

Kwansei Gakuin University

Report of Research Outcome

2020/04/13

To President

Department : Institute of Business and Accounting
 Position : Professor
 Name : Norlia Ahmad

I report the outcome of the research as follows.

Name of the Fund/Program	<input type="checkbox"/> Sabbatical leave with grant ◆ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sabbatical leave with no grant <input type="checkbox"/> KGU Joint Research <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Special Research <input type="checkbox"/> Postdoctoral fellow ※Please report by designated form as for “International Research Collaboration”.
Research Theme	Sustainability and Marketing: The Influence of Intrinsic Motivations on Sustainable Customer Behavior
Research Site/Venue	Kwansei Gakuin University
Research period	2019/09/20 ~ 2020/03/31 (6 months)

◆ **Summary of the research outcome** (approx. 2,500 words)

Please write down the outcomes in detail regarding the research theme above.

The six months of sabbatical leave has provided valuable time to develop the groundwork and refine the framework of my research on sustainable consumer behavior. I have been able to focus on the literature regarding the influence of digital technology on consumer behavior and examined the link between mindful digital consumption and sustainability. The three pillars of sustainability are environment, society and, economy. My research offers a less obvious debate to the discussion of sustainability; it looks at consumers as individuals whose behavior has a major and cumulative impact on sustainable development agenda. It focuses on customer relationships with technology and links sustainable consumption with the behavioral change of individual consumers in their daily interaction with digital devices and online information. Digital transformations have influenced the way we feel, think and live, and for better or worse, will continue to do so. If sustainability is viewed as living within the limits of available natural, environmental and economic resources, sustainable digital behavior relates to consumer ability to make the best use of individual personal resource i.e. attention.

During the first half of my research leave, I have looked at the emergence of the ‘mindfulness’ industry which has surfaced in recent years as one of the market reactions to

information overloads and endless distractions. This industry extends beyond the mindfulness training and stress reduction program to include software applications and wearable devices. Digital technologies and the practice of mindfulness triumphed based on the extent of their influences on people's minds and behaviors. The rise of interest in mindfulness is also credited to the rising cost of mindlessness such as internet-related addiction and its negative impact on people's cognitive capabilities. Digital transformations have magnified the contents of our minds to such an extent that require efforts to confront their detrimental effect on individual and collective wellbeing. Based on these arguments, I develop a working framework and propositions toward promoting sustainable behavior of digital consumption from a rational and psychological perspective. In January 2020, this framework was submitted for the 2020 Global Marketing Conference in Seoul, South Korea. The conference which was initially scheduled in July 2020 was later postponed to November 2020 due to the global outbreak of COVID-19.

From the psychology perspective, my research expands the meditative state of mindfulness in which individual attention and awareness are directed towards the 'here' and 'now'. In this study, the word 'mindful' refers to being aware of our attention in terms of intent and action beyond the 'here' and 'now'. It argues that despite our dependence on digital technology, it is not a resource for every aspect of life; it is a tool to be capitalized for individual and collective wellbeing. This study views sustainable consumer behavior as behavior that encompasses individual beliefs, motives, values and, senses of responsibility in deliberate actions that focus on enhancing personal and collective wellbeing. In this respect, mindful consumption is regarded as the basis of sustainable consumer behavior. Whilst sustainable behavior, overconsumption and consumer dependencies on technology are also influenced by various external forces in the economic and social environment, my research merely explores internal drivers of behavioral change that are within consumer power such as inner motive and self-regulation. I argue that the ever more pervasive and persuasive technology is a reality now from which there is no retreat, thus, the most important challenge facing individual consumers is to develop digital literacy and necessary skills towards the mindful use of technology.

The current global pandemic has also restricted research trips and data collection during the latter half of my sabbatical leave. Accordingly, I have focused my research efforts on developing a conceptual framework of mindful digital consumption (MDC) and detail elements that aim to promote sustainable consumer behavior. These elements focus on self-awareness, inner motives, self-care and interest, and self-regulation which serve as a 'filter' of attention process. Theoretically, there exists a causal relationship between awareness, attention and, action. For instance, attention is the link in consumer decision making before we decide to buy or not to buy a product. Consumers do not get to the act of buying a product without giving their attention to the product. In this regard, the action also includes sharing information about the product or searching for more information. To provide more clarity of attention process, this study describes a model of attention funnel in which the self-awareness, inner motives, self-care and interest, and self-regulation serve as filtering elements for the reduction of the amount of information and only allow ones that support individual task focus.

The main idea of this research is rooted in the assumption that being mindful is not an option; it's a way of life. It leads to sustainable behavior in everything we do, including consumption. As digital technologies increasingly influenced the way we communicate, entertain, buy, travel and various other activities of our lives, analysis of this research is relevant beyond marketing and consumption. The outcomes of this research and completed article(s) are to be considered for publication(s) and will be presented in laypersons' language to also reach public audiences. In identifying the opportunities and challenges for sustainable

consumption, this research contributes to efforts that aim to cultivate the skills needed to survive and thrive in a digitally connected world. Although the MDC framework focuses on consumer interaction with technology, its emphasis is on the basic aspects of behavior i.e. intent and action. This allows the framework to be extended and adapted in various contexts of sustainable consumer behavior research. To reiterate, a mindful approach to all aspects of life enhances our wellbeing; the mindful act of digital consumption allows consumers not only to regain control of their attention but also to develop sustainable habits crucial for personal growth and collective wellbeing.

Moving forward, I plan to conduct deeper analyses to advance research on sustainable consumer behavior. Further research efforts focus on developing practical propositions regarding the mindful use of digital technologies. As digital transformations, the internet, and artificial intelligence (AI) technology can be more intrusive in peoples' lives, there is a sense of urgency to provide critical views of our interactions with digital devices and online information. In the so-called 'attention economy', we (the consumers) are considered as the 'product' and the advertisers are the actual consumers for the big technology companies. The main challenge for consumers as individuals is to recognize and understand the nature of attention economy and to develop the ability to control the 'controllable' such as our most personal resource i.e. attention.

-end of report-

Deadline : Within two months after finishing the research period.

Sabbatical leave with grant: Submit this report to President with confirmation by the dean of school you belong to.

※ Postdoctoral fellow is required to submit this report with confirmation by the dean of graduate school before the end of employment period.

Where to submit : Organization for Research and Development and Outreach (NUC)

◆ We put this report on the web of KGU. If there is any problem about it because of difficulties on your research, please let us know.