Investigating the relationship between consumer mindfulness and sustainable consumption behavior

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ABSTRACT

Mindfulness which is based on one's acceptance of the current situation and state without judging has recently manifested itself in various field studies of marketing. Similarly, in today's changing conditions, the importance of ecological balance has made consumers and businesses more sensitive to sustainable product production and consumption. In this context, the aim of the study is to explore the relationship between consumer mindfulness and sustainable consumption behavior. In order to test relationships, 200 usable questionnaires were collected and tested through linear regression analysis. Findings indicated that consumers' mindfulness has a significantly positive effect on consumers' sustainable consumption behavior.

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Introduction

Environmental problems have their origins in human behaviors, so the solution lies in changing the behavior of people, organizations and the groups and creating changes in people's lifestyle and culture (Arslan et al., 2011). The concept of sustainable consumption, which has developed as a strategy in dealing various environmental problems, has been extensively reached in the last decade, both in the literature and in organizational practice areas. There is a need for a detailed understanding of the problems related to sustainable consumption; because sustainability can be addressed by triggering simple behavioral changes that can lead consumers to a more sustainable lifestyle and product (World Economic Forum Report, 2014).

Mindfulness, which is based the origins of many religions, including Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism, and worldview, adopts the approach of being in the present without judgment by being areas of external stimuli and respecting the current situation (Bahl, 2016). Mindfulness transforms individuals and organizations to protect the environment in all processes by changing their perspectives and thinking now. The researches in literature which examine the relationship between mindfulness and sustainable consumption behavior, verify that with more consumer mindfulness creates more sustainable consumption behavior.

Considering the shortcomings of the mindfulness and sustainable consumption behavior studies as a result of the deep literature review, this study examines the relationship between mindfulness and sustainable consumption. Within this context, in the first section of the study the concept of mindfulness and sustainable consumption behavior were mentioned and empirical studies about this relationship was deeply reviewed. In the second section, in order to examine the relationship between two concepts, the regression analysis was performed and the results of analysis were given.

This study aims to explore the relationship between consumer mindfulness and sustainable consumption behavior. In order to test relationship, 200 usable questionnaires were collected and tested though linear regression analysis. This study emphasis on the question of whether consumers' mindfulness has a significant effect on consumers' sustainable consumption behavior or not. The

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analysis results will be obtained by SPSS providing practitioners and academicians to understand the sustainable behavior patterns of consumers with mindfulness.

The organization of this paper is as follows. This study continues with a literature review, research and methodology and findings. This paper ends with a conclusion.

Literature Review

Theoretical Conceptual Framework

Considering the first mindfulness studies in the literature, mindfulness has been addressed at the individual level by psychologists (eg. Langer, 1989; Sternberg 2000), with their conceptualizations such as alertness, active awareness and sensitivity to different situations. Mindfulness, which was addressed at the organizational level in later years, included preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001; Ndubisi and Al-Shuridah, 2019). There are many definitions of mindfulness, some of which are based on religious foundations such as Buddhism (Wallace and Shapiro, 2006), some on quasi-religious practices (Brinkerhoff and Jacob, 1999), and some on scientific research (Langer, 1989; Amel et al., 2008). In Eastern philosophical, spiritual and therapeutic contexts, the definition of mindfulness includes not only attention and awareness, but also meditative situations and general peace of mind. Bishop et al. (2004) defines mindfulness in the context of one's processing of inner stimuli. The authors' two-component models include self-regulation and orientation of attention to experience. Self-regulation of attention means the ability to maintain attention, refocus after the mind dives, and inhibit cognitive elaborations. It involves the ability to adapt to experience, to control inner experiences, to observe and accept sensations and thoughts when they occur, instead of drowning or otherwise managing them (Amel et al., 2008).

Mindfulness, which is conceptualized as multidimensional structure (Siegling and Petrides, 2014) and periodic application of mindfulness cause continuous mindfulness to increase (Kiken et al., 2015). There are a variety of tools that highlight different aspects of mindfulness, such as attention (Brown and Ryan, 2003) or non-judgmental attitude (Walach et al., 2006). The five dimensions of mindfulness which were developed by Bear and colleagues (2008) were confirmed by many studies. The first of these dimensions is observation, that includes conscious experience of internal stimuli such as sensation, cognition emotion and external stimuli such as sound, smell and image. The second dimension is unresponsiveness, which include the ability to let thoughts and feelings come and go. While the third dimension is to behave with full attention and awareness, the fourth dimension is not judge which is taking a non-evaluative attitude towards thoughts and senses. The last dimension is the definition that includes the ability to label internal experiences with words (Baer et al., 2008; Hunecke and Richter, 2019). The common point of all these various definitions of mindfulness is that mindfulness is a deliberate state of awareness (Rosenberg, 2004; Amel et al., 2008).

Consumption as an important priority area in research and policy-making regarding sustainable development. Given the significant impact of different consumption areas such as food, nutrition, housing or textile consumption, the research for an approach to encourage sustainable consumer behavior has become important for both researchers and businesses (Ivanova et al., 2015; Tucker et al., 2010).

According to the definition proposed by the Oslo Sustainable Consumption Symposium in 1994, sustainable consumption is the use of goods and services that meet personal basic needs and provide a better quality of life, minimize the use of natural resources and toxic substances and waste emissions (Lim, 2017). More specifically, the act of consuming in a sustainable way involves a decision-making process that explains the social responsibility of the consumer in addition to individual needs and desires (Verbeke, 2006). According to another broad definition, sustainable consumption is the consumption skill that meets the needs of current and future generations without harming the environment or disrupting the function of the natural system (Jackson, 2003). According to Dolan (2002), consumers are not aware of the resources used in overconsumption, if consumer can gain macro marketing insight and realize the meaning of objects as a product of nature, sustainability can be achieved (Lim, 2007).

Empirical Studies

Current studies revealed that consumer mindfulness has a positive impact on sustainability (Ndubisi, 2014) and organizational mindfulness facilitates the transformation of mindfulness consumption into opportunities by creating mutual value of the whole planet, society and business world. Mindfulness based approaches propounded that the ability of individuals and organizations to achieve reliable performance in a changing environment depends on how they think, how they collect information, how they perceive the environment, and whether they can change their perspective to understand the current situation (Langer, 1989; Ndubisi, 2012; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001). Thus, individual and organizational mindfulness-based strategies can develop value in being accountable for the environment, resources, universe and future (Ndubisi and Al-Shuridah, 2019).

Organizational mindfulness is built on the Western perspective put forward by Langer (1989). As mentioned earlier, Weick and colleagues embraces organizational mindfulness in five dimensions: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise (Ndubisi, 2012; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001). All these five dimensions founded an indirect and direct open practice for the environment. According to author mindful organizations are able to produce and implement effective solutions for any environmental failure or disaster by clearly representing and defining problems

though adherence to resistance, as well as gaining insight into strategies to improve environmental conditions, as well as bringing decisions to expert inside or outside organizations (Ndubisi and Al-Shuridah, 2019).

Ericson et al. (2014) believe that mindfulness supports sustainable lifestyle by increasing subjective well-being (Fischer et al., 2017; Hunecke, 2013) and establishes intrinsic value and empathy towards other living things (Ericson et al., 2014). Shet et al., (2011) stated that a potentially mindful consumption goes along with a mindset that takes nature, self and society into consideration, and thus helps individuals to resist repetitive acquisitive and aspirational consumption patterns (Hunecke and Richter, 2019).

One of the conceptual suggestions on how mindfulness can contribute to sustainable consumption came from the author Rosenberg, who saw a twofold contribution to awareness raising. According to the author, increasing awareness of potentially accessible cognitive processes underlying consumption, which has become relatively automatic, enables the person to make more informed choices (Rosenber, 2005). Beside this, Pollock et al. (1998) and Dong and Brunel (2006) suggest that a certain marketing technique and sensitivity to persuasion can be reduces when people become more conscious (Rosenber, 2005), and the development of mindfulness is a supportive factor to obtain more personally spacious and more get more ecologically sustainable lifestyle (Cromton and Kasser, 2009; Fisher et al., 2017). On the other hand, Hunecke (2013) identified six psychological sources of mindfulness that increase the probability of choosing a sustainable lifestyle while at the same time promoting subjective well-being. In this theoretical approach, mindfulness plays a central role due to its transformative function and supports six sources defined as meaning construction, self-acceptance, self-capacity and capacity for repression (Hunecke and Richter, 2019).

Jacob et al. (2009) proved that there is a weak but statistically significant relationship between frequency of mindfulness meditation practices and sustainable food consumption. Also, Unsworth et al. (2016) observed that mindfulness meditation performed in nature creates a commitment to the self-nature of the person, and it has been proven that commitment to nature is a prediction of ecological behavior (Mayer and Fratz, 2004). According to authors research attachment to the environment is an intermediary between mindfulness and environmentally friendly behavior (Barbaro and Pickett, 2016).

On the other side Panno et al. (2018) identified that social dominance orientation has a mediating effect between mindfulness and pro-environmental behavior. Similarly, Amel et al. (200) and Brown and Kasser (2005) revealed that there is a positive relationship between mindfulness and ecological behavior (Hunecke and Richter, 2019).

Research and Methodology

Procedure and Study Sample

The aim of this research is to reveal the relationship between mindfulness and sustainable consumption. The study used a quantitative methodology employing a self-administered structured questionnaire to measure and validate the relationship between mindfulness and sustainable consumption. Convenience sampling method was used due to time and cost constraints. 220 data were collected by online questionnaire in İstanbul and 200 of them were used after screening. While calculating the sample size of the research, the calculation ($N > 50 + 8m$) suggested by Tabachnich and Fidell (2001) was used.

The questionnaire form consists of three sections. While the first part consists of the demographic questions, second part consists of mindfulness scale with fifteen items which is adapted from Brown and Ryan (2012). The third part of the questionnaire includes question of measuring sustainable consumption behavior adapted from Çakmak and Özkan (2016). measured using 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Assumption Tests

In the research, skewness and kurtosis values were examined to test the normality assumption. In order to examine whether the data has normal distribution, skewness and kurtosis values were firstly examined. As a result of analysis, it was determined that skewness value was between -1.148 and 1.714 and the kurtosis value was between -1.120 and 2.285 which showed a normal distribution.

Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliabilities

As a result of the exploratory factor analysis the KMO value was 0,777 and the Bartlett's test value was 0.000, but the analysis was repeated because of the factor loads of eight items of mindfulness and three items of sustainable consumption variable below 0.50. As a result of repeated analysis, the KMO value was 0.805 and the Bartlett's test value was 0.000 and the scales were collected under a total of two factors in accordance with their original status. Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient was used to calculate the reliability of each factor in the questionnaire and scales were found to be over 0.7 of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and they were accepted as reliable. Factor and reliability analysis results of the scales are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Result of Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

Construct/Factor	Item	Total Variance Explained	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO
Sustainable Consumption	SC3	35,104	,819	,892	,805
	SC4		,804		
	SC2		,800		
	SC6		,763		
	SC8		,736		
	SC7		,727		
	SC1		,696		
	SC9		,627		
Mindfulness	M8	55,146	,806	,838	
	M12		,759		
	M10		,712		
	M4		,680		
	M15		,674		
	M14		,669		
	M7		,624		

Analysis and Findings

The demographic characteristics of the sample

When demographic data of the study were examined, it was seen that 50 percent of the participants were female and 50 percent were male, while 29 percent of these participants were between the ages of 26-34 and 27 percent were between the ages of 35-44. Of the 200 respondents 65 percent were single, 35 percent were married and 88 percent were educated in high school and 61 percent were undergraduate. While the 94 percent of participants were private sector employees, 62 percent of household income was between 5.001TL and 7.000TL. Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of sample

Demographic variables	Frequency	%	Demographic variables	Frequency	%
Gender	100	50.0	Income level	2	1.0
Male	100	50.0	Under 2.020TL	52	26.0
Female			2.021-3.500TL	62	31.0
Age (Years)			3.501-5.000TL	62	31.0
Younger than 18	18	9.0	5.001-7.000TL	17	8.5
19-25	40	20.0	Above 7.001TL	5	2.5
26-34	59	29.5	Occupation		
35-44	55	27.5	Student	23	11.5
Older than 45	28	14.0	Private sector	94	47.0
Marital Status			Public sector	18	9.0
Single	69	34.5	Self-employed	31	15.5
Married	131	65.5	Retired	5	2.5
Education Level			Unemployed	29	14.5
Primary school	9	4.5			
High school	88	44.0			
Associate degree	26	13.0			
Bachelor's degree	61	30.5			
Graduate education	16	8.0			

Analysis of the relationship between mindfulness and sustainable consumption behavior

At first the relationship between mindfulness and sustainable consumption behavior was analyzed by using correlation analysis, then the effect of mindfulness on sustainable consumption behavior was analyzed by regression analysis.

Correlation analysis results support that mindfulness has a significant positive relationship between sustainable consumption. The results of the correlation analysis presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlations results

		Mindfulness	Sus_Con
Mindfulness	Pearson Correlation	1	0.259
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	200	200
Sus_Con	Pearson Correlation	0.259	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	200	200

Table 4: Regression analysis results

	Beta	t	p	F	p	R	R²
Model				14.225	0.000	0.259	0.067
(Constant)		18.827	0.000				
Mindfulness	0.248	3.772	0.000				

a. Dependent Variable: Sus_Con

The linear regression analysis was used to test the effect of mindfulness on sustainable consumption behavior. As shown by the Table 4, the F value of the model is 14.225 with the significance of 0.000 which reveals that the proposed model is statistically significant. The result of the regression analysis indicated that there is a significantly positive relationship between mindfulness ($b=0.248$, $p<0.05$) and sustainable consumption behavior.

Conclusions

Today's consumer behavior has turned into more automatic, instant or compulsive buying behavior. The concept of mindfulness, which has seen in various field literatures in recent years, aims to enable person to focus on the "now" and makes any decision without judgement but with awareness. Nature, harmony with nature and unconditional acceptance of nature were great importance in mindfulness, which is mostly realized with meditation practices.

With this thought the purpose of this study was to examine the direct effect of mindfulness on sustainable consumption behavior. The result clearly show that consumers' mindfulness has a direct effect on their sustainable consumptions. This result is consistent with the researches of (Rosenberg, 2005; Kasser, 2005 Amel et al., 2009; Chan, 2009; Jacob et al., 2009; Hunecke, 2013; Ericson et al., 2014; Bahl et al., 2016; Unsworth et al., 2016; Panno et al., 2018) that consumers with mindfulness tend to buy product with the attaching importance to sustainability. Studies conducted with sustainable consumption behavior (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Lee, 2008; Kim and Choi, 2005) reveal that the knowledge and awareness obtained by the consumer is an important indicator in sustainable behavior by creating environmental awareness and concern. In line with the result obtained from this study, it has been proven in these studies that as the level of self-control increases and awareness develops, the person tends towards sustainable consumption.

The positive relationship result obtained from this study is also consistent the five sustainable behavior patterns (disruption of routines, congruence of attitude and behavior, pro sociality and connectedness to nature and other, persons 'meaning in life and personal health and wellbeing) which defined by Geiger (2018). In other words, mindfulness causes the person to change the routine consumption patterns and eliminate the incompatibility between attitude and behavior. Mindfulness that leads to society bias and to establish a connection with nature makes it easier for person to understand his thoughts about the meaning of life by making him better aware if his inner happiness. All these changes based on mindfulness interpret persons' orientation to sustainable consumption behavior.

This study is unique as there are rare studies in the literature that examines the direct effect of mindfulness on consumers' sustainable consumption behavior. It makes an important contribution to both the literature and the marketing practices as it has shown that, with mindfulness practices sustainable consumption can be increased.

The findings of this research based just on consumers in Turkey. For further researches, examining the relationship between these two concepts with comparative analysis in Turkey and other countries are recommended. On the other hand, examination of the relationship between mindfulness and sustainable behavior with subjective wellbeing behaviors or materialistic behaviors will contribute marketing literature and practices. Beside these, revealing the effect of interpersonal concept such as personality or current situation on mindfulness and sustainable consumption relationship can provide important information for both marketing managers in terms of learning the behavioral patterns of the target market.

Finally, considering that mindfulness is a competence that will gradually develop over time, the impact of sustainable consumption on long term repetitive studies and examining the benefit of mindfulness programs to be implemented in this period will be useful for better understanding in the relationship between two concepts.

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