Call for Papers

The Journal of Consumer Affairs announces a special issue on

Mindfulness and Consumer Well-Being

Submission deadline: July 31, 2022

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The Journal of Consumer Affairs (JCA) invites papers for a special issue on Mindfulness and Consumer Well-being.

We’re at a critical time in history, in which the marketplace offers great opportunities and grave risks for consumer, societal, and environmental well-being. In 2018, half the world joined the global consumer class (Kharas and Hamel 2018), giving roughly 4 billion people the discretionary income to buy durable goods and spend on leisure. Despite the temporary drop in consumption during COVID-19, consumer spending is estimated to grow to $91 trillion by 2030, which is almost 50% higher than in 2020 (Fengler and Kharas 2021).

This golden age of consumption accelerated by advances in technology has unleashed a global market of goods and services—open day and night—for consumers to enjoy, grow, and connect with each other through shared marketplace rituals and social networks. However, this progress has come at a high price including untenable harm to our environment, which is disproportionately impacting marginalized communities and poses an existential threat to our way of life and place in the natural world (World Resources Institute 2018-2019 Report).

The increase in consumption has not necessarily enhanced consumers’ happiness, health, and quality of life. The World Happiness Report 2019 attributes the declining health and happiness in the US to an epidemic of addictions. Dr. Sachs (2019) characterizes the US as a “mass-addiction society,” in which individuals are
compulsively pursuing behaviors such as gambling, social media use, shopping, consuming unhealthy foods and alcohol, and engaging in risky behaviors in the face of adverse consequences.

A major determinant of consumption-induced problems is mindlessness (Bahl, Milne, Ross, et al 2018). It’s estimated that for up to 95% of our daily decisions we rely on our unconscious processing such as instincts, habits, addictions, and decision biases that are beyond our conscious control and intentions. Living in a fast-paced culture with pervasive technology and stress, consumers seek solace and escape in the marketplace, even when the consumption outcomes are detrimental to their health and well-being. Merely providing more information is not enough to offset the messages that induce consumers to behave irrationally. Existing research and government and non-profit initiatives have met with little success in changing consumer behavior (Prothero et al 2011).

This special issue is a call for papers on the role that mindfulness can play in transforming consumer well-being. Our focus on mindfulness and consumer well-being builds on previous research that established a research agenda for ways in which mindfulness could transform consumer behavior and lead to higher levels of well-being (Bahl et al 2016). Since this article’s publication in 2016, consumers have faced their health compromised with a pandemic, tremendous civil strife and polarization, harsh environmental conditions, addictive technologies, and other challenges all of which lower consumer well-being.

We believe that mindfulness can play a pivotal role in empowering consumers to make marketplace choices that enhance their well-being, which is intrinsically tied to environmental and societal well-being. This special issue aims to add to the efforts of scholars who have begun to examine the power of mindfulness on consumer well-being in the last couple of years. The topics we seek are broad in nature and address the important relationship between mindfulness and consumer behavior. To stimulate interest in writing research papers for this special issue we suggest this partial list of possible questions to be addressed in three broad areas:

1. Mindfulness and Mindful Consumption
2. Mindfulness and Other Well-being Constructs
3. Domains of Consumer Well-being

Mindfulness and Mindful Consumption

What are the different dimensions of mindfulness that may be particularly beneficial for making better consumption choices?

What are interventions, beyond that of meditation, for mindful consumption that include different aspects of the mindfulness process?
How does the mindset of mindful consumption temper acquisitive, repetitive, and aspirational consumption?

**Mindfulness and Other Well-being Constructs**

What are the relationships among dimensions of mindfulness and other well-being constructs?

What are the multiple mechanisms by which mindfulness enables consumers to make more deliberate choices in the marketplace?

Does mindfulness strengthen consumer willpower, or does it reconnect consumers with their embodied experiences, values, and intentions for their marketplace experiences, which leads to more deliberate consumer choices that improve consumer well-being?

**Domains of Consumer Well-being**

There is much to know about how mindfulness can benefit different domains of consumer well-being. The domains can include, health and addictions, family and community matters, financial well-being, materialism, multiculturalism, and others.

i. Health and addictions
   How can awareness and insights into impermanence of desire and craving support mindful consumption in other areas of health and unhealthy eating, internet addiction, gambling, and substance abuse?
   What role can technologies like apps and online communities play in supporting mindful well-being?

ii. Family and community matters
    What is the role of mindfulness training in increasing empathy and compassion regarding the needs of others?
    Can mindfulness training improve parent-child relationships or interpersonal relationships?
    What impact does mindful parenting have on behavioral problems and well-being among children?
    What impact does mindful consumption have on family and community health and well-being?

iii. Financial well-being
    How can mindfulness training be directed to reducing biases that lead to poor financial decisions?
    To what extent are stress, lack of present focus and negative emotions linked to financial decision processes moderated by mindfulness?

iv. Materialism
    How do mindful consumption practices affect the relationship between self-
concept and dependency on material goods?
What is the impact of mindful consumption on materialism and the processing of messages and promoting materialism?
How is mindful consumption related to the pursuit of intrinsic motives?
What are the longitudinal effects of mindful consumption practices in training in children on their materialistic pursuits and identities as adolescents?

v. Multiculturalism
Everyone has been touched by the pandemic, but it has struck vulnerable and marginalized communities hardest, revealing deep inequities across society.
How can mindfulness empower consumers to exercise economic, social, and cultural rights in the marketplace?
What is the long-term impact of mindfulness on prejudice reduction and acceptance of diversity?
Can mindfulness overcome the inertia and resistance to consumer diversity initiatives?

Researchers in all relevant fields and disciplines are encouraged to submit their work. Manuscripts may be submitted online through Scholar One Manuscripts. Style guidelines and publishing requirements can be viewed online at http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/joca. Style guidelines and publishing requirements can be viewed online at wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/OCA

Please contact the special issue editors, George R. Milne, Shalini Bahl, or Elizabeth G. Miller, with questions regarding the special issue subject matter. Please contact the Assistant to the Editor at joca@consumerinterests.org for questions about the ScholarOne submission system.

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