2011; Lutz, Greischar, Rawlings, Ricard, and Davidson, 2004). Mindfulness facilitates a reconnection to self as a whole person which includes the body

which resultingly inspires a renewed sense of interconnectedness among people. Arguably this reconnection is vital considering the cultural pervasiveness of using consumption in place of connection as a need satisfier for meaning and fulfillment (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Barber and Deale, 2014). Ecological sustainability need not be incompatible with personal, social and psychological wellbeing as a few studies evidenced mindfulness as a supporting mechanism in attaining greater personal wellbeing and a more environmentally sustainable lifestyle concurrently (Brown and Kasser, 2005; Crompton and Kasser, 2009). Understanding MC in a reflected holistic way, relegating responsibility not just onto the citizen consumer but also society and the marketplace is an essential aspect of understanding and conceptualizing sustainable MC (Henkel and Andersen, 2015; Achrol et al., 2012; Phipps, Ozanne, Luchs, Subrahmanyam, Kapitan, Catlin, Gau, Naylor, Rose, Simpson, Weaver, 2013; Malhotra and Uslay, 2012).

This paper presents a contextual examination of sustainability as it relates culturally to business and marketing as an essential foundation for understanding the research questions. It highlights the implications of mindless consumption from a citizen, societal and environmental perspective. A broad conceptual and theoretical background to mindfulness and its potential for transformation is examined, along with its connection to SCR. Finally, the empirical methodology is outlined with a review of the findings and a discussion on recommendations for future research in this emerging field.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Globalization, retail concentration, epic technological advances, brand proliferation, social media, and the Internet have presented the world of consumers with vast opportunities to engage the market. Like never before, consumers can attune to their needs and wants with the greatest of precision from a seemingly vast array of product and service choices worldwide. The ability to consume, accumulate wealth, and engage markets can be considered one of the 20th century's greatest luxuries. The aggregate marketing system in western affluent societies has positively contributed to society in many ways. For example, the offering of a high standard of living, freedom of choice in consumption, and personal incomes and employment (Wilkie and Moore, 1999). However, alongside ever-expanding global markets, virtual, neural and social networks, and business innovation and technological advances, exist some fundamental (perhaps fatal) unexamined assumptions by business and marketers: a) the planet is free of resource limitations; b) the endless satisfaction of wants is natural and infinite; and c) that modern products and services have made the lives of billions of human beings and their communities better and more worthwhile in the advanced societies of the world (Kotler, 2011; Achrol and Kotler, 2012; Sheth et al., 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 2001; Mick, 2016). Citizens, commonly known as consumers from a business marketing perspective, are often objectified and considered a proxy for market demand with little consideration paid to the looming personal, social and environmental health threats the world faces.

The environment is clearly suffering but so are citizens in affluent societies. Stress-related illness has been on a steady incline in the last decade, whereby 50% of adults in the US are suffering from a stress-related illness (Maté, 2006). Across affluent societies, obesity and type 2 diabetes are seeing epidemic-like inclines and can be considered health epidemics (Santoro, 2013). The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) reported over 500,000 UK employees suffered from work-related stress, burnout, depression, or anxiety in 2016/17, equaling a loss of 12.5 million working days over one year (HSE, 2018). There has been widespread recognition that western societies will need to consume less in the coming decades. If developing countries replicate industrialized society's consumption patterns, the planet's resources will be over-exhausted (Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997).

Sustainability is often only considered from an environmental perspective with climate change topping the agenda of the world's leaders and activists. However, to look squarely at unsustainability from its most broad perspective we need to also consider citizens as both victims and perpetrators of the world's overconsumption practices underlying the issues of climate change and environmental depletion. The necessary call for increased MC which will inevitably result in sweeping cultural changes could offer some transformational solutions to the consequences of not only climate change but the well-being of citizens and society (Grabow, Bryan, Checovich, Converse, Middlecamp, Mooney, Torres, Younkin, and Barrett, 2018).

As citizens are presented with more options and choices than ever before for human consumption another assumed cultural narrative exists: material accumulation and economic growth equals happiness, health, and security. Caught between the fear of

scarcity and the awareness of overwhelming abundance citizens are continually bombarded by cultural and societal messages pressuring them to get more, be more, have more and do more (Brown, 2012). The array of overwhelming options and insincere propaganda often only serves to diminish motivation and citizens' ability to choose, as well as, their overall satisfaction with the option selected (Malhotra, Lee, and Uslay, 2012; Ndubisi, 2014), resulting in a dynamic of either overconsumption or underconsumption (Sheth et al., 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Consumption is a gratifying aspect of living in a prosperous society and a necessary part of life, however, when it becomes excessive and extreme it assuredly becomes harmful to the health of people, communities, and the environment.

In the last decade scholars, governments and citizens have increased attention and awareness around finding solutions to complex sustainability issues (Amel, Manning, Scott, 2009; Grabow, 2018). Sustainable business models are slowly emerging despite the inherent resistance to change from conventional business practices to more sustainable ones (Stubbs, 2017). Citizens are increasingly waking up with trends towards more sustainable, "green" lifestyles. Consumption is not only a psychological process but also a neuropsychological one, which is why offering information is not sufficient enough (Mick, 2016) to retrain the brain and counteract underlying materialistic values that cause citizens to behave mindlessly or illogically which is evidenced through research in a variety of fields, including neuroscience and psychology (Maté, 2006). As we will see later, one way to support citizens to act with increased agency and resilience over consumption decisions (reduce the attitude-behaviour gap) is through the cultivation of

mindfulness (Ndubisi, 2014) with its accompanying neuropsychological impacts (Hölzel et al., 2011).

The recent decade has seen extensive multidisciplinary research in the fields of education, medicine, neuroscience, and psychology on mindfulness and its positive impact in advancing individual and collective wellbeing (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2013). For example, the US National Institutes of Health has spent over \$100 million on mindfulness research (Harrington 2014). However, there remains a dearth in empirical research on mindfulness as it relates to business management, marketing, and MC (Ndubisi, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2014) despite the obvious need for such research given marketing's well-known adverse impacts.

## 2.1 Marketing, Consumption and Sustainability

Marketing is concerned with consumption and has well-known negative impacts on citizens and the environment (Achrol et al., 2012). Through promoting rapid consumption (for example, food and fashion), creating superficial needs, over-fulfilling materialistic wants and underserving non-material wants often by encouraging the citizen to attach emotional needs to products and services. Overmarketing includes techniques like planned obsolescence, creating excessive variety, manipulative advertising, deceptive emotional techniques, misrepresenting value offerings, unnecessary frequent design changes, extreme inventory supply, and incessant price discounting. Arguably overmarketing drives overconsumption (Sheth and Sisodia, 2002). Academics have proposed preliminary solutions for overmarketing, such as social marketing (Peattie and Peattie, 2009; Gilaninia and Sharif, 2011) or demarketing (Ramirez, Tajdini, and David,

David, 2017; Stubbs, 2017) however, there seems to be very little motivation on the side of business to truly embrace such techniques (Stubbs, 2017) as the pursuit of profit is paramount.

This paper proposes that citizens' competitive advantage lies in their ability to detach some of their already exhausted attention and cognitive capacity away from persuasive marketing and advertising methods, bringing it inward in order to initiate increased mindfulness. As citizens arm themselves with their own personal competitive advantage and strategy, arguably health and wellbeing can be restored, initiating important shifts in business and marketing practices.

Societal demands to address environmental problems are increasing, and the obvious challenge is the widespread perception that social and environmental impact and economic advancement are incompatible (Santos, Pache, Birkholz, 2015). However, radical adjustments to prevailing business models are vital in order to effectively respond to the primal needs of sustainable development (Stubbs and Cocklin, 2008). Typically, organizations' efforts in dealing with sustainability can be considered "add-ons" to what remains unsustainable business practices (Markevich, 2009) and further, is often discerned by citizens as inauthentic.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives fail to include citizen-centric issues in sustainability (Sheth et al., 2011). In the sustainability context, it is both necessary and vital to consider both citizen agency as well as the common notion that governments and regulators are wholly to blame. Such is the case in marketing, where the prevailing practice is to not see the consumer as "a citizen, a parent, an employee, a community member, or a member of the global village with a long-term stake in the



future of the planet" (Smith, Drumwright, and Gentile, 2010, p.4). Citizens are commonly objectified, whereby growth and profit are primary business objectives, and CSR initiatives are often reactive, opportunistic side projects lacking strategic integration (Stubbs, 2017) and a long-term sustainable perspective. Given the wide acknowledgment of issues related to overconsumption, resource depletion, environmental and waste issues, and climate change, the pressing concern is how to effectively respond to these increasing social problems.

Just as economists are concerned with stimulating growth in the economy, they are also responsible for controlling its malfunctions like unemployment, inflation, recession, and poverty. Similarly, marketing is responsible for the functions and malfunctions of consumption. As we enter the 3rd-millennium, marketing as a societal institution can no longer ignore and overlook its malfunctions and there is significant reason by all stakeholders to consider solutions for increased sustainable, healthy consumption environments, as well as modalities for protecting citizens from overconsumption.

Business school scholars are proposing models for growth that offer more sustainable alternatives to traditional frameworks originating in economics, sociology, and anthropology (Achrol et al., 2012). The current prevailing business model and economic growth philosophy are increasingly antiquated, as evidenced by the declining of individual, social and environmental wellbeing (Stubbs, 2017; Achrol et al., 2012; Malhotra and Uslay, 2012). Businesses' response to the alternative sustainability model mandate will have far reaching implications on the survival of their organisations and their future success will depend on how well they manage social and environmental

issues related to sustainability. As Birken et al., (2009) write "unavoidable structural inhibitions in contemporary business models," hinder organizations from being motivated to be sustainable.

Aligning profit with individual, societal, and planetary sustainability has garnered increasing attention in terms of attempting to refine current business models with a priority on sustainability. Santos et al., 2015 and Birkin et al., 2009, p. 288 conclude that the "initiatives do not involve a fundamental change to the common economic-focused business model, and they are not integrated by a comprehensive new understanding that could be identified as a new business model".

Achieving economic success while simultaneously creating positive individual, social, and environmental impacts are possible with sustainable business models (Schaltegger and Wagner, 2011). For example, B Corps which go beyond being social enterprises. Sustainable business models leverage a fundamental triple bottom line approach (social, economic, and environmental impacts) (McMullen and Warnick, 2016). They acknowledge all stakeholders' interests, including the environment, society, and citizens (Bocken, Short, Rana, and Evans, 2014). Sustainable business models alter the way organizations operate through prioritizing sustainability. New models can help integrate sustainability into the fundamental purpose of business and serve as significant drivers of competitive advantage through connecting more closely to citizens' deepest needs and yearnings and therefore offer authentic customer value. Despite the need for these advancements, there remains limited research and understanding of sustainable business models (Boons and Lüdeke-Freund, 2013).

B Corp certification includes a set of rigorous sustainability measurements that are based on a sustainable business model framework that aligns profit and societal impact. They use “the power of business to solve social and environmental problems” (Lab, 2014) and place a priority on business processes that are socially and environmentally sustainable. Certified B Corps have received very little academic attention to date (Stubbs, 2017) and are still somewhat a novelty despite gaining corporation status in 2007.

Businesses and marketers have a responsibility to make some radical changes to theories, practice, and perspectives if the sustainability mandate is to be achieved. However, the citizen/consumer is a critical partner-stakeholder of which solutions to sustainability cannot be accomplished without their involvement (Sheth et al., 2011). Therefore, this paper makes a direct attempt to explore and investigate MC from citizens’ lived experience within the context of the business landscape in western culture.

Sheth et. al.’s (2011) customer-centric sustainability framework attempts to recast the sustainability metric in terms of the environmental, personal, social and economic wellbeing of the consumer. "The environmental dimension relates to impact of consumption on environmental wellbeing, that is, health and human wellbeing consequences of environmental change ensuing from consumption; the social dimension relates to impact of consumption on personal wellbeing of the consumers, reflecting individual (and family) wellbeing or quality of life, and associated welfare of the community; and, the economic dimension relates to impact of consumption on economic wellbeing of consumers associated with financial aspects such as debt-burden, earning pressures, and work-life balance" (Sheth et al., 2011).

Business success and survival for decades to come will depend on organisations' honest ability to positively embrace the sustainability mandate. As citizens become increasingly empowered and aware of the consumption choices they make, the more businesses will need to adapt their strategies with a focus on balancing profit and growth goals with citizen-centric sustainability. As the culture moves towards more citizen-centric sustainability practices, other positive outcomes could emerge, such as increased trust-building between companies and citizens (Yang and Lim, 2009).

## 2.2 The Role of Business in Society

Businesses are not ends in themselves. They can be understood as "organs of society" — tools that society builds and creates whereby its needs are fulfilled through an exchange process (Hooley, Piercy, Nicoulaud, and Rudd, 2017). Their existence and their survival are contingent on creating value for the customer (Drucker, 1973; Hooley et al., 2017) rather than generating profit for its own ends. Peter Drucker's (1958, p. 252) view: "Marketing is ...the process through which economy is integrated into society to serve human needs". The stakeholder view implies that profitability, while necessary, is not the sole measure of an organization's performance. Many human needs cannot be directly met through marketing, especially when its underlying motives are driven exclusively by profit. Marketing overtly or covertly attempts to insinuate and promise that basic human needs for attachment and connection can be fulfilled through consumption practices as a way of achieving an idealized and attainable perfection of self. In other words, in the modern consumer culture, the need for authentic connection has been replaced with consumerism. While marketing plays a critical role in offering meaning to life through

exchange via consumption (Van Raaij, 1993) when it is operating and driven by selfish pursuits, it manifests broadly in society as unsustainability.

### 2.3 Impact of Human Health and Wellbeing in a Consumption-Dominated Culture

The US financial crisis of 2008 along with the euro debt crisis of 2010 have revealed structural deficiencies in the dominant, prevailing business perspective that arrogantly suggests that advanced western societies are the most "successful" in the world. However, are citizens (consumers) from the most economically advanced societies in the world happier and healthier? The obvious question is, if modern western culture is so successful, why are we seeing such increased rates of human stress-related illness in such a short period of time? The seemingly most "successful" society in the world — the US — has witnessed 50% of the adult population suffering from stress-related chronic illness (heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, autoimmune diseases and addictions, including psychological related problems like depression and anxiety) in the last decade alone (Maté, 2006). Autoimmune diseases such as Crohn's disease, type 1 diabetes, multiple sclerosis (MS) and asthma have soared by 300% or more (Scudellari and Writer, 2017).

Currently, in the US, 50% of adolescents meet the diagnostic criteria for a mental health condition. Approximately 3.5 million US children are receiving stimulant medication for ADHD, a staggering increase from only 600,000 in 1990 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2014). In Canada, the number of prescription medications for ADHD has risen by 43% in the last five years (Hauck, Lau, Wing, Kurdyak and Tu, 2017). Half a million children in the US are receiving antipsychotic medications to treat behavioural and emotional issues. Worldwide, it is estimated that 7.2% of children aged

18 and under (129 million) have been diagnosed with ADHD (CHADD, 2019). In addition, we see in our western culture the increasing epidemic of obesity and diabetes in both adults and children (Santoro, 2013).

It is widely accepted that modern society is more stressful than ever before and that our nervous systems are not built for the 21st century. Leveraging the biopsychosocial perspective, we need to understand that human health and wellbeing is not an individual outcome, but is an interplay of family, community and the culture in which the individual exists. Autoimmune diseases which were once considered to be genetic are now seen to be expressions of living in a stressful environment or culture — such staggering rises in disease rates of this type within the last two decades cannot be attributed to genetics, because genes do not change within a population in such short timeframes. Stress impacts and changes people's (including children of stressed parents) physiology and nervous system (Black, Walker, Fernald, Andersen, DiGirolamo, Lu, McCoy, Fink, Shawar, Shiffman and Devercelli, 2017; Shern, Blanch, and Steverman, 2014; Fricchione, Ivkovic, and Yeung, 2016). Further, research has shown that people who are stressed and emotionally isolated are more likely to develop disease (McEwen and Gianaros, 2010). The latest research in transgenerational epigenetics demonstrates that we cannot separate people from their environment to determine outcomes as almost all diseases are social diseases (Bohacek, Gapp, Saab, Mansuy. 2013). In other words, people's health and wellbeing are highly influenced by the surrounding culture and the people in it. "A culture can be toxic or nourishing," writes Thom Hartmann (Lee, 2015). Increasingly academics and practitioners in a variety of disciplines are discovering that a biopsychosocial perspective of individuals is the only way to address human health,

despite the western view of medicine which separates the mind from the body and the individual from its environment.

How successful is the modern culture when it is shown to be exponentially disrupting individuals, the planet and its resources, leading to all sorts of unsustainable problems? By these standards, we have created a culture that leaves citizens and the environment far short of good health and wellbeing.

## 2.4 Materialism and Wellbeing

Materialism is a value system, embedded in social practices with priority and importance placed on the pursuit of attaining financial prosperity, achieving social status, acquiring numerous possessions as success symbols and displaying the proper culturally defined image whereby the attitudes of comparison and competition are rewarded (Kasser, 2003). Value systems are learned within a culture during the early years of childhood development. When considering cultural beliefs and values in terms of the iceberg model, the part that can be seen above the waves reflects isolated behaviours and outcomes. The submerged part comprises the shared values, beliefs and assumptions. Behavioural changes will likely happen in fits and starts if the underlying values and beliefs are not changed. Values and beliefs such as materialism, which are embedded in the larger cultural landscape are often unconscious drivers of consumption behaviours, making it difficult to change them.

A wide variety of correlational studies indicate that individuals who score higher in materialism experience lower levels of mental and physical wellbeing (Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002; Kasser, 2002). Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996) found that more materialistic individuals showed lower levels of psychological adjustment and social

functioning. Higher materialistic values also predict higher levels of anxiety and unhappiness (Kasser and Ahuvia, 2002) and are associated with lower-quality social relationships (Kasser and Ryan, 1993, 2001).

Consumption-dominated lifestyles or "mindless consumption" practices are shown to be detrimental to personal happiness, quality mental health, financial security, and lasting wellbeing (Quelch and Jocz, 2007). Individuals with materialistic values and attitudes have a lower sense of subjective wellbeing (Bauer, Wilkie, Lee, and Bodenhausen, 2012). Interestingly, cultural materialism even displays effects on individuals who are non-materialistic who are exposed to cues initiating consumerism (Bauer et al., 2012).

Mindless consumption is becoming more mindful (Bahl et al., 2016), evidenced by the growing cultural trend towards awareness of the need for green initiatives, environmental activism and acceptance of mindfulness becoming more mainstream. This could signify a significant opportunity for business and marketing to play a more substantial role in connecting with the current cultural values shifts. Life crises can often serve to awaken individuals to the need for change. Similarly, cultural crises can stimulate societies toward transformation.

Citizen's consumption decisions, choices, mindsets, behaviours, and resulting lifestyles play a vital role in operationalizing the citizen-centric sustainability mandate (Jackson and Michaelis, 2003). In line with Bahl, Milne, Ross, Mick (2016) this paper argues that many of contemporary citizens' consumption decisions are a result of mindlessness — compulsivity, habits, addictions, and compulsions. This paper further argues that modernized western culture over the last century with its incessant promises



of pleasure, happiness, and non-stop distractions along with profit maximization being the primary driver of business is disturbingly responsible for perpetuating mindlessness in its citizens. In other words, the stress-inducing, isolating, lack of true connectedness, materialistic culture is, in part, responsible for many of today's mental and physical health problems not to mention mass environmental problems. Marketing, therefore, may need a new philosophical orientation, one which is more connected to the wellbeing of the consumer and society over the wellbeing of marketing management.

## 2.5 Sustainable Mindful Consumption

Cross-disciplinary research and understanding on how to encourage more sustainable patterns of consumption is significantly lacking, especially for society at large. Integrative studies that consider individual consumption as part of a larger social institution are also slim. Further, marketing theories (and theoretical perspectives) to analyze and describe sustainable consumption practices including demarketing remain underdeveloped. Consumer research suggests that mere citizen education is not enough to reverse or offset the barrage of daily stimuli and messages from the market that drive consumers to consume (Bahl et al., 2016) mindlessly.

Overconsumption or mindless consumption can be defined as repetitive, acquisitive and aspirational consumption that is unaffordable or unacceptable because of its environmental or economic consequences and affects personal and collective wellbeing negatively (Sheth et al., 2011).

Taking responsibility for the health of our society and the planet at large seems an unremitting necessity. We must advocate for radical changes in structures, institutions, and ideologies that keep us mired in a toxic culture that is leaving citizens and the planet

far short of happiness and health. Despite the rhetoric that citizens alone should be responsible for their consumption choices, this paper argues that marketing needs to consider the problems it is perpetuating. Despite this we need to start somewhere and the remainder of this paper will focus on the citizen and how to help citizens make more MC choices, which is defined as "the awareness that arises by paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn 2013, p. 11).

There is currently limited research on the application or role mindfulness could play in facilitating citizens to make better, less habitual reactive emotional choices in the marketplace. However, countless studies on mindfulness as an antidote to other human ailments have shown significant success. This paper suggests that mindfulness could play a pivotal role in supporting citizen's in their pursuit of genuine happiness and wellbeing with a larger objective of caring for the environment with greater agency in the consumption decision-making process. The Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl writes, "There is a space between the stimulus and the response and in that space lies your power to choose". Mindfulness practice has demonstrated its ability to decrease the attitude-behaviour gap and therefore enhance personal agency over typical reactive, unconscious, autopilot responses that are oftentimes unwanted and detrimental behaviours. There is reason to believe that mindfulness holds significant promise in its abilities to support better consumption decisions among citizens.

## 2.6 A Case for Mindfulness in Sustainable Consumption

Mindfulness or Satipatthana, as discussed throughout this paper, is a specific form of meditation that can be defined as "to keep your attention inside" (Lee, and Chez Kuang, 2018). The aim of mindfulness practice is not to empty the mind or reach

subhuman states but to attune to one's inner states (mental, emotional, physical) as one goes through the day. In other words, mindfulness is a mechanism to establish a connection or relationship with oneself (including one's own body) whereby thoughts, behaviours and reactions to both internal and external stimuli can be observed. It is safe to say that most citizens are generally unaware of what their minds are doing and typically live on autopilot. Pulled by both internal and external forces, citizens think, behave and react in ways with a general unawareness and therefore a disconnection from themselves. Mindfulness cultivation supports individuals to be more aware of thought and behavioural patterns and react less to them by appreciating that they are just passing creations of the mind (Brown, Ryan, and Creswell, 2007). In other words, one is better able to manage or control their relationship to negative cognitive-behavioural patterns in the context of a continually changing external environment. In our contemporary technology-pervaded, fast-moving consumer culture with its many distractions and promises of escapes and pleasures ten minutes of mindfulness can seem like a drink of cold water on a desert. For the mindful citizen, this attentiveness means slowing down, becoming more aware and potentially less reactive to the barrage of messages found in the prevailing materialistic society. Therefore, providing an opportunity to engage in activities (like connection to self, others and the environment) that offer more authentic meaning and rewards. After all, attachment, attunement and connection are basic human needs therefore it should not be surprising that cultivating these connections through the mechanism of mindfulness brings certain rewards in an increasingly impersonal society.

The positive effects resulting from mindfulness practices are not controversial among researchers - psychological, neuropsychological, emotional and physiological

impacts that extend well beyond the actual time meditating (Baer, Fischer, and Huss, 2005; Ekman, Davidson, Ricard, and Wallace, 2005; Greenberg, Shapero, Mischoulon and Lazar, 2016). A recent groundbreaking neuroscience study at Harvard demonstrated that mindfulness practices are not merely relaxation techniques, but that they actually produced persistent changes over time in the brain's gray matter (Greenberg et al., 2016). For example, decreased gray-matter density in the amygdala was correlated with mindfulness practice (Greenberg et al., 2016). The amygdala plays an important role in regulating stress, anxiety, compulsivity, and addiction. Mindfulness cultivation was also correlated with increased gray-matter density in the hippocampus which is known to be important for memory and learning as well as in brain structures related to self-awareness, compassion, and introspection. "It is fascinating to see the brain's plasticity and that, by practicing mindfulness, we can play an active role in changing the brain and can increase our wellbeing and quality of life." (Hölzel et al., 2011).

Mindfulness is associated with lower rates of overeating (Anālayo, 2018; Daubenmier, Moran, Kristeller, Acree, Bacchetti, Kemeny, Dallman, Lustig, Grundfeld, Nixon, Milush, Goldman, Laraia, Laugero, Woodhouse, Epel, and Hecht, 2016) as mindful consumers eat slower, generally enjoy food more (Hong, Lishner, and Han 2014), and attend more to satiety cues resulting in increased attention and connection to the body which inhibits further food intake (Van De Veer, Van Herpen, and Van Trijp, 2016). Mindfulness-based smoking cessation programs show success rates five times higher than other programs (Brewer, Mallik, Babuscio, Nich, Johnson, Deleone, 2011). Mindful parenting programs significantly improve family connection and parenting pleasure (Duncan, Coatsworth, and Greenberg, 2009). Similarly, mindfulness is linked

with higher self-esteem, greater satisfaction with one's behaviour, and a lower likelihood of being motivated by approval motives. Authentic non-dualistic connection with the self (mind and body) rather than an object to be evaluated leads to less external approval seeking behaviour (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness supports people in their ability to cope with challenges that are always present in the human experience. In this way, mindfulness operates as an internal stabilizer increasing capacity to regulate emotion during stress, and diminish negative thoughts and emotions (Barner and Barner, 2011; Greenberg et al., 2016). Similarly, mindfulness is linked with higher self-esteem, greater satisfaction with one's behaviour, and a lower likelihood of being motivated by approval motives. Authentic non-dualistic connection with the self (mind and body) rather than an object to be evaluated leads to less external approval seeking behaviour (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness supports people in their ability to cope with challenges that are always present in the human experience. In this way, mindfulness operates as an internal stabilizer increasing capacity to regulate emotion during stress, and diminish negative thoughts and emotions (Barner and Barner, 2011; Greenberg et al., 2016). Adult brains change both functionally and structurally through mindfulness training (Hölzel, Lazar, Gard, Schuman-Olivier, Vago, and Ott, 2011; Greenberg et al., 2016).

Marketing techniques have less impact on citizens that are more aware - more mindful (Pollock, Carrie, Smith, Knowles, and Bruce, 1998). Arguably the more mindful one is, the more content they will be and therefore are less likely to be driven toward consumption as a need satisfier (Brown et al. 2009). People with higher trait mindfulness display higher psychological flexibility and potential for taking action (Silberstein, Tirch, Leahy, and Silberstein, 2012). Mindfulness helps facilitate compatibility between

happiness and ecologically responsible behaviour (Brown and Kasser 2005; Jacob, Jovic, and Brinkerhoff, 2009). When processing consumption decisions, mindful people are more likely to be sensitive and discerning about wastefulness and disposal (Brown et al., 2005). Mindfulness is associated with improved ability to savour, and citizens who exhibit slower consumption satiate at decreased rates (Galak, Kruger, and Loewenstein, 2013; Beaumont, 2011), which can help sustain the reward-based consumption experience longer.

The topic of mindfulness in consumption is complex and has various definitions across a broad range of disciplines. As a cognitive skill, some argue that people differ in their capacity to think mindfully, and hence is viewed as a stable personality trait. Other scholars consider mindfulness as a style or an orientation (Sternberg, 2000). However, this idea has been argued by the latest research suggesting mindfulness, rather than being a "trait" people possess it is a learned, cultivated state over time that causes measurable changes in brain regions associated with memory, sense of self, empathy, and stress (Greenberg et al., 2016). In other words, mindfulness is not a static personality trait found in some people and not in others. A mindful orientation has been described as the convergence a mindful mindset and mindful behaviour that is learned over time rather than static. Mindful mindset is characterized by a sense of caring for self, community, and nature (Bahl, Shalini, and Milne, 2010). Mindful behaviour is expressed by tempering of excesses associated with the three forms of mindless consumption: acquisitive, repetitive, and aspirational (Sheth et al., 2011).

Changes will require that citizens become more empowered in their agency to alter their current consumption patterns for their own personal, social, and economic

wellbeing. Drawing on the customer-centric sustainability (CCS) framework developed by Sheth et al. 's (2011) seminal work "Mindful Consumption: a customer-centric approach to sustainability" this research focuses primarily on attempts to explore and advance how citizens can more effectively make sustainable consumption choices despite significant pressure from the culture.

Replacing mindless consumption with MC will require “disengaging individuals from automatic thoughts, habits, and unhealthy behaviour patterns” (Brown and Ryan 2003, p. 823). Consistent with other conceptions of mindfulness, this paper suggests that MC is an inquiry-based process that supports citizens to be more aware and present in their consumption choices as opposed to operating mindlessly on autopilot. This study deepens the investigation suggesting underlying factors and motivations for mindless consumption being alienation from self, others and nature.

Habitual unconscious routines driven by materialism that are acquisitive and aspirational require more than just education (Bahl et al., 2016). Mindfulness practices such as breathing help people connect to themselves, their body and the present moment as a way to detach from habitual thinking patterns and learn to become less reactive. Non- reactivity is a common desirable experience whereby people are less fixated on consuming and more conscious of consumption related decisions. This is useful because when we are focused on the here and now it allows our mind a break from the incessant stimuli found in the environment. It gives citizens a chance to not react to the consumption-related content in the mind, therefore, offering individuals more agency in their decision-making processes. Mindful consumption holds important implications across a wide range of domains in society: citizen wellbeing, including mental/physical

health and addiction, family and financial wellbeing, community and business engagement, and consumerism and materialism.

## 2.7 Sustainable Consumption Research (SCR)

Thus far, research on the connection between mindfulness and sustainable consumption lacks integration and is fragmented across different disciplines (Kaufmann-Hayoz, Brohmann, Defila, Di Giulio, Dunkelberg, Erdmann, Fuchs, Gölz, Homburg, Matthies, Nachreiner, Tews and Weiß, 2012). There is currently limited research on the application or role mindfulness could play in facilitating citizens to make better, less habitual, reactive, emotional choices in the marketplace — to be more mindful citizens. Only seven empirical research studies currently exist at the interface between mindfulness and sustainable consumption; one qualitative, five quantitative, and one mixed method (Fischer et al., 2017). Some have argued that there are methodological challenges in existing empirical approaches in current SCR publications primarily regarding definitions, sample selection, design and the lack of precision with mediating



and moderating variables (Fischer and Hanley, 2007; Fischer et al., 2017 Schäfer, et al.,

**Table 1 - Summary of Quantitative Empirical Literature on Sustainable Consumption Research (SCR) and Mindfulness**

#	AUTHORS	RESEARCH QUESTION	SAMPLE	METHOD	SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION CONSTRUCT	MINDFULNESS CONSTRUCT
1	Brown and Kasser, 2005	Can people live so as to promote both personal and planetary wellbeing? Can mindfulness explain this relationship?	General population (200) vs. simple lifestyles (200)	Correlational study (SEM with group comparison)	Ecologically responsible behaviour	Receptive attention and awareness
2	Amel et al., 2009	Is mindfulness toward internal and external stimuli positively correlated with sustainable behaviour?	Eco fair visitors (500)	Correlational study (Regression)	Self-perceived greenness	Self-regulating attention and observing sensations
3a	Barbaro and Pickett, 2016	Opera singer, Music Teacher Does connectedness to nature indirectly affect the relationship between mindfulness and pro-environmental behaviour?	Students (360)	Correlational study (Mediation)	Pro-environmental behaviour	Unclear mix intentional awareness / behavioural regulation
3b			General population (296)			
4	Jacob et al., 2009	Is there a significant relationship between mindfulness meditation and environmentally sustainable behavior (ESB)?	Buddhist peace fellow members (829)	Correlational study (Regression)	Environmentally sustainable behaviour	Process dimensions of mindfulness meditation
5	Brinkerhoff and Jacob, 1999	Do back-to-the-land experiences rather relate to mindfulness or church attendance?	Back to landers (565)	Correlational study (Regression)	Back to the land values	Buddhist mindfulness values
6a	Armstrong, 2012	Do associations exist between measured levels of mindfulness and measures connected to wellbeing, consumption, ecological concern, compulsive buying, and meditation?	General population and meditators (n=468)	Correlational study	a) Pro social and pro-environmental behaviour b) Compulsive buying	Holistic approach, based on Kabat- Zinn's definition
6b		What do individuals learning mindfulness experience and what do they notice regarding their consumption behaviour?	University employees (n=9)	Intervention study (only post)		
6c		From such individuals [compulsive consumers], what can be concluded regarding the mechanisms by which mindfulness induces change?	Compulsive shoppers (n=12)	Intervention study (pre post)		

Credit: Fischer, Stanzus, Geiger, Grossman, Schrader, 2017

2012). Table 1 represents the details of existing quantitative published research studies.

Table 2 shows current qualitative studies.

Table 2 - Summary of Qualitative Empirical Literature on Sustainable Consumption Research (SCR) and Mindfulness						
#	AUTHORS	RESEARCH QUESTION	SAMPLE	ANALYTICAL APPROACH	SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION CONSTRUCT	MINDFULNESS CONSTRUCT
6b	Armstrong, 2012	What do individuals learning mindfulness experience, and what do they notice regarding their consumption behavior and in general?	University employees (n=9)	- Thematic analytic approach & Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) - Pre-/post-design	Detailed conceptualization of varying perspectives – focus on pro-social, pro- environmental and lowering consumption	Holistic approach based on Kabat- Zinn 's definition
6c		If compulsive buyers are learning mindfulness, what do they experience? Are measureable levels of factors associated with mindfulness, compulsive buying, psychological wellbeing, sense of self, or shopping outcomes altering in such individuals?	Compulsive shoppers (n=12)			
7	Essen and Mårtensson, 2014	How do young adults use their lived bodily experience of organic food as the starting point for lifestyle exploration? How do they use these experiences as a life strategy for well-being and vitality?	Organic food consumers (18- 35 years) (n=10)	Descriptive phenomenological psychological method	Non specified use of the term “organic food consumers”	Concentration on mind-body awareness / sensitivity to nutrition-related body sensations

Credit: Fischer, Stanzus, Geiger, Grossman, Schrader, 2017

Four potential mechanisms of mindfulness for MC have been revealed in the current empirical literature: to disrupt routines; to promote more congruence with regard to the attitude-behaviour gap; to nurture non-materialistic values to enhance wellbeing; and to foster pro-social behaviour (Fischer and Hanley, 2007;

According to the theme of disruption of routines, the findings (Table 3) illustrate mindfulness is a supportive modality to disrupt people’s consumption routines and patterns (Armstrong, 2012) as it helps individuals to consider their behaviours more consciously (Amel et al., 2009). In line with the theme of promoting congruence, Armstrong (2012) revealed that as a result of mindfulness individuals were more apt to behave more congruently with their attitudes and behaviours. In support of the theme of non-materialist values, mindfulness tended to be a significant predictor of subjective wellbeing with a negative relationship to materialistic values and leading to an increase in values related to caring for the wider ecological and social worlds related to

**Table 3 - Quantitative and Qualitative Findings based on Themes**

#	DISRUPTION OF ROUTINES	CONGRUENCE	NON-MATERIALISTIC VALUES	PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CONSTRUCT
1	n/a	n/a	Mindfulness and intrinsic values are seen as joint predictors for environmentally responsible behaviour and subjective wellbeing	n/a
2	Mindfulness helps to consider behavioural option consciously	(discussed, but not measured)	n/a	n/a
3	n/a	n/a	Mindfulness increases connectedness to nature, this in turn enhances pro environmental behaviour	n/a
4	n/a	n/a	Environmentally sustainable and mindfulness meditation seen as two related predictors of subjective wellbeing	n/a
5	n/a	n/a	Mindfulness is one expression of downshifting and simple back-to-the-land values	n/a
6a (quant)	Mindfulness disrupts compulsive consumption patterns	n/a	Mindfulness negatively related to material values and positively related to life satisfaction	n/a
6bc (qual)	Mindfulness leads to less compulsive consumption patterns	Greater likelihood to engage in behaviour more in line with their attitudes	Strengthening of values caring for the wider ecological and social worlds in consumption decisions. Negative effects on materialistic values Improved self-regulation, increased overall awareness as well as specifically with ones own body and compulsive buying related behaviour	Rise in reported empathy and moral concern for others, beyond the close social circles of participants
7	n/a	Mindful eating broadened thought-action repertoire and stimulated embodiment	Increase in well-being as well as vitality and resilience	Rise in perceived self-compassion

Credit: Fischer, Stanzus, Geiger, Grossman, Schrader, 2017

consumption decisions (Armstrong, 2012; Jacob et al, 2009; Brown et al., 2005; Barbaro and Pickett, 2016). Relating to the fourth theme of pro-social behaviours, Armstrong (2012) reported that mindfulness cultivators showed a marked increase in empathy and moral concern for others outside of their close circles.

Notably, six of the seven studies measured non-materialistic values. Only two measured disruption of routines, two considered congruence and two considered pro-social behaviour. This existing research is preliminary support for further research at the nexus of mindfulness and sustainable consumption. With this in mind, more integrative

research across the four themes is needed as the impact of mindfulness is not restricted to behavioural changes but rather encompasses complex cognitive-behavioural shifts in the individual. There are mental disruption of routines as well as behavioural ones which are required for successful long term behavioural change. For example, mindless consumption can be considered a persistent, embedded cognitive-behavioural pattern that requires shifts that go deeper than merely changing the behaviour itself.

This research study argues that mindless consumption is a citizen, societal and cultural issue and is an attempt to extend and consolidate the existing SCR research and include the broader social and cultural aspects of mindless consumption.

This paper was inspired by seminal conceptual work across various fields. Most of the current quality literature exists in disciplinary silos and is thereby unintegrated and therefore limiting the ability to find solutions to pressing problems. Through a citizen, societal and environmental lens, this paper attempts to explore, elucidate and integrate theoretical perspectives relevant to the pursuit of encouraging greater sustainable consumption practices among citizens —namely MC as proposed by Sheth et al., (2011), Bahl et al., (2016) and Fisher et al., (2017). This paper is the author's attempt to generate new knowledge and insight into an important under-researched topic by integrating multidisciplinary research using an exploratory qualitative phenomenological research method with an attempt to better understand how mindless consumers are moved toward being more mindful citizens.

Q1 — Explore evidence on how citizens' behaviour and attitudes can be more effectively influenced towards sustainable consumption, through the cultivation of

mindfulness — how do individuals go from being mindless consumers to mindful citizens?

Q2 — Explore the interface between overconsumption, materialism, and mindfulness, drawing on existing researched themes.

Q3 — Integrate and advance multidisciplinary research streams (consumer behaviour, psychology, sociology, and business) as a way to gain greater insight into the phenomenon of MC.

Q4 — Advance the concept of how mindfulness is a potential antidote to mindless consumption, including advancing the case for using business as a power for good.

## Chapter 3

### Research Methods

#### 3.1 Introduction

An exploratory qualitative research method is particularly relevant for research topics that are new or have attracted relatively little research or academic theory to date (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). The connection between SCR and mindfulness can be considered an immature area of research (Fischer et al., 2017), and therefore, an exploratory study method was selected. Developing an understanding of a social or individual phenomenon (exploratory studies) is appropriate where limited knowledge exists in the literature.

Qualitative research attempts to better understand, interpret, and assess phenomena in terms of meaning (Chromczynski, 2011). Studying things in their natural

environment facilitates the development of qualification and meaning. In-depth interviews with informants are a common data collection method for exploratory research (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). In-depth interviews with natives are a standard data collection method for exploratory research, and inductive styles of research are frequently used, although they can also be integrated with a deductive approach (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). They begin with data collection, followed by analysis, which elucidates developments in generalizations to explain features of a social phenomenon (Blaikie, 2000). Grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) is used as an approach to code and analyze data (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). Content analyses assist in uncovering themes that recur and require further exploration. Organizing qualitative data into intelligible narratives of lived experience are necessary analytic exercises (Edmondson and McManus, 2007).

As mindfulness denotes awareness, a research assumption is being made that the more conscious and "aware" citizens are of their consumption-related behaviour patterns, the more they will be able to exert agency in those decisions. Likewise, the more mindless, unconscious and compulsive citizens are, the more they will mindlessly consume. As researchers are called on to advance the sustainability mandate (Jackson and Michaelis, 2003) this study attempts to make a unique contribution to this new and emerging field.

A spring-board for this study is based on Sheth et al.'s (2011) seminal work where it is stated that the "nature of (the) relationship between a caring mindset and temperate consumption behaviour ... needs to be investigated" (p. 34), but the outstanding question, which is unclear, is how to consider the relationship between

behaviour and the myriad of personal factors related to behaviour. The study extends this to how to consider the link between mindless consumption and the variety of personal and social factors related to the behaviour.

### 3.2 Objectives

The objectives of this study include the following:

- Q1 — Explore evidence on how citizens' behaviour and attitudes can be more effectively influenced towards sustainable consumption, through the cultivation of mindfulness — how do individuals go from being mindless consumers to mindful citizens?
- Q2 — Explore the interface between overconsumption, materialism and mindfulness.
- Q3 — Integrate and advance multidisciplinary research streams (consumer behaviour, psychology, sociology, and business) to gain greater insight into the phenomenon of consumerism and overconsumption.
- Q4 — Advance the concept of how sustainable or mindful consumption (MC) is a potential antidote to mindless consumption in society and in the marketplace and more broadly, advance the case for using business as a power for good.

### 3.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore, understand mindful consumption from a citizen, social, and environmental perspective whereby materialistic beliefs and attitudes, loss of connection, and the prevailing social institutions are contributing factors. Mindfulness has been proposed as a tool that supports citizens to more effectively be

guided towards increased wellbeing and sustainability (Kaufmann-Hayoz et al., 2012), which has implications across a variety of domains. A recent SLR proposed four themes representing outcomes in which mindfulness could activate: reduce materialistic values, increase internal congruence (decrease the attitude-behaviour gap), disrupt habitual routines, and promote pro-social behaviours (Fischer et al., 2017). This study will explore the data through these themes and offer new insights into the phenomenon.

In order to glean insights into the experiences of citizens who have successfully eliminated or curbed detrimental behaviours (decreased the attitude-behaviour gap) through mindfulness practices, this research study employs in-depth, semi-structured interviews with people who have already been successful in the long-term (for many years) at eliminating harmful behaviours through practices of mindfulness. Through the in-depth exploration of how citizens have effectively decreased the attitude-behaviour gap in a particular area of life, it can then be generalized or ported to other issues like mindless consumption.

### 3.4 Research Philosophy

This study will employ an exploratory, phenomenological approach to this investigation as a means of generating meaning, insight, and understanding through rich case study description. Qualitative research was selected for its significant exploratory value to assess the lived experience of consumption, materialism and mindfulness (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). As mentioned, the connection between mindfulness and sustainable consumption is a highly unresearched phenomenon, as Fisher et al. 's., (2017) systematic literature review reveals there are only seven empirical studies done in this area. Qualitative approaches are most effective in uncovering the nature of a problem



or phenomenon; exploring topics where little information exists and developing new variables for further research (Chromczynski, 2011).

### 3.5 Research Approach

Typically, exploratory studies use an inductive research approach to explain social life and phenomenon whereby limited knowledge exists (Blaikie, 2000); however, it can be integrated with deductive approaches. A recent SLR (Fisher et al., 2017) suggests support for the assumed potentials of mindfulness grouped into the following four themes: the disruption of routines; congruence; non-materialistic values and wellbeing; and pro-social behaviour and therefore this study will assess these themes deductively, as well as, build new insights, theories and themes inductively.

### 3.6 Research Strategy

This research uses a select sample representative of a social group of citizens who have successfully eliminated (over an extended time) a persistent problem behaviour such as drinking, drugs or overeating, that was detrimental to themselves, their families, their communities and the planet at large. Secondly, this sample identified as having some form of experience with the cultivation of mindfulness, which is one of the focal points of this case study investigation. It was necessary for the purposes of this investigation to assess individuals who have mindfulness experience in order to explore factors and variables related to the elimination of self-defeating behaviours. Lastly, it is assumed that this sample is more "conscious and aware," based solely on past lived experience and, therefore, able to offer insight into the phenomenon being researched.

### 3.7 Research Conduct

Eight Canadian participants ranging in age from 29 - 61 years (four males and four females) agreed to be interviewed. Each participant identified as having experience

Table 4 - Summary of Participants			
CODE	ETHNICITY	AGE	GENDER
P1	Caucasian, white	61	Male
P2	Caucasian, white	51	Female
P3	Caucasian, white	45	Female
P4	Caucasian, white	40	Male
P5	Caucasian, white	31	Male
P6	Caucasian, white	52	Female
P7	Caucasian, white	53	Female
P8	Caucasian, white	29	Male

with different forms of mindfulness over differing lengths of time and had successfully eliminated a persistent alcohol or drug habit for ten years or longer (see Table 4).

Each interview was approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length. Six interviews were done face-to-face and held in places that were chosen by the participant. Two interviews were done over the phone. Four themes found in previous research served as guiding posts for the interviews. The organic questioning of the participant's life experience attempted to uncover and reveal factors or variables underlying reasons or drivers of overconsumption along with questions around how and why mindfulness was a factor in achieving successful behavioural change. Other themes were explored amidst the subject's narrative such as their relationships to businesses they engaged with and sustainability and green initiatives. The interview guide included questions on: the interviewee's background; age and gender; what it was like, what happened and what it is like now in relation to the elimination of a behaviour that was self-defeating or detrimental; attitudes and experiences with materialism; direct questions along with

loosely based ones from the Material Values Scale (MVS) (see Appendix 1); reported changes in values over time; feelings, behaviours and experiences with overconsumption; direct questions from the Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS) (see Appendix 2); messages from the culture around mindless consumption; cultural influences and reported challenges to more sustainable behaviours; mindfulness experiences and practices; reported physical, psychological and social results; direct questions from The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (see Appendix 3); Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (see Appendix 4); and experiences and attitudes with businesses in society.

### 3.8 Data Handling and Collection

This study begins with data collection, followed by an analysis which elucidates themes and generalizations to explain and understand aspects of mindfulness and MC as both a personal and a social phenomenon (Blaikie, 2000). Interview data from the participants was collected through recordings (with consent) and transcribed.

Data was coded and analyzed through grounded theory (Edmondson and McManus, 2007; Corbin and Strauss, 2008) and a content analyses via NVIVO was used to assist in grouping themes that recur or align with previous research and/or require further exploration. Organizing qualitative data into intelligible narratives of lived experience are necessary analytic exercises (Edmondson and McManus, 2007).

To maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, each interviewee was assigned a code (see Table 4). Codes are used to show quotes from the interviewees and to precisely and accurately present their perspectives.

### 3.9 Issues of Data Quality

As a result of studying individuals from a distinct representative group data quality is accounted for through credibility of lived experiences — what it was like, what happened and what it is like now. Findings in this study hold strength of generalizability specifically to sustainable consumption patterns because each of the participants in the study have successfully overcome (over many years) challenging behaviours through the supporting mechanism of mindfulness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

#### 3.9.1 Reliability and Validity

Qualitative research has long been criticized as being anecdotal, biased and lacking quality. Research concepts of reliability and validity are typically connected with quantitative research; however, they are becoming increasingly important concepts in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Because qualitative research differs contextually to quantitative, there is a need to redefine reliability and validity for qualitative studies (Golafshani, 2003). Assessing the data for reliability (is the study replicable) and validity (did the study measure what it was intended to measure) are generated through a quantitative lens it is argued that a different paradigm is required in qualitative research to determine reliability and validity (Kuhn, 1970). Precision, credibility, trustworthiness and transferability are better criteria in evaluating the findings of qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). In this context, the two research approaches are essentially different paradigms (Kuhn, 1970).

Precision and transferability of this study can be confirmed and underscored through the general consistency of data revealed in the participants' narratives. The study's findings are easily seen as applicable to wider audiences. Additionally, the data

reported is consistent with themes postulated in other research and therefore can be considered to hold a degree of reliability.

The honesty, genuineness and trustworthiness of the research data (validity through a qualitative lens) was contingent on the thoroughness with which the interviews were conducted, the niche sample selection, the trust built between the researcher and participant and the depth of the authentic narratives conveyed in the findings.

### 3.10 Ethical Considerations

Participant engagement and consent were collected through a website created by the author ([www.mindful-consumption.org](http://www.mindful-consumption.org)) where information about the study, consent form downloads, general guidelines on confidentiality, and how the data would be used was presented. Prior to the interview guidelines were reiterated and participants were reminded that it was optional to respond to specific questions as well as withdraw from the study at any time. Sensitivities and considerations around the personal nature of the questions were held in high regard, and special care was taken post interview. The anonymity of the participants' names was respected as was strict confidentiality regarding all data. Place of interview was considered in terms of where the participant felt most comfortable, which was mostly in their own homes. Relationships were established whereby continued dialogue occurred outside of the official interviews. The interviewer has a background in psychology. The participants were able to understand and trust that the research was worthwhile. These things all contributed to validity, reliability and the importance of regarding the humanness in scientific endeavours.

### 3.11 Limitations

This study has certain limitations. Trustworthiness as a test of validity may have been stronger if more participants involved in the study. The exploration of mindfulness proved to be complex and difficult during interviews as conveying subjective experience can be challenging. In general, each of the participants was well-acquainted with mindfulness and, therefore, generalizations with beginners may not offer the same strength of results in terms of cognitive-behavioural changes. The sample represented members of society who perhaps have suffered more severe consequences than general citizens in the population and, therefore, they may have more of the necessary motivation to make the leap to more MC behaviours than those who have suffered less dire consequences. As seen in the findings, crisis brought about changes in the participants' lives.

Additionally, the sample of participants have learned to eliminate a harmful behaviour and, when it comes to general consumption, moderation is required as opposed to complete abstinence. Despite this sample not being totally representative of society, this limitation seems inconsequential as the findings demonstrate that whether it be by elimination or moderation, the underlying factor of authentic connection with self, others and nature through mindfulness offers the same results.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

## 4.1 Introduction

This section addresses the four research questions through the synthesis of four conceptualized themes which are postulated in a recent systematic literature review (SLR) on sustainable consumption and mindfulness, as well as, seminal conceptual works in the field: disruption of routines; greater congruence with regard to the attitude-behaviour gap; the cultivation of non-materialistic values to enhance well-being; and the fostering of pro-social behaviours (Fischer et al., 2017).

The four themes as being potential outcomes of mindfulness practice and antidotes to mindless consumption are discussed in this chapter and illustrated in Table 5, followed by a separate framework (See Table 6) synthesized and analyzed contextually according to three more broad factors of MC; citizen impact, societal impact, and environmental impact.

The themes used to guide this research tended to be restrictive and were too narrowly focused on the rewards or outcomes of mindfulness, rather than underlying causes. Hence, the first section, “A Case for Reconnection”, presents the unique findings in narrative format with themes interwoven throughout.

## 4.2 A Case for Re-Connection

This study confirms that long term mindfulness cultivation mediates the motivation (mental aspects) and compulsion (behavioural aspects) to mindlessly consume through the four themes of disruption of routines; congruence; lessening of materialistic values; and increasing prosocial behaviours (Fischer et al., 2017) (See Table 5). What has been unclear in previous studies, however, is why or what underlying factors are related

to mindless consumption and therefore why does mindfulness provide a specific anecdote.

Participants revealed that whether it is the consumption of food, shoes, houses, cars, alcohol, gadgets, news, online videos, gaming, movies or information, more is never enough to offer an authentic sense of wellbeing. P8 reports:

After years of spending, I became aware that materials, possessions, or things do not bring me happiness. They don't fill the void...I always wanted more of material things, whether that was clothes, cars, furniture, jewellery, whatever, money. But when I started practicing mindfulness and being part of community, I felt a different sense of happiness. A void that has been filled by spirituality and connection, and I was beginning to feel free of not wanting material things, that there is more to life than just having things.

Participants revealed in different ways that their mindless consumption patterns were an attempt to solve an inner problem, an attempt to feel better or to reward themselves, as P6 describes:

I wanted to change how I felt, I wanted to reward myself and feel better. There are so many demands along with the anxiety and worry. I established a pattern of looking on the outside to calm the inside through consumption.

Mindless consumption patterns can be seen as an attempt by citizens to solve a problem. The problem as it has been revealed here is that of alienation from self, others and ultimately the earth. Mindfulness practice offers a bridge to re-connecting with self first, and which then emanates outward to others and then the environment. It does this through facilitating disruption of routines, congruence, lessening of materialistic values and increasing prosocial behaviours, but more importantly it satisfies a biopsychosocial need. One that goes increasingly unmet in a frenetic modern culture — attachment, attunement and connection. It is important to note here that the term “connection” refers to connection to body and presence, with respect to self-connection. In respect to



connection with others it refers to face to face, eye contact and attunement which have been shown to distinctly alter the brains hormonal and nervous apparatus (Maté, 2006). We know that consumption patterns are embedded in the larger social conventions of what is considered normal and that living in an affluent society with overwhelming abundance we are encultured to consume mindlessly (Fischer et al., 2007; Schäfer et al., 2012). Regardless of whether this behaviour is healthy or not, it often remains unquestioned, traditional, social practice (Shove, 2003). Mindless consumption allows us to substitute satisfaction gained from authentic relationships for satisfaction from a combination of consumption and the prevailing social narrative, leaving people short of wellbeing. We know that if attachment and connection needs throughout an individual's lifetime are not optimal, the individual suffers and gets sick. Being alienated from a genuine connection with self, community and the environment has been seen as contributing to an increase in a variety of stress-related illnesses like depression, anxiety, chronic pain, and autoimmune diseases, which have increased 50% in the last decade alone (Maté, 2006). This is evidenced by P6:

Life is more simple now I don't feel like I am walking around deficient needing more of everything to keep up an image. I am more healthy both physically and psychologically, and I get sick less often. I also don't require as many medications to just be okay.

The need for connection with self and others encompasses both mind and body. Living exclusively in the mind or on autopilot restricts our ability to be present (one of the benefits of mindfulness) meaning we are limited in our ability to connect with ourselves, others and nature. When we are disconnected (always thinking), alienated and rarely present, it is difficult to live congruently aligning our deepest needs with our behaviour (congruence) as P2 describes:

I was overwhelmed with a brain that was seeking, security, or safety; it all comes down to security and safety. And I have really come to recognize that. It was driving my consumerism; I have to have this house, I have to look this way, I have to act this way, in order to get that sense of safety, security, and belonging. So where the mindfulness came in is it gave me the ability to quiet my mind. It gave me the ability to be attached to my breath. Now, in the beginning, my brain was going a mile a minute, like going crazy.

The mind with its constant chatter of worries and desires builds up a momentum whereby it seeks relief. It is trained that way. Contemporary modern society is frenetic, and racing through the day caught up in the demands of getting ahead or even just staying afloat is commonplace. Work, commitments, deadlines, and distractions mean the mind is on overdrive creating stress and anxiety. Relief is needed and is often acted upon through a pattern of continual consumption. This is where mindfulness can be a tool helping to create a space in which to unplug and calm both the mind and body. As the participants cultivated increased connection through mindfulness the drive to consume lessened. P1 describes it this way:

I never went back to materialism but I would have flashes of "wouldn't it be nice to have a bunch of money and live a normal life like everyone else" or "wouldn't it be nice to win the lottery" or "wouldn't it be nice to live in a big house"... I had those thoughts on a regular basis every time I saw an ad on TV, but I stopped acting on those thoughts. My interests changed, and I began to think more about how I could be of service to people instead of thinking about myself all the time.

Training our minds can be likened to a commitment to physical exercise for our bodies. The mind, like the body requires a form of training in order to slow it down and move it out of continual fight or flight mode. Mindfulness practice does exactly that, as P7 reports:

I engage mindfulness by breathing and drawing back from the chatter. I still have many problems with on-going chatter in my head, nonsense chatter as far as I can tell, and pulling back and breathing and focusing —

focusing on what I am doing right at this moment. I only have the one moment, and I only have the one day to do the best that I can.

Not only are citizens struggling with disconnection to themselves and others, they are similarly alienated from businesses — the organ of society. Disconnection and mistrust are chronicled throughout P1 — P8’s responses. Answers to questions like “Do you feel businesses have your best interests at heart” reveal statements like:

The greed on the part, of certainly corporations of any sort, is to amass ever more wealth for either the direct owners or for the shareholders or for the underpinnings of commerce ... they are still stuck in the mindset that to drive consumers to ever more consumption, to keep improving that bottom line.

I find this in my interactions with grocery stores that I frequent, although they do put on a facade of having my best interests at heart, but mostly only in terms of what they can make me believe what they are doing for me so that I will consume more. It is the same with every other institution.

Businesses are insincere. They are so over the top cheesy, and much of it also does not relate to me, my lifestyle, or the type of person that I am.

It is like there is a disconnect between my real life and my Facebook life.

Mindlessly consuming, as evidenced by the responses above and in Table 6, is not meeting individuals’ needs and is affording further disconnection and isolation.

Mindfulness is not a panacea to the world’s ills, one of its benefits, however, is to help individuals identify what may be missing in their lives. These findings have important implications in terms of wellbeing individually and collectively.

#### 4.2 Disruption of Routines

Responses for P1— P8, related to the theme of disruption of routines, (Table 5, column 1) support previous research study outcomes that mindfulness practices cause an on-going weakening of attachment to habitual behaviours, not out of willfully altering the

behaviour but more as a result of a changed caring mindset — a value system shift that is more orientated towards selflessness (Armstrong, 2012; Amel et al., 2009). In other words, MC patterns are more closely linked to the shifts in materialistic values (mental disruption of routines) than just simply disruption of behavioural changes. Therefore, it is argued that “disruption of routines” need to be delineated into two subsets: mental and behavioural routines (Table 6) as they are interdependent constructs it helps to more clearly understand their interplay.

These findings concur with other literature that one of the pivotal benefits of mindfulness is disengagement of automatic thoughts, habits, and unhealthy behaviour patterns (Armstrong 2012; Amel et al. 2009; Brown et al., 2003). As a result, the citizen is increasingly freer to make different choices. Therefore, MC on a variety of levels requires first the awareness of mental "autopilot" processes and then on-going attention directed towards behavioural consumption patterns.

I do breathwork when I am stressed and in my head, fixated on something in my life. It tends to help make me less reactive to the everyday challenges that life throws at me. I feel the need to be present with my son and not always on autopilot.

Living on autopilot through memory or futurizing is primarily a function of "living in the mind" as opposed to experiencing life in an embodied way — through both body and mind. Through mindfulness practice the participants became more aware around not living in the mind and thus better able to manage the normalized onslaught of thinking patterns (autopilot) which typically leads to unconscious harmful behaviours like mindless consumption.

It helps train the mind not to be so reactive to the millions of stimuli in the environment. It also helps get me into my body and experience life in a more simple way. Less disturbed, more content.

Therefore, both mental and behavioural disruption of routines were necessary processes involved in the transformation. In enhancing awareness of "potentially accessible cognitive-behavioural processes underlying consumption that have become relatively automatic" (Rosenberg, 2005: 108), mindfulness facilitates increased deliberate choices. P7 states:

Previously, I was on autopilot. I just did whatever with very little thought; I just did it. Now I plan my day. Now, like, I know, today, I am going to do some woodworking. I am going to do some gardening; I am going to walk my dog in nature. Deliberately. It is a deliberate conscious act.

Just as mindless consumption is a cognitive-behavioural pattern established over long periods mindfulness practice also requires on-going cultivation. Training our minds towards increased wellbeing and thus, greater sustainability outcomes can be likened to consistent physical exercise for our bodies. Disruption of routines is a necessary process required to alter unwanted behaviour patterns and the more profoundly ingrained or unconscious a behaviour pattern, the more difficult it is to change that behaviour. There is widespread recognition that mindfulness practice enhances awareness, empowering individuals to be more aware and be in a better position to change previously unconscious habits. Grossman et al., (2004) referred to this cognitive process as the ability to turn off the autopilot mode.

### 4.3 Congruence

Congruence represents the alignment between one's attitude and specific behaviours. It is commonly referred to as the attitude-behaviour gap, knowledge-action gap, or awareness-behaviour gap (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). It is the extent to which one knows and believes a behaviour is harmful or detrimental but is individually

unable, incapable or unwilling to adjust the behaviour accordingly. For example, understanding or knowing that recycling is a good practice for the environment but continuing not to recycle.

Not unlike other studies, participants in this study explained how the cultivation of mindfulness was an essential factor in supporting them to align their behaviour with their beliefs and attitudes effectively (Table 5, column 2). Awareness and attention gained through mindfulness practices substantially decrease the attitude-behaviour gap (Ericson et al., 2014; Rosenberg, 2005), which is in line with what Armstrong (2012) found. Chatzisarantis and Hagger (2007) suggest that the attentional aspects of mindfulness are associated with the narrowing of the "attitude-behaviour-gap" in consumer behaviour research by aligning participants' intentions to engage in health-related behaviours with their actual behaviour.

Exactly how this happens has not been well understood in the literature. Findings here suggest as a result of reconnection through regular mindfulness practice an entire mental shift in values empowered P1- P8 to make the necessary changes in behaviour. Society rewards behaviours that promote disconnection — workaholism, competitiveness, individualism — and thus, citizens' ability to exert agency and choose a lifestyle that promotes personal, social, and environmental wellbeing has become increasingly impaired. Mindfulness may be an antidote to this. P2 states:

That was the other thing that mindfulness helped me with was really getting clear on my values, and living, figuring out a life that was true to that, versus worrying about what anybody else thought.

8 out of 8 participants reported the necessity of ongoing mindfulness cultivation as being part of a discipline or practice in order to gain a sense of sustained wellbeing. Seminal work by (Hölzel et al., 2011) demonstrated that long-term meditation caused

more profound changes in the brain's grey matter as well as operating on other brain centers compared to beginners.

Each participant, while practicing a variety of mindfulness techniques, reported a daily discipline.

I spend time in versions of meditation every single day. I end my day, in thanks and gratitude. It helps me find my content. Otherwise, I can quickly become irritable and discontent - lacking gratitude for what I do have as opposed to thinking I need things to fix my current reality..." (P8)

I have to practice over and over and over again because I find when I get busy, those things can fall away very easily, or I forget. (P7)

These are the sorts of practices that enable me to be emotionally regulated and balanced inside. They are just little rituals I do in the morning and at night. Then through the day, what I'm trying to do currently, is be present. I'll go walk my dog and practice being in the moment and being grateful. (P2)

#### 4.4 Nonmaterial Values and Wellbeing

Mindfulness practices help individuals clarify personal values and enhance the role of nonmaterial values in people's lives as seen in previous studies — Brown and Kasser, 2005; Barbaro and Pickett, 2016, Armstrong, 2012 and Essen and Martensson, 2014. It is widely accepted that materialistic values, attitudes, and behaviours are inversely related to happiness and wellbeing (Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002; Kasser et al., 2014).

Each participant chronicled materialistic attitudes and drives (Table 5; column 3), which resulted in delusion, feelings of alienation, selfishness and unhappiness. Attempts to resolve these effects of materialism lead to even more destructive consumption behaviours:

I realized I couldn't build a life that would keep me sober based on materialism. It had to be based on my inner sense of self and my devotion

to things like mindfulness, because mindfulness played a part in becoming less materialistic. It was a side benefit of becoming mindful. (P1)

If I had the right car, and I had the right girlfriend or if I had the right wife and if I had the right house, then my wife would be happy. You know I thought if I just made more money, then I could get more things that would keep my wife or those around me happier and by extension, I would also be happier. Yeah, but it certainly did not prove itself to be true anyway. Even when I was making far more money than I am now, that didn't really help me be happier. It was much more stressful. (P1)

In six of the seven SCR studies (Table 3) mindfulness was negatively related to material values and was positively linked to other values such as caring for the wider ecological and social world. P1, P2, P4 and P7 reported a less selfish orientation and a need for a greater sense of connection to a larger whole (Table 5; column 3), thinking of others more, and not subjectively considering themselves as alienated, isolated individuals with their own problems.

I am striving to be less materialistic because I know that "things" only bring temporary relief or happiness, and they don't actually resolve the problem. I've learned to become less attached to things and value experiences over of possessions. (P5)

It was just something that slowly evolved over time. And that's where I want to be now, I want to be more mindful, more slow, more peaceful, more observant, more helpful to others. I don't want to be a taker; I want to be a giver in this world now. That's one of my big goals. (P7)

Engaging more in authentic relationships with people has been a result of having more time... less time spent on selfish futile endeavours like "getting ahead" for example. (P6)

...that is all about service. And that's where the connection, and that's where that fulfillment comes from, is giving it away. And so taking that mentality, and that teachings about unity, too. We're all part of a big, big world here. That principle informs the rest of my life. (P2)



## 4.5 Pro-social Behaviours

While pro-social behaviours could be considered “connection” it was revealed to be more fundamental than what other studies consider. Pro-social behaviours in the context of the other SCR studies was about an after effect — demonstrating a rise in empathy and concern for others (Armstrong, 2012). Table 5, column 4 reports similar findings, however, more fundamentally, the connection to self that mindfulness facilitates results in individuals’ basic human needs being attended to and, therefore, leads to an increased ability to be more open and present with others and nature. Additionally, this study suggests that pro-social behaviours and mindfulness practice are a reciprocal exchange, whereby community and connection support mindfulness and vice versa. Pro-social behaviours and connection acted as synergistic, non-consumerist satisfiers for the deepest of human needs (Ericson et al., 2014). As a result of an increased caring mindset from the satisfaction of human needs there was a naturally reduced aspiration to consume mindlessly and more significant concern for how personal consumption patterns affect the environment. This caring mindset was not previously present in these individuals’ pre-mindfulness practices and the active pursuit of fulfillment through community engagement. P7 states:

Now, like if I have a need, and it draws me into the community, like there's, I have many types of, of communities in my life, you know, sure, like spiritual communities, my work community, my friends community, and if I have a need and I can't fulfill that I actually go out of myself into these communities, and people help me. As opposed to reacting to that need by buying and consuming. It is a much richer way to live. But I had to learn how to do that.

And I have found before my life was really stressful when I was consuming, and I have much more of a peace now. And I have a lot less financially less. And even things in my life - the last I have, the more peaceful and connected I feel to people and the world around me. So I'm trying to be very conscious of when I actually purchase something like,

where did this come from? Who made this? How did it get here, where's it going to end up when I finish with it?

Table 6 offers a summary of these findings based on theme.

#### 4.6 Citizen, Social and Environmental Wellbeing

Table 7 illustrates transformative outcomes of MC, which provide important insights and clues in three broad domains — citizen, social and environmental wellbeing.

Table 5 - Qualitative Findings Related to Proposed Themes

P	DISRUPTION OF ROUTINES	CONGRUENCE	NON-MATERIALISTIC VALUES	PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	MINDFUL (SUSTAINABLE) CONSUMPTION
P1	<p><b>Mental Routines</b>                      “I was seized with a huge mental burden in that for the first year of attempting to quit smoking crack and drinking. I probably played out scenarios about drinking, at least 100 times a day. So to pull myself out of that I had to be mindful of my conscious real life, and not memories, and not ego. So I had to do that on such an ongoing basis that I think of course, it became embedded. It had to become a way of life.”</p> <p><b>Behavioural Routines</b>                      “I never went back to materialism but I would have flashes of “wouldn’t it be nice to have a bunch of money and live a normal life like everyone else” or “wouldn’t it be nice to win the lottery” or “wouldn’t it be nice to live in a big house”... I had those thoughts on a regular basis every time i saw an ad on TV but i stopped acting on those thoughts.”</p>	<p>“The lifestyle my wife and I were trying to achieve did not align with my inherited belief system.”</p> <p>“..eventually, things started to filter in, by no means consciously, that there is a different way, now I was seized with a choice of finding a radically different way to live. And it couldn’t be based on anything that I had any idea that I had before, because those ideas, were all contributing factors were ended up at the end. So I more or less unconsciously started to build on mindfulness from that point.”</p>	<p>“...and that developed into mindfulness where it no longer seemed important to have things Having more stuff.”</p> <p>“...I don’t think that way anymore. How well I am doing in life has not much to do with the things I own. It used to be that way for me but not anymore.”</p> <p>“It has never made me happy to purchase things. In fact it stresses me out.”</p> <p>“I realized I couldn’t build a life that would keep me sober based on materialism. It had to be based on my inner sense of self and my devotion to things like mindfulness, because mindfulness played a part in becoming less materialistic. It was a side benefit of becoming mindful.”</p> <p>“I couldn’t build a life that would keep me sober based on materialism. It had to be based on my inner sense of self and my devotion to things like mindfulness, because mindfulness played a part in becoming less materialistic. It was a side benefit of becoming mindful.”</p>	<p>“My interests changed and I began to think more about how I could be of service to people instead of thinking about myself all the time.”</p> <p>“..it definitely was affecting my relationships in general, because our world ended up getting smaller and smaller. Because one of the primary affects on our relationships together as a couple was the fact that I worked two jobs, so I had zero time for anything else including relationships. Then I was also working 46 hours every night, seven nights a week. There was not a lot of time to do socializing with other people.”</p> <p>“It translates into behaviour ... generally speaking it is trying to not think of myself, you know, to practice selflessness, and I find selflessness, gratitude, mindfulness, they’re all part of the same continuum.”</p> <p>“So I’m very conscious of trying to be of service to others.”</p>	<p>“My lifestyle, by consequence was reduced to a very small point where I was almost a non-consumer. And I had to sort of work my way back from there, not in terms of consumerism, but in terms of building on mindfulness and the spiritual experience in order to keep myself sober.”</p> <p>“Mindfulness came about as an extension or an adjunct to my spiritual practice. To be conscious of how my buying habits contributed to the rest of the world.”</p> <p>“I got the impression that maybe it wasn’t such a good idea to buy things that were made in sweatshops. I became conscious of that and I try where I can to avoid those kind of behaviors.. and to buy ethically sourced food and probably the single biggest thing I do is to be mindful of, you know, my waste habits as it were, and recycle and,reduce and reuse things. Now I find it very frustrating to throw away plastic bags and stuff. So, if you compare what it was like prior to that, those things would have never crossed my mind.”</p>
P2	<p><b>Mental Routines</b>                      “I’ve just made a big shift away from worrying about status, and more to what was more important, closer to my heart. And also a shift in values, you know, and not worrying so much about what others think...”</p> <p>“So I needed to look at a different way. And mindfulness is part of the process of how I stay in the moment...this is how you do one day at a time, is you stay in today.”</p> <p><b>Behavioural Routines</b>                      “I was overwhelmed with a brain that was seeking, security or safety, it all comes down to security and safety. And I’ve really come to recognize that. It was driving my consumerism, I have to have this house, I have to look this way, I have to act this way, in order to get that sense of safety, security and belonging.”</p> <p>“...And so where the mindfulness came in is it gave me the ability to quiet my mind. It gave me the ability to be attached to my breath”</p>	<p>“I live in this culture, but I tend to be grateful for what I have. And I tend to take time to think about my purchases and invest in things for the long term.. I was thinking about how the culture, the western culture, really doesn’t facilitate this type of living.”</p> <p>“..And that was 16 years ago. So I’ve been finding my way with different things. And what I get is the longer I’m on this path, the more important this moment is. Yeah, I am able to let go of the past that’s done.”</p>	<p>“... because I was always doing, always doing, always achieving, always on the move... always doing the next thing... always thinking what I have to do... you’ll have to get a job, and do this or that. I was always in my head basically. Because that’s what I grew up with and that is what my programming was.”</p> <p>“That’s where the mindfulness really set in, it’s like the comfort of being in my own skin has to come from inside. It’s got to come from my spirituality, it’s got to come from something bigger, and a greater purpose.”</p> <p>“I have the freedom to come up with my own and what matters to me. And so with the cultivation of mindfulness, I’m getting more and more clear on who I am. And as a result I’m getting a greater sense of purpose, I’m getting a greater sense of what I’m supposed to do with my life. And that comes from the quiet in a busy world.”</p>	<p>“..that is all about service. And that’s where the connection, and that’s where that fulfillment comes from, is giving it away. And so taking that mentality, and that teachings about unity, too. We’re all part of a big, big world here. That principle informs the rest of my life.”</p> <p>“I stopped doing Facebook pretty much all together... I was finding it wasn’t real connection for me on Facebook and that was disconcerting.”</p>	<p>“I tend to go to the fewer pieces and invest... And it builds community, right. I go in, they know who I am. They know my face. Yeah, she knows what I like. She’ll say I got an item you might like. Not to sell it to me, but because she thought of me. So it builds community right. Of course she’d love to make a sale but it is not a hard sell. It is about service. She wants to be of service.”</p>

Table 5 Continued - Qualitative Findings Related to Proposed Themes

P	DISRUPTION OF ROUTINES	CONGRUENCE	NON-MATERIALISTIC VALUES	PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	MINDFUL (SUSTAINABLE) CONSUMPTION
P3	<p><b>Mental Routines</b> I use prayer and meditation to re-center myself so I don't feel the need to drink anymore. I am not very consistent though. I should probably do it more. I have tried Reiki recently and that was interesting. I am practicing meditation with my son and we hired a mentor.</p>	<p>"I do breath work when I am stressed and in my head fixated on something in my life. It tends to help and make me less reactive to the everyday challenges that life throws at me. I feel the need to be present with my son and not always on autopilot."</p>	<p>I thought before I had the new car, (which was a total rip off) and a shark loan and everything I thought that would make me look better and have better status but it doesn't, like I forget I am even in it when I am driving it. I don't look and see who's looking at me."</p>	<p>"Well, for some reason, buying stuff does make me happy....I think for me connection would help make me more happy but I am still working on that."</p>	<p>n/a</p>
	<p><b>Behavioural Routines</b> "I do breath work when I am stressed and in my head fixated on something in my life. It tends to help and make me less reactive to the everyday challenges that life throws at me."</p>				
P4	<p><b>Mental Routines</b> "Security was driving me. Therefore, I thought I would have much less stress. Yet it isn't really the case because now I have new stresses."</p>	<p>"I have to kind of work in robot mode. So when I'm up there in the field, my ways of connecting with myself I workout, eat healthy and do breathe work."</p>	<p>"My job, I thought it was going to bring me a whole lot of like, you know, not social status, but like, make me feel better about my life, because I have worked really hard at a high paying job. It is just not the case."</p>	<p>"That's always kind of my go to is like helping other people. And you know, I'm pretty generous when it comes to like, my friends and stuff, like, I'll send the money if they're having a hard time or whatever. And that kind of stuff always feels good, like giving always feels good."</p>	<p>"..And it used to be more of an uncontrollable urge. Now I kind of just buy things for use and practicality. I buy higher quality things now, so I don't have to buy things again after they break after a day."</p>
	<p><b>Behavioural Routines</b> "I see shopping and buying something as different. I like look for stuff a lot, but I don't actually buy stuff a lot anymore. I get the "fix" so to speak by just looking online or in store. It allows me to feel like I have more control if I look but don't buy."</p>				
P5	<p><b>Mental Routines</b> ".you see, the thing is I feel "less than" initially, but you know, that you don't need that stuff. So there's this push pull thing going on...it flashes up there, and they want you to have it and think you need it for a minute. But then when you consider it a bit longer, you realize actually, I don't need that. That's, that's how I'm learning to be more kind of mindful in terms of what I spend money on."</p>	<p>"My learned habits of over-consuming are hard to break. Secondly, there is this pressure to have stuff. The pressure seemingly comes from everywhere. I see successful people with wealth and they look happy. Everywhere I look I find messages that suggest that I need stuff because it will make my life better in some way."</p>	<p>"Materialism is a value, but it's not. It's not like a fundamental value. And this is part of the problem with culture, is it's made materialism be a number one value based on people's behavior, but their innermost values are things like intimacy, true connections with community and people being able to be present, So materialism is like a conditioned value, that really gets pushed on us on the outside environment. And we pick up on it, and act and behave in ways that make us go against our deeper values"</p>	<p>"Having things is not as important as having friends and meaningful relationships with people."</p>	<p>"That's not to say that sometimes I still make impulsive decisions to buy, but I'd say that it's like, less and less frequent, especially now."</p>
	<p><b>Behavioural Routines</b> "There was a turning point recently where I just knew I needed to stop spending. I was losing pleasure in it and it was really depressing me with the debt and everything. It was just an ingrained habit to spend and numb out."</p>				

P	DISRUPTION OF ROUTINES	CONGRUENCE	NON-MATERIALISTIC VALUES	PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	MINDFUL (SUSTAINABLE) CONSUMPTION
P6	<p><b>Mental Routines</b> “I had to retrain my mind to be less noisy, less reactive. On-going practice of mindfulness was key to this process because I needed a way out of all the negative things my brain was telling me to behave.”</p> <p><b>Behavioural Routines</b> “In order to change ingrained patterns of behaviour I needed motivation and that drive to change was supported through quieting the incessant thinking mind.”</p>	<p>“Despite repeated efforts to change and align what I truly believed with my behaviour I had to keep trying because I was so unhappy living the way I was living. When I found mindfulness it was transformational because it was the first time in my life I experienced living in my body instead of my mind.”</p>	<p>“I became aware that many of my thoughts and behaviours were not really supporting me in living at peace with myself and the world around me. Even just regular breath/body work helped me slow down enough to consider what really matters to me.”</p>	<p>“Engaging more in authentic relationships with people has been a result of having more time... less time spent on selfish futile endeavours like “getting ahead” for example.”</p>	<p>“The more centered I became the more in-tune I was with greater causes like how I was contributing to the harming of the natural environment around me.”</p> <p>“Mindfulness helps with just becoming more conscious of things you would otherwise have no time for in your pursuit to “get ahead”.</p>
P7	<p><b>Mental Routines</b> “I have to practice mindfulness daily. I have to practice over and over and over again, because I find when I get busy, those things can fall away very easily or I forget.”</p> <p><b>Behavioural Routines</b> “..it was just something that slowly evolved over time. And that’s where I want to be now, I want to be more mindful, more slow, more peaceful, more observant, more helpful to others. I don’t want to be a taker, I want to be a giver in this world now. That’s one of my big goals.”</p>	<p>“It became the norm because everything, a lot of what I heard in my ears, a lot of what I saw in my eyes, what was this drive to succeed. I felt very surrounded by it. So it was just the norm. There was no really intentional thought process in this whatsoever. I just became like a robot and just did what everybody around me was doing.”</p>	<p>“I had abundance of everything, I had a lot more things in my life than I ever needed which complicated my life actually, you know, instead of having, let’s say, seven shirts hanging on a rack, I had 27. The time it would take me to figure out what to wear, the economical cost of dry cleaning and laundering and putting things away. It would have been so much better to have had less at the time.”</p> <p>“I was extremely materialistic. What I didn’t have spiritually was a connection to my environment, and to the world around me. And it was a very self-centered kind of thinking and living. I was not mindful in any way whatsoever.”</p>	<p>I am more into community. I have many types of communities in my life, you know, like spiritual communities, my work community, my friends community, and if I have a need and I can’t fulfill that I actually go out of myself into these communities, and people help me. As opposed to reacting to that need by buying and consuming. It is a much richer way to live but I had to learn how to do that.”</p> <p>“..And then the benefit is .. there’s a connection. There’s the people connection, right, we’re doing this together. And so it’s like a win-win for me and the other people.”</p>	<p>“The less I have, the more peaceful and connected I feel to people and the world around me. So I’m trying to be very conscious of when I actually purchase something like, where did this come from? Who made this? How did it get here, where’s it going to end up when I finish with it?”</p>
P8	<p><b>Mental Routines</b> “I always needed to get more, I was just on I was just a one track mind. I needed more, I needed more clothes. You know, more cars, more furniture, more and more and more.”</p> <p><b>Behavioural Routines</b> “I started practicing mindfulness in community. I felt a different sense of happiness. A void that has been filled by spirituality.”</p> <p>“I was beginning to feel freed of not wanting material things, that there’s more to life than just having things. It’s it’s having the ability to look at things realistically, that I struggle with. And it’s every day which is why I have mindfulness routines daily.”</p>	<p>“Messages were that I would be prettier, I would be more happy. I would have everything in the world. I would have respect. I’d be admired. So the consequences with that is going into debt, accumulating debt, buying things that I couldn’t afford.”</p> <p>“It’s a default switch, for me. If I don’t like the way that I feel I need to change it. So to me it’s a reward to go out and buy something because society says...well, you should look this way and I’m giving you permission to go out buy stuff. By all means shop shop away, because this is how you should look.”</p>	<p>“I became aware that materials, possessions or things don’t bring me happiness. They don’t fill the void.”</p> <p>“The first time I did a mindfulness exercise, I loved it. It worked for me. I had a transformational experience, the first time I did it. I actually had a complete mind shift where I was able to stay in the moment and was present, and I never experienced that before. And that was through meditating for a couple of minutes. It was unbelievable. It was really was.”</p>	<p>“I became involved in a community out of need at first because I couldn’t stop drinking on my own. What I realized is that I was trying to fill the void... that what I actually needed was connection to other people. Now I help other people and I feel a sense of purpose as a contributing member of society. It is hard to explain”</p>	<p>“I don’t know of any businesses that are here to, you know, to make the world a better place. Without putting the dollar in their pocket first.”</p>

**Table 6 - Summary of Findings Based on Theme**

DISRUPTION OF ROUTINES	CONGRUENCE	NON-MATERIALISTIC VALUES	PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	MINDFUL (SUSTAINABLE) CONSUMPTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental and behavioural routines are altered through the supportive process of mindfulness cultivation. However, they are separate processes yet interrelated and non-linear.</li> <li>Both mindfulness and a sense of community in combination are predictors of successful long-term behavioural changes.</li> <li>Increased ability to weaken detrimental habits and enhance mental and physical well-being</li> <li>De-conditioning of ingrained embedded mental and behavioural patterns requires more than education alone.</li> <li>Mindfulness was positively correlated with being more conscious, and more attentive in daily life and negatively related to living unconsciously and on autopilot.</li> <li>Awareness of the impermanence of triggers and cravings with greater agency to ride them out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decreasing the attitude-behaviour gap requires a personally relevant impetus.</li> <li>Mindfulness is the modality in which mind and body connect in an integrated way and therefore facilitating alignment of attitudes and behaviour increases.</li> <li>Mindfulness initiates a shift in attitude from selfish pursuits towards a broader perspective of others, society and the environment.</li> <li>Less need to gain approval and acceptance from others or society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mindfulness plays a key role in bringing about the awareness of the disconnect between true values and conditioned societal norms.</li> <li>Mindfulness was negatively related to materialistic values and positively related to a greater sense of well-being especially, gratitude and contentment.</li> <li>Mindfulness offers citizens agency to detach from materialistic conditioning, environmental pressures, and less reactivity resulting in greater contentment with what one has rather than continual mindless pursuit of “more”.</li> <li>Mindfulness practices facilitated decreased motivation to overconsume.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both a predetermining factor and a consequence of mindfulness is increased prosocial behaviour or “other” centered orientation.</li> <li>Increased desire for familial and community engagement as well as connection to nature.</li> <li>Less time attending to mindless consumption as a futile attempt for belonging, acceptance and status affords more energy devoted to serving real human needs like connection to others.</li> <li>Mindfulness played a fundamental role in decreasing a sense of isolation and alienation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mindful consumption is an adjunct to on-going mindfulness practice because of increased awareness of personal, societal and environmental harm.</li> <li>Mindfulness through increased connectedness to self, society and nature in turn enhances pro environmental behaviour.</li> <li>Increased caring for the wider ecological and social worlds in consumption decisions.</li> <li>Greater attunement and awareness of the way one’s behavior affects others and the environment.</li> <li>Long-term mindfulness practice showed marked impact on citizens awareness and processing of messages promoting materialism where there had been previously no awareness.</li> <li>Communication technologies, apps, online communities, groups, speakers, video and the like played a pivotal role in supporting mindfulness practice and thus increased mindful consumption attitudes and behaviours.</li> </ul>

**Table 7 - Transformative Outcomes Based on Domain**

DOMAIN	TRANSFORMATIVE OUTCOMES FOR MINDLESS (IN-SUSTAINABLE) CONSUMPTION
<b>CITIZEN WELL-BEING</b>	
<b>Mental and Physical Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased ability to weaken detrimental habits and enhance mental and physical well-being.</li> <li>• Increased embodied connection to self, others and nature thereby fulfilling authentic needs. Less need to gain approval and acceptance from others or society.</li> <li>• Increased personal contentment and gratitude for what one has resulting in decreased motivation and need to over-consume</li> <li>• Living in a more embodied way supports alignment of attitudes and behaviour.</li> <li>• Mindfulness initiates and expands upon positive shifts in attitude from selfish pursuits towards a broader perspective of others, society and the environment.</li> <li>• Increased awareness of the disconnect between true values and conditioned societal norms.</li> <li>• Mindfulness offers citizens agency to detach from materialistic conditioning, environmental pressures, and less reactivity resulting in greater contentment with what one has rather than continual mindless pursuit of “more”.</li> <li>• Decreased pressure and stress to “keep up” with the “jones”.</li> <li>• Less stress, anxiety, depression and addiction resulting in decreased need for medications.</li> </ul>
<b>Temperance (in place of materialistic)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindfulness plays a key role in bringing about the awareness of the disconnect between true values and conditioned societal norms.</li> <li>• Increased agency to effectively deal with societal pressures to spend money or use possessions as a yardstick for success.</li> <li>• Personal negative consequences of materialistic attitudes and behaviours drive citizens to mindfulness.</li> <li>• Marketing and advertising schemes are less effective.</li> </ul>
<b>Familial Harmony</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased selfless pursuits and stronger attachment to family, friends and community.</li> <li>• Less time attending to mindless consumption as a futile attempt for belonging, acceptance and status affords more energy devoted to serving real human needs like connection to others.</li> <li>• Increased openness and decreased pre-occupation with “getting ahead”. therefore more time with family.</li> <li>• Decreased sense of isolation and alienation.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Well-Being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less stress, increased present moment living, and positive emotions resulting in decreased financial compulsivity.</li> <li>• Decreased pre-occupation with “getting ahead” acting as a mediator to status and comparison driven pursuits.</li> <li>• Increased contentment and gratitude with what one has decreasing motivation to over-spend.</li> <li>• Increased awareness that over-consumption does not meet basic human psychological or emotional needs for connection and attachment.</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIAL WELL-BEING</b>	
<b>Community Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater desire to be collaborative and involved in community rather than a “me versus you” competitive attitude.</li> <li>• Desire for increased personal face to face engagement as a need satisfier.</li> <li>• Increased willingness to support local causes and businesses.</li> <li>• Greater awareness, sensitivity and negativity towards profit motive and inauthentic businesses.</li> <li>• Decreased detachment from standard, conditioned societal norms and practices.</li> <li>• Mindfulness facilitates decreased isolation and alienation from society as a whole if niche communities are discovered and engaged long-term.</li> </ul>
<b>Healthcare Systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizens who are less stressed, anxious, and depressed have less of a toll on the health care system.</li> <li>• Meditators and mindfulness cultivators report in decreased need for mental health medications.</li> <li>• Addictions are eliminated and replaced with shifts in perception and substantial behavioural changes.</li> </ul>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING</b>	
<b>Sustainable Attitudes and Behaviours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased conscious awareness and sensitivity of personal, societal and environmental harms.</li> <li>• Increased awareness of how personal actions have a direct outward affect.</li> <li>• Mindfulness facilitates a “slowing down” mentally thereby providing greater agency to make less harmful decisions.</li> <li>• Shifts in attitude towards seeing the interconnectedness of citizens, societies and the environment.</li> <li>• Decreased desire to live aimlessly, purposelessly and on autopilot.</li> <li>• Increased sense of personal responsibility to align values with behaviour.</li> </ul>

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

Mindful citizens represent human beings who offer important economic growth opportunities in society, through consumption that is sustainably beneficial to themselves, their communities and the planet. A mindful citizen consumes in a way that is optimal and life-giving but not at the expense of human, societal or environmental health. This indeed requires a transformation in the way we view consumers — not as people to be manipulated through marketing for profit but as citizens, parents, and employees, or community members with a long-term stake in the future of the planet — part of a larger whole.

Authentic connection, atunement and attachment are primal and required throughout human life for wellbeing. Contemporary modern society, including many of its innovations and abundances races at an abnormally fast pace and often alienates people from themselves and others as well as nature. Marketing attaches itself to our deepest longings then uses them for its own commercial objectives. It asks us to substitute satisfaction gained from authentic connections for gratification gained from a combination of consumption and the hopes embedded in the prevailing social narrative. Therefore, citizens seek relief and reward based on needs, through consumption as false substitutes for connection, which has become a common social pattern in a materialistic society. Modern citizens in western societies are generally unaware of how to make a difference on issues of unsustainability, especially when the term "sustainability" is typically associated with only environmental concerns. Despite mounting concerns about unsustainable mindless consumption and unhealthy lifestyles, academic research,



initiatives by government and policy makers and social enterprise have made very little inroads in shifting consumer behaviour for improved quality of life, particularly in prosperous populations (Prothero, Dobscha, Freund, Kilbourne, Luchs, and Ozanne, 2010).

Mindfulness is one mechanism to bridge the gap back to a fundamental connection with self, body, others and nature, which supports both individual and collective wellbeing. Mindful citizens display a more selfless orientation and increased consideration of others, including the environment. It makes sense that when one's primary needs are met, wellbeing is established, and an individual is less discontent, stressed-out and fixated on seeking relief. Long-term cultivation of mindfulness is positively linked with disruption of both mental and behavioural routines; congruence; lessening of materialistic values; and pro-social behaviour.

This study offers a unique contribution to the field of SCR through considering a broad, wholistic approach to understanding mindless consumption as both a personal and a societal problem, which has impacts across three domains: citizen, social and environmental. This study confirms, as well as extends, the notion that mindlessness is a significant determinant of consumption-related problems which is considered to be a driver of unsustainability (Bahl et al., 2016). Mindlessness related to unsustainable consumption takes on many forms, including negative habits and patterns that are often rooted in a culture and considered normal, regardless of whether they are healthy or unhealthy. These express themselves as a lack of inner and outer congruence; excessive materialism that causes unhappiness; and a lack of connection through alienation of self and loss of community, giving reason to believe that the profit motive is driving western

societies' citizens and the environment to become increasingly unwell, as evidenced by research. Exercising mindfulness and engaging in authentic connection-related practices over time penetrates the citizen at a very fundamental level with positive outcomes far exceeding visible behavioural changes. Long-term mindfulness effects emanate outward and impact the citizen, social and environmental domains.

Mindless consumption and its associated personal, societal, and environmental repercussions are far from being an individual problem. Mindless citizens do not have isolated individual problems of overconsumption but are, in part, victims of an embedded social structure — one that can be considered toxic and traumatizing. Moving the needle on individual, social and environmental sustainability needs to be considered in its full context.

While the focus of this paper has primarily been on individual citizen accounts of transformation through mindfulness it has also been a critical analysis of the role that marketing has played in contributing and perpetuating mindless consumption. It has been both illuminating and encouraging to explore individual accounts of mindful living and the profound effects it has both mentally and behaviourally, which emanate outward to families, communities and the planet. Often the changes these individuals made were contrary to societal norms. For example, choosing face-to-face connection and community more often than tv, devices or shopping. As citizens awaken and begin to operate in new ways through increased personal agency and awareness, businesses, the marketplace and social structures will also require sweeping change. We are already witnessing this shift in the preponderance of social enterprises, CSR initiatives and more importantly b-corporations, whose mandate is "using business as a force for good".

However, these business models are still far from the norm (Stubbs, 2017). As seen in this research people mistrust the majority of businesses they engage with daily. There exists a resentment and lack of connection between business and citizen and yet the very essence of marketing is the " ...process through which economy is integrated into society to serve human needs" (Drucker, 1958, p. 252). We seem to have deviated far off the track of attending to human needs, not to mention the needs of society and the environment. Hope remains that an increase in cross-disciplinary research like this study will emerge with new solutions for citizen-centric sustainability.

While mindfulness has shown to be a modality supporting citizens to connect with themselves, others and the environment, there remain many other ways to reconnect. As well as creating opportunities for increased face-to-face connection, citizens need to leverage the same technologies which cause disconnection from self, others and the environment to work for them in ways that support their wellbeing, for example, meditation apps such as Headspace, Calm and Insight Timer. Business and marketers will need to address issues of unsustainability as the future of their organisations will depend on it. Governments and policy makers will need to step up and exercise leadership with policies regarding sustainability issues.

### Areas for Future Research

Clearly, more quality empirical research is required in the areas of MC, SCR and citizen-centric sustainability, such as mechanisms for how to market and promote MC in the three domains. A mindfulness index could serve as a barometer for citizens to assess their own MC habits and progress. Additionally, more needs to be done in the area of sustainable business models and increasing awareness of the relevant and pertinent work

B Labs and the b-corps certification are doing to promote using business as a force for good. Other questions remain like, what specific type of mindfulness practice is most effective for MC? How do non-western cultural values impact consumption? How does mindfulness practice affect different categories of consumption, e.g. food vs. gaming? How does MC differ across varying demographics, e.g. age, race, ethnicity? How do different types of meditation impact consumption habits? Are other preventative interventions used to regulate consumption as effective as meditation? What are the specific impacts of MC and the processing of marketing messages promoting materialism? How can mindfulness empower citizens to exercise social and cultural rights in the marketplace? Is there a link between mindfulness and educational outcomes? How can business, governments, media and policy makers bring awareness of MC to its citizens?

## Appendix 1.

### Material Scale MVS

Item	English version / German translation in the G-MVS
1	My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have. / Mein Leben wäre besser, wenn ich bestimmte Dinge besitzen würde, die ich noch nicht habe.
2	The things I own say a lot about how well I'm going in life. / Die Dinge in meinem Besitz sagen eine Menge darüber aus, wie erfolgreich ich bin.
3	I like to own things that impress people. / Ich besitze gern Dinge, mit denen ich andere beeindrucken kann.
4	I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes. / Ich bewundere Menschen, die teure Häuser, Autos und Kleidung haben.
5	I like a lot of luxury in my life. / Ich mag viel Luxus in meinem Leben.
6	I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things. / Ich wäre glücklicher, wenn ich mir mehr kaufen könnte.
7	Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions. / Der Erwerb materieller Güter ist eines der wichtigsten Ziele im Leben.
8	I have all the things I really need to enjoy life. / Ich habe eigentlich alles, was ich brauche, um das Leben zu genießen.
9	I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things. / Wenn ich bessere Dinge hätte, wäre ich auch nicht glücklicher.
10	The things I own aren't all that important to me. / Die Dinge, die ich besitze, sind für mich nicht so wichtig.
11	I put less emphasis on material things than most people I know. / Auf materielle Dinge lege ich weniger Wert, als die meisten Menschen, die ich kenne.
12	I don't place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success. / Ich lege wenig Wert darauf, wie viele Gegenstände manche Menschen als Zeichen des Erfolgs besitzen.
13	I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned. / Ich versuche, mir das Leben einfach zu machen, was Besitz angeht.
14	Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure. / Es verschafft mir große Befriedigung, etwas zu kaufen.
15	It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like. / Manchmal macht es mich sehr unzufrieden, dass ich mir nicht alles kaufen kann, was mir gefällt.

## Appendix 2

### Compulsive Buying Scale

#### Compulsive Buying Scale © Valence, D’Astous & Fortier

Please express the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Please place an X on the line that best indicates how you feel about each statement.

	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
When I have money, I cannot help but spend part or all of it.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I often buy something I see, without planning, just because I have to have it.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
For me, shopping is a way of facing the stress of my daily life and relaxing.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I sometimes feel that something inside pushed me to go shopping.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
There are times when I have a strong urge to buy.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
At times, I have felt somewhat guilty after buying a product, because it seemed unreasonable.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
There are some things I buy that I do not show to anybody because I’m afraid people will think I wasted my money.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I often have an unexplainable urge, a sudden and spontaneous desire, to go and buy something.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
As soon as I enter a shopping center or mall, I have an irresistible urge to go into a shop and buy something.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I have often bought a product that I did not need, even when I knew I had very little money left.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
I like to spend money.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Calculating your score:

Each X that you placed corresponds to a number: 5 for “strongly agree”, 4 for “somewhat agree”, 3 for “neither agree nor disagree”, 2 for “somewhat disagree”, and 1 for “strongly disagree”. Add together the 11 numbers for your Xs to get your total scale score.

If your score is 36 or higher, you are likely to be a compulsive buyer.

## Appendix 3

### The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)

#### Day-to-Day Experiences

**Instructions:** Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the 1-6 scale below, please indicate how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience. Please answer according to what *really reflects* your experience rather than what you think your experience should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Almost Always	Very Frequently	Somewhat Frequently	Somewhat Infrequently	Very Infrequently	Almost Never

I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
It seems I am "running on automatic," without much awareness of what I'm doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5	6

The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Almost Always	Very Frequently	Somewhat Frequently	Somewhat Infrequently	Very Infrequently	Almost Never

I drive places on 'automatic pilot' and then wonder why I went there.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I find myself doing things without paying attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I snack without being aware that I'm eating.	1	2	3	4	5	6



## Appendix 4

### Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)

#### Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire

##### **Description:**

This instrument is based on a factor analytic study of five independently developed mindfulness questionnaires. The analysis yielded five factors that appear to represent elements of mindfulness as it is currently conceptualized. The five facets are observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging of inner experience, and non-reactivity to inner experience. More information is available in:

Please rate each of the following statements using the scale provided. Write the number in the blank that best describes your own opinion of what is generally true for you.

1	2	3	4	5
never or very rarely true	rarely true	sometimes true	often true	very often or always true

- \_\_\_\_ 1. When I'm walking, I deliberately notice the sensations of my body moving.
- \_\_\_\_ 2. I'm good at finding words to describe my feelings.
- \_\_\_\_ 3. I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions.
- \_\_\_\_ 4. I perceive my feelings and emotions without having to react to them.
- \_\_\_\_ 5. When I do things, my mind wanders off and I'm easily distracted.
- \_\_\_\_ 6. When I take a shower or bath, I stay alert to the sensations of water on my body.
- \_\_\_\_ 7. I can easily put my beliefs, opinions, and expectations into words.
- \_\_\_\_ 8. I don't pay attention to what I'm doing because I'm daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted.
- \_\_\_\_ 9. I watch my feelings without getting lost in them.
- \_\_\_\_ 10. I tell myself I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling.
- \_\_\_\_ 11. I notice how foods and drinks affect my thoughts, bodily sensations, and emotions.
- \_\_\_\_ 12. It's hard for me to find the words to describe what I'm thinking.
- \_\_\_\_ 13. I am easily distracted.
- \_\_\_\_ 14. I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn't think that way.

## Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I have trouble thinking of the right words to express how I feel about things
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I "step back" and am aware of the thought or image without getting taken over by it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I pay attention to sounds, such as clocks ticking, birds chirping, or cars passing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. When I have a sensation in my body, it's difficult for me to describe it because I can't find the right words.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. It seems I am "running on automatic" without much awareness of what I'm doing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I feel calm soon after.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I tell myself that I shouldn't be thinking the way I'm thinking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I notice the smells and aromas of things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. Even when I'm feeling terribly upset, I can find a way to put it into words.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. When I have distressing thoughts or images I am able just to notice them without reacting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn't feel them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. I notice visual elements in art or nature, such as colors, shapes, textures, or patterns of light and shadow.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. My natural tendency is to put my experiences into words.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I just notice them and let them go.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. I do jobs or tasks automatically without being aware of what I'm doing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I judge myself as good or bad, depending what the thought/image is about.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. I pay attention to how my emotions affect my thoughts and behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. I can usually describe how I feel at the moment in considerable detail.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. I find myself doing things without paying attention.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. I disapprove of myself when I have irrational ideas.

## Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ)

### **Scoring Information:**

#### Observe items:

1, 6, 11, 15, 20, 26, 31, 36

#### Describe items:

2, 7, 12R, 16R, 22R, 27, 32, 37

#### Act with Awareness items:

5R, 8R, 13R, 18R, 23R, 28R, 34R, 38R

#### Nonjudge items:

3R, 10R, 14R, 17R, 25R, 30R, 35R, 39R

#### Nonreact items:

4, 9, 19, 21, 24, 29, 33

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