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Inside the sustainable consumption theoretical toolbox: Critical concepts for sustainability, consumption, and marketing

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a foundation for future marketing research on sustainable consumption through the application of three prominent theoretical perspectives of consumer behavior: responsible consumption, anti-consumption, and mindful consumption. This article considers how each perspective can help researchers better understand how consumers can engage in sustainable consumption practices, and develops insights that emerge from the simultaneous examination of multiple theoretical perspectives.

1. Introduction

Today's consumers live in a society with unprecedented individual comfort, convenience, and choice. The products consumers purchase come from sellers in the marketplace, which in turn acquire those products or their inputs from factories and farmhouses, whose supply chain starts in the same place—namely, the natural environment. Although the connections between how people live and the ecological system are made opaque by the complexity of today's economy, the simple truth is that consumption patterns cannot continue at their current rate (Lim, 2016; Peattie & Collins, 2009).

The idea of sustainable consumption has received a great deal of attention. International policy organizations (e.g. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations, Commission for Sustainable Development) and national research programs (e.g. in the United States, Norway, and the Netherlands) are beginning to realize that the patterns and levels of contemporary consumption are not ecologically sustainable. Many people from the scientific research community, as well as others, have argued convincingly and forcefully that current levels of consumption of natural resources and practices are unsustainable. This is evident from the nascent efforts not only to encourage sustainable consumption but also to understand how changes in sustainability might be undertaken. For example, prior research has investigated ethical consumption (Cherrier, 2005; Shaw & Shiu, 2003), environmental consciousness (Schlegelmilch, Bohlen, & Diamantopoulos, 1996), ecological intelligence (Jacobs, 2009), irrational desires (Elliott, 1997), consumption values (Lee, Levy, & Yap, 2015), place identity (Lee, Yap, & Levy, 2016), extended self (Kunchamboo, Lee, & Brace-Govan, 2017), social loading (Wilhite & Lutzenhiser, 1999), cognitive dissonance (Thogersen, 2002),

experiential meanings (Ger, 1999), ecological marketing (Chouinard, Ellison, & Ridgeway, 2011), pro-social marketing (Dibb & Carrigan, 2011), and plenitude consumption (Schor, 2010, 2012), among others. Similarly, various public policy approaches have also explored ways to resolve these problems (Lodge, 2001; Martens & Spaargaren, 2005; Prothero et al., 2011; Quinn, 1971; Thogersen, 2005).

Despite the work conducted in academia, business communities, governments, and non-profit organizations to understand and change unsustainable practices, such practices persist and are being amplified by the continued growth of the global economy (Assadourian, 2010; Henderson, 1999; Peattie, 1999; Seth, Sethia, & Srinivas, 2011; Varey, 2012). Furthermore, the notion of sustainable consumption itself is a problematic issue and field of scholarship. According to Gordon, Carrigan, and Hastings (2011) and Peattie and Collins (2009), critics view sustainable consumption as an oxymoron because to "consume" something means to use it up or destroy it—the complete opposite of "sustainability." A different perspective of "consumption" is therefore required. Traditionally, consumption is narrowly discussed as being confined to the contextual lens of purchasing (e.g. Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Mason, 1993; Wertenbroch, 1998; Westbrook, 1987). This creates a problematic situation because understanding the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of any form of consumption requires a holistic comprehension of all potential impacts (e.g. social environmental) that occur throughout the entire production and consumption cycle of a product (Jones, Clarke-Hill, Comfort, & Hillier, 2008). Thus, consumption needs to be understood not as an activity of purchase but as a process of decisions and actions that include purchasing, product use, and the handling of any remaining tangible product after use (Peattie & Collins, 2009).

In addition to consumption, only narrow discussions of sustainable

development, which includes both consuming and producing, have appeared in the literature, most of which emphasizes environmental dimensions rather than economic, social, and ethical dimensions of sustainability (Lim, 2016). Furthermore, of the environmental dimension, impacts such as energy use or carbon emissions have dominated discussions over others, such as the impact on biodiversity (Peattie & Collins, 2009). Although researchers agree on the need to reduce resource utilization (sustainable consumption) as part of sustainable development (Kotler, 2011; Peattie, 2001), a lack of consensus exists on whether consumption should be reduced or just changed and whether individual consumers have the capability to contribute significantly to resource conservation (Banbury, Stinerock, & Subrahmanyan, 2012). It has also proved difficult thus far to agree on a precise definition of the term "sustainable consumption" (Dolan, 2002). As Peattie and Collins (2009, p. 108) stated in their guest editorial in a special issue on sustainable consumption:

> More than one contributing author, when requested by referees to provide a clear and explicit definition of sustainable consumption, decline to on the basis that they do not believe attempts to settle on a single view were genuinely helpful.

Nonetheless, the realization that consumers' choices, behaviors, and lifestyles—that is, their consumption decisions—play a vital role in achieving sustainable development is one of the (relatively few) points of agreement to have emerged in the last decade (Jackson & Michaelis, 2003). Ultimately, the problems related to unsustainable consumption are growing, and the approach to addressing them must become more intentional, comprehensive, and systematic (Prothero et al., 2011).

If marketing is truly the ultimate social practice of postmodern consumer culture (Firat, 1993; Firat & Dholakia, 2006), it carries the heavy burden of determining the conditions and meaning of life in the future (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993). Van Raaij (1993) echoes the idea that marketing plays a key role in giving meaning to life through consumption. Although academics and practitioners from various disciplines (e.g. marketing, psychology, sociology, and economics) have explored ways to encourage consumers to choose more sustainable products, scholarship still lacks understanding of how to encourage more sustainable patterns of consumption, especially for the society at large. This article agrees with Lim (2016) and Webster (2009) that marketing has been more data driven than theory driven, which highlights the need for a sound theory base to understand the interplay between sustainability and consumption. Marketing theories (and theoretical perspectives) to analyze and describe sustainable consumption practices remain underdeveloped. As sustainability continues to grow as a central concern of many stakeholders in society, researchers need to offer new insights that build on current knowledge on sustainability and consumption and strive to develop a holistic conceptualization of sustainable consumption. Toward this end, this article draws on a set of well-established theoretical perspectives to articulate their contributions to promote sustainability in consumption for marketing and consumer behavior research. According to Connelly, Ketchen, and Slater (2011) and Lundberg (2004), relying on theories (and theoretical perspectives) that have demonstrated their usefulness for explaining empirical phenomenon should instill a measure of confidence in the insights derived from them.

The main goal of this conceptual article is to inspire marketing scholars to consider how sustainable consumption fits into their research agendas and to provide a broad conceptual foundation for that research. By bringing consumption issues to the fore, this article reviews, extends, and integrates three prominent theoretical perspectives relevant to the pursuit of encouraging greater sustainability consumption practices among consumers—namely, responsible consumption, anti-consumption, and mindful consumption. Recently, Connelly et al. (2011) leveraged nine theoretical perspectives to set an agenda for research on sustainability marketing. This article takes a similar approach by developing a "theoretical toolbox" that marketing

and consumer behavior researchers can use to build knowledge about sustainability, consumption, and marketing. More specifically, this article considers how each perspective can help researchers better understand how consumers engage in sustainable consumption practices. This article then attempts to extract critical features of a turbulent field that pervades the entire fabric of society and to condense them into a forward-looking blueprint for sustainable consumption—that is, the article's concentration on social-psychological frames of reference should directly propel greater discussion in closely related areas, such as consumer behavior, marketing, psychology, and sociology, and indirectly provide greater insights and foundations for multidisciplinary work (e.g. behavioral economics and finance) on the topic of sustainable consumption.

In essence, this article makes three major contributions. First, it offers greater clarity on the concept of sustainable consumption by delineating its conceptual boundaries. Second, this article makes a case for taking responsible consumption, anti-consumption, and mindful consumption as theoretical perspectives to sustainable consumption and delivers a comprehensive review of key insights from the extant literature in these areas. Third, this article provides a critical evaluation of these theoretical perspectives, including how they can be extended individually and integrated collectively, and offers contributions and insights that can be gleaned from them. As a whole, this article should help academics, practitioners, and policy makers fully grasp the notion of sustainable consumption, as well as encourage its practice more prominently among consumers through the conceptual insights discussed herein.

2. Sustainable consumption

Consumption, which lies at the heart of economic, social, ecological, and ethical debates, is being increasingly challenged by consumerist and anti-consumption movements (Forno & Graziano, 2014;). According to a survey by Delpal and Hatchuel (2007) 44% of consumers report that they consider social awareness issues when shopping (e.g. not buying products involving child labor, not causing suffering to animals, reducing pollution), 61% are prepared to pay 5% more to respect such commitments, 31% have boycotted a particular product at some point, and 52% have bought a committed product in the last six months. Sensitivity to ethical aspects of consumption has also increased, particularly among younger consumers, from 6% to 15% since 2002. Although these figures appear promising, a substantial amount of the larger population remains ignorant of or chooses not to engage in sustainable consumption practices. For example, on average, 46% of Europeans claim to be willing to pay a higher price for ethical products (MORI, 2000), but at the same time most products with ethical labeling initiatives (e.g. organic food, products free from child labor, legally logged wood, fair-trade products) often have a market shares of less than 1% (MacGillivray, 2000). Moreover, the industrialized economies, which represent only 23% of the world's population, consume more than 77% of its resources (including 72% of all energy) and generate approximately 80% of overall pollution (Tolba, 2001). Relatedly, Peattie and Collins (2009) argue that many consumers find it difficult to consume sustainably primarily because the acts of consuming and sustaining are contradictory to each other. This raises a key question: Is the concept of sustainable consumption theoretically coherent and practically actionable to consumers either as a collective group or as individuals?

To pinpoint transformative action for the discourse of sustainable development, the imperative need for an established conceptualization of sustainable consumption is apparent. Both governments and non-governmental organizations attending the 1992 Earth Summit agreed that major changes in present consumption patterns were necessary to solve the global environment and development problems (Reisch & Scherhorn, 1998). This leads to the question: What is sustainable consumption? Peattie and Collins (2009) contend that it is

consumption whereby each individual consumes only his or her "earthshare," which is equivalent to 2.1 global hectares. They nonetheless argue that this is not the only possible answer. In particular, research on sustainability represents a broad range of social and environmental issues (Gordon et al., 2011; Peattie, 2001; Shaw & Newholm, 2002), and some researchers have endeavored to focus on very specific (albeit important) sustainability issues, such as climate change (e.g. Perry, 2006; Robinson et al., 2006; Scott, McBoyle, Minogue, & Mills, 2006) and global poverty (e.g. Onuche, 2010; Wachs, 2010). Furthermore, research on consumption is sometimes represented by the whole consumption process (e.g. Coughlan, Macredie, & Patel, 2011; Dube & Morgan, 1998; Yang, Mao, & Peracchio, 2012) and sometimes by specific steps, such as information search (e.g. Schmidt & Spreng, 1996), purchase (e.g. Ji & Wood, 2007), and product disposal (e.g. Cooper, 2005).

If we return to the notion of sustainable development, as popularized following the publication of the Brundtland report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), sustainable consumption should meet current needs and wants at a level and in a form that can be continued indefinitely, without impoverishing future generations and the planet's ability to meet those needs and wants. Manoochehri's (2001) report for the United Nations Environment Programme added that sustainable consumption comprises several key issues, including meeting needs, enhancing quality of life, improving efficiency, minimizing waste, taking a life-cycle perspective, and accounting for the equity dimension (for both current and future generations), while continually reducing environmental damage and the risk to human health. A working definition proposed by the 1994 Olso Symposium on Sustainable Consumption referred to sustainable consumption as the use of goods and services that meet basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials, and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations. A common theme throughout the various conceptualizations of sustainable consumption is the meeting of basic needs. The assumption is that when people consume beyond these needs, they are being irrational, greedy, immoral, and manipulated (Dolan, 2002). Also prominent throughout these conceptualizations is the desire to maintain current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Academic researchers have also defined sustainable consumption in different ways. Because consumption itself can be perceived as antithetical to sustainability, some scholars have defined it to mean voluntary simplicity (e.g. Cherrier, 2009)—that is, a way of life that rejects consumerism, particularly high consumption and materialistic lifestyles, and affirms living "the simple life" (Gregg, 2009). Thus, sustainable consumption is a concept that goes beyond the traditional understanding of consumerism, which Hume (2010) describes as gathering and purchasing material possessions to increase happiness and social position. More specifically, the act of consuming sustainably involves a decision-making process that accounts for the consumer's social responsibility in addition to individual needs and wants (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Conversely, Kilbourne, McDonagh, and Prothero (1997) connect sustainable consumption with the need to communicate the link among ecological degradation, modern hyperconsumption, and prevailing economic and political institutions—that is, through the dominant social paradigm, which includes the ideologies of progress and rationality. With this definition, hyperconsumption connotes consumption in which the ecological referent is obscure—consumers are no longer aware of the natural resources used to manufacture goods (Dolan, 2002). Dolan (2002) and Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt (2012) further add that if consumers can gain macromarketing insights into and understand the true meaning of objects as products of nature, sustainability will follow. Perhaps a more concrete definition comes from Jackson (2003), who refers to sustainable consumption as consumption that supports the ability of current and

future generations to meet their needs without causing irreversible damage to the environment or a loss of function in natural systems, and Schor (2010, 2012), who connected the act of consuming sustainably to plenitude consumption, which accounts for the consumer's environmental and social responsibility in addition to individual needs and wants over time, as a solution to encourage sustainable development. More important, Lim (2016) argues that there is no universal solution to sustainability. Instead, sustainability, as an agenda, needs to be continuously nurtured by taking an adaptive, balanced, and contextualized approach in the crafting of strategies to achieve the goals of given dimensions in any definition of sustainability and its related concepts (e.g. sustainable consumption); absence of this outlook prevents the realization of sustainability (e.g. human fulfillment and survival).

From this literature review, this article relies on ideologies of progress and rationality and take a life-cycle and equitable perspective to identify sustainable consumption as an adaptive, balanced, and contextualized approach to consumption that (1) meets the basic needs of the current generation, (2) does not impoverish future generations, (3) does not cause irreversible damage to the environment, (4) does not create a loss of function in natural systems (ecological and human value systems; environmental and social responsibility), (5) improves resource use efficiency, (6) improves quality of life, and (7) avoids consumerism and modern hyperconsumption. These general principles are in line with Lim's (2016, p. 245) call to "adopt a comprehensive and holistic approach to identify sustainability issues and problems and to manage corresponding sustainability initiatives with a well-informed mindset." Thus, the inherent characteristics (i.e. adaptive, balanced, and contextualized) and multi-faceted principles (i.e. seven general principles) of sustainable consumption described herein are mainly intended to increase opportunities for achieving greater sustainability, not limiting them. Because sustainable consumption has been positioned as the solution to sustainable development, this article examines the conceptual underpinnings that enable its practice.

3. Application of theoretical perspectives to sustainable consumption

This article summarizes three theoretical perspectives of consumer behavior that seem most pertinent to sustainable consumption research and considers the key insights emerging from each perspective. Specifically, this article considers responsible consumption, anti-consumption, and mindful consumption. Table 1 summarizes the key premise of each perspective and illustrates its potential implications for sustainable consumption research.

3.1. Responsible consumption

The concept of responsible consumption is complex and characterized by a large diversity of practices. The first definition was coined by Fisk (1973), who referred to responsible consumption as the rational and efficient use of resources with respect to the global human population. However, he concentrated only on the supply side, showing how firms can contribute to responsible consumption. This article notes that what is produced is governed in part by consumers' needs and wants. As such, a focus on consumption from the demand side—that is, on consumers—provides a strategic complement to Fisk's definition. In support of this notion, existing studies, such as those by Antil (1984), Roberts (1995), and Webb, Mohr, and Harris (2008), all show responsible consumption as a consumer behavior.

More specifically, the work of Webster (1975) set the foundation for further work on responsible consumption from the demand perspective. He proposed that consumers are "socially conscious" when they consider the public consequences of their private consumption and attempt to use purchasing power to bring about social change. The basis of this conceptualization is grounded in the psychological construct of social involvement, which posits that socially conscious consumers

Table 1
Key consumption theoretical perspectives and their implications for marketing research on sustainability.

| Theoretical perspective	Key premise	Key insights for sustainability
Responsible consumption	Responsible consumers' social concerns, environmental concerns, and ethical concerns are translated into responsibilities that can be expressed through consumers' consumption decisions.	Consumers become aware of the negative effects of consumption on the outside world. Such awareness is important to reduce the detrimental effects of consumption on sustainability.
Anti-consumption	The strength of feelings and behaviors of consumers who engage in anti-consumption varies (i.e. aversion, avoidance, and abandonment). Consumers who abandon consumption can do so through rejection, restriction, and reclamation.	To satisfy consumer needs and address consumption practices that cannot be rejected outright, alternative consumption choices include restriction and reclamation.
Mindful consumption	A mindset developed through awareness and attention that reflects receptivity to and engagement with the present moment (a sense of care toward the self, community, and nature), which reinforces temperance in consumption practices (private and public goods and services).	Greater awareness of both the self and the ecosystem may function to dampen the effects of unsustainable practices.
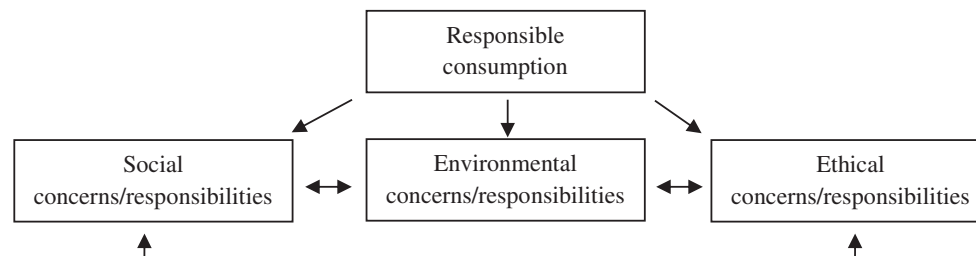
Fig. 1. Responsible consumption.

must (1) be aware of social problems, (2) believe that they have the power to make a difference, and (3) be active in the community. Despite Webster's (1975) broad definition of the concept, the outcomes of his study deviated from the word "social" to instead narrowly focus on "environmental" aspects. Roberts (1995) subsequently reworked Webster's concept and introduced the term "socially responsible consumers," or those who purchase products that have a positive (or less negative) impact on the environment and patronize businesses that attempt to effect related positive social change. This definition encompasses two dimensions: environmental concern and the more general social concern. Similarly, Mohr, Webb, and Harris (2001) suggested that socially responsible consumer behavior means basing acquisition, usage, and disposition decisions on a desire to minimize or eliminate any harmful effects and maximize the long-term beneficial impact on the environment and society. In contrast, some scholars have chosen to focus on the ethical aspects of consumer behavior (Carrington, Zwick, & Neville, in press; Chatzidakis, 2015; Chatzidakis, Maclaran, & Bradshaw, 2012; Shaw & Riach, 2011; White, MacDonnell, & Ellard, 2012). Although this research stream is often referred to as ethical consumption, a clear overlap exists between this concept and responsible consumption. Smith (1996) suggests that ethical consumption simply means consuming products that are congruent with what society views as "good." Marketing literature has commonly portrayed "good" consumers as those who are ethical, that is, those who consider social and ecological welfare important and, as a result, conduct their consumption lifestyles in accordance with these issues (Barnett, Cloke, Clarke, & Malpass, 2005; Lim, 2016; Shaw & Riach, 2011). Indeed, what is considered "good" (or "right") with regard to sustainability is often predicated on widely accepted moral philosophies adopted by most global citizens (e.g. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals).

More important, though responsible consumption is frequently examined in the literature, there is little consistency in the terminology and definitions used. For example, Anderson and Cunningham (1972) and Webster (1975) use "socially conscious consumers"; Antil (1984), Mohr et al. (2001), and Roberts (1995) use "socially responsible consumers"; Follows and Jobber (2000) use "environmentally responsible consumers"; and Schlegelmilch et al. (1996) use "environmentally conscious consumers". Perhaps Ozcaglar-Toulouse (2005, p. 52) offers

the most comprehensive definition of responsible consumption to date—"the set of voluntary acts, situated in the sphere of consumption, achieved from the awareness of consequences judged as negatives of consumption on the outside world to oneself, these consequences raising therefore not from the functionality of the purchases nor from immediate personal interest." Although this definition does not explicitly state a focus on social, environmental, or ethical concerns, it provides a context in which "responsibility" is shaped by the environment, and both social and ethical concerns are indirectly part of that environment. Thus, this article contends that, gradually, social (e.g. maximizing the benefits for society and social equity), environmental (e.g. minimizing resource use, encouraging preservation, and reducing environmental degradation), and ethical (e.g. morally wrong for society to engage in activities that pollute and destroy the economic, natural, and social environment) dimensions will be incorporated into the umbrella term of responsible consumption (Lim, 2016). That is, responsible consumers are those that include social, environmental, and ethical concerns into their consumption decisions (see Fig. 1).

3.2. Anti-consumption

Marketing scholars often examine sustainability by studying consumers' preference for environmentally friendly products and socially responsible choices. However, the notion of anti-consumption also plays a key role in sustainability. Sandikci and Ekici (2009) argue that consumers can choose to avoid and not consume products that are incompatible with their conservation ideology. This is further evidenced by the rising anti-consumption movements and sub-cultures (Bettany & Kerrane, 2011; Dubuisson-Quellier, 2015; Garcia-Bardidia, Nau, & Remy, 2011), triggered by deteriorating quality of life and environmental degradation around the world, ascribed to excessive unsustainable consumption and growing consumer power facilitated by technology advancement (Pentina & Amos, 2011). Indeed, there is a broad scope of reactions against consumption (Lee, Fernandez, & Hyman, 2009b), which includes both active and visible actions (Hogg, Banister, & Stephenson, 2009) occurring among consumer groups (simplifiers and global impact consumers; Iyer & Muncy, 2009) and within systems (Cherrier & Murray, 2007). For example, research on brand avoidance (e.g. Lee, Motion, & Conroy, 2009a),
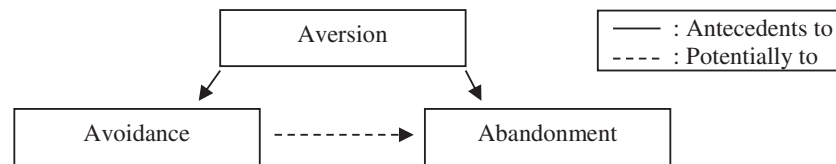
Fig. 2. Aversion, avoidance, and abandonment in the articulation of anti-consumption.

boycotting (Hoffmann, 2011; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009), consumer rebellion (Funches, Markley, & Davis, 2009; Hoffmann & Muller, 2009), consumer resistance (Close & Zinkhan, 2009; Cromie & Ewing, 2009), culture jamming (Sandlin & Callahan, 2009), emancipated consumption (Holt, 2002; Kozinets, 2002), ethical consumption (Shaw & Riach, 2011; White et al., 2012), non-consumption (Stammerjohan & Webster, 2002), and voluntary simplicity (Shaw & Newholm, 2002) addresses consumer motivations, ideologies, and practices related to anti-consumption. Common to each of these anti-consumption manifestations is the aim to withstand the force or effect of consumerism at the level of the marketplace.

Notwithstanding the extant reactions against consumption, several scholars have endeavored to define and conceptualize the notion of anti-consumption more precisely. Penaloza and Price (1993) identify anti-consumption as resistance to a culture of consumption and the marketing of mass-produced goods. Zevestoski (2002) refers to anti-consumption as an act of resistance to, distaste of, or even resentment of consumption. Both sets of authors relate anti-consumption to a resistance in activity and attitude. This means that a set of attitudes and counter-cultural behaviors challenging the capitalist system and opposing oppressive forces exists (Garcia-Bardidia et al., 2011). More recent research, however, has challenged this narrow focus because it revolves only around the topic of power (power asymmetry) (Lee, Roux, Cherrier, & Cova, 2011), which may not necessarily exist in all instances of anti-consumption. Consequently, anti-consumption assumes a more open nuance in recent research. For example, Lee et al. (2009b) and Lee et al. (2011) suggest that anti-consumption literally means "against" consumption. Other researchers suggest that rejection is at the heart of anti-consumption (Hogg et al., 2009; Lee, 2006; Lee et al., 2009b). Iyer and Muncy (2009) add that anti-consumption targets overall consumption or specific products as a means to achieve societal or personal goals. Although some consumers may affirm their anti-consumption attitudes through non-standard consumption and/or lifestyle choices (e.g. purchase of environmentally friendly products), anti-consumption investigations center on the rationales against consumption rather than the approach aspects of consumer attitudes and behaviors. As such, anti-consumption is not synonymous with alternative, conscientious, or green consumption (Lee et al., 2009b). Kozinets and Handelman (2004) posit that anti-consumption attitudes give way to the ideology of progress and material growth, and Lee et al. (2009b) argue that anti-consumption need not be contrary to business success or enhanced quality of life on the grounds that anti-consumption can and should include ways to reduce consumption. Because enhanced quality of life depends on improving the quantity and quality of consumption, anti-consumption is not an inherent economic threat, and thus both academics and practitioners should view acts of anti-consumption as opportunities to learn about societal processes and practices. Accordingly, anti-consumption, similar to consumption, practices enable consumers to express their values, ideas, beliefs, and overall identities (Cherrier & Murray, 2007). Thus, this article posits that anti-consumption is a subjective consumer practice motivated by personal interest and/or social environmental concerns, in which the consumer rejects the consumption of a particular product/brand on both a personal and a societal level. Therefore, the focus of anti-consumption research should be more on consumption issues, especially on the reasons against consumption, and less on power issues.

To further our conceptual understanding, this article examines more closely the discourses in anti-consumption in extant literature. Two streams of research exist. The first stream is the articulation of anti-consumption through aversion, avoidance, and abandonment (Hogg et al., 2009). These three concepts are distinguished by the strength of feelings and behaviors in which consumers express them. Aversion is the psychological action of turning away from a particular subject and is often expressed as dislike, disgust, and revulsion (a form of attitude); avoidance involves staying away from a particular subject; and abandonment involves giving up something previously consumed (forms of actual behavior; Hogg, 1998; Hogg et al., 2009). Premised on previous consumer emotion–behavior underpinnings, in which consumers' affect precedes their expression of behavior (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Westbrook, 1987; White & Yu, 2005), aversion stimulates behavioral responses of either avoidance or abandonment. Hogg and Abrams (1998) and Hogg et al. (2009) illustrate that aversion and avoidance stem from consumers' determination to distance themselves from negative stereotypical images and their desire to adopt and follow preferred images of chosen social groups (e.g. supporting and identifying with underdogs versus the top dog; McGinnis & Gentry, 2009). Similarly, consumers who avert from and avoid being associated (dissociated) with unwanted images may abandon related practices. Fig. 2 depicts the inter-relationship among expressions of aversion, avoidance, and abandonment in the articulation of anti-consumption.

The second stream of research is the rejection, restriction, and reclamation of anti-consumption (Lee et al., 2011). According to Lee et al. (2011), anti-consumption focuses on the reasons against consumption expressed through rejection, restriction, and reclamation. In the process of rejecting, consumers intentionally and meaningfully exclude particular products/brands from their consumption cycle (i.e. do not consume, a form of actual behavior). When complete anti-consumption is not possible, they can chose to restrict consumption of particular products/brands (i.e. limit consumption, a form of actual behavior), for example, by restricting electricity or water use. Reclamation represents an ideological shift to a holistic process that includes acquisition, use, and dispossession (i.e. retrieving products/brands from the process of dispossession, a form of actual behavior); for example, dumpster divers reclaim trash from the process of dispossession and imbue waste with new meaning and value (Fernandez, Brittain, & Bennett, 2011). To further this notion, this article argues that consumers who reject and restrict consumption of a particular product/brand can find alternatives through reclamation. As a heretical behavior, rejection and restriction of consumption is not easy to adopt and refusing to purchase certain items can often be emotionally and financially costly (Cherrier & Murray, 2007). More often than not, consumption provides comfort, satisfies physical needs, and, ultimately, contributes to the construction of one's self and its communication to others (Ewen, 1988). Thus, reclamation permits consumers to consume in a self-sufficient manner without clashing with their reasons against consumption. The idea is that reclamation provides something (an alternative) to consume and satisfies, to some degree, consumers' needs and wants. Fig. 3 depicts anti-consumption through rejection, restriction, and reclamation.

From the two streams of anti-consumption research, several observations can be deduced. First, the articulation of anti-consumption through aversion, avoidance, and abandonment is limited from the different degrees of anti-consumption. That is, this representation narrowly assumes that consumers have only a definite choice at the
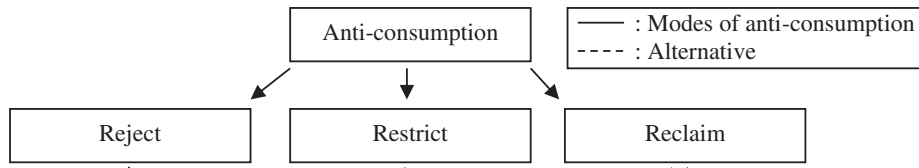
Fig. 3. Anti-consumption through rejection, restriction, and reclamation.
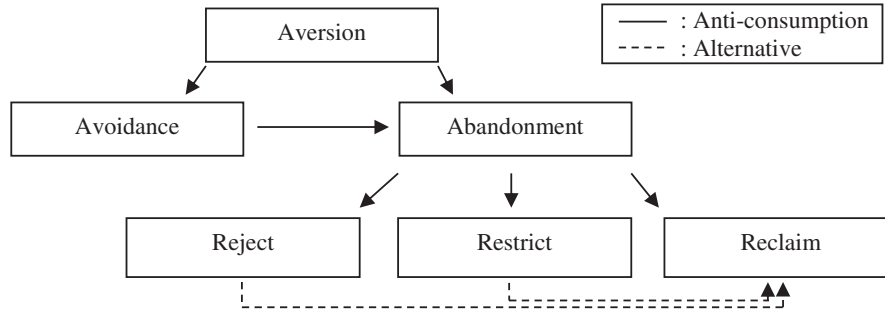

Fig. 4. An integrated model for anti-consumption.

end, which is to abandon consumption. In circumstances when complete anti-consumption is not possible, the theoretical limitation of Hogg et al.'s (2009) proposition becomes apparent. Second, the rejection, restriction, and reclamation phenomenon of anti-consumption provides a good understanding of consumer choices with anti-consumption. Notably, this approach provides variation in anti-consumption choices; that is, it takes into account when complete anti-consumption is and is not possible. The shortcomings here, however, is that it lacks an explanation of the different levels of consumer commitment to anti-consumption. Thus, an integration of these two propositions would be useful. More specifically, the notion of abandonment serves as a key link between the two streams of anti-consumption research, in that the act of giving up consumption can be explained more broadly by its actionable alternatives, namely rejecting, restricting, and reclaiming products/brands in the consumption cycle. Thus, this integration would enable researchers to distinguish consumers' expressed commitment to anti-consumption as observed through aversion, avoidance, and abandonment, in which varied anti-consumption choices are available (i.e. rejection, restriction, and reclamation). Fig. 4 presents an integrated model that overcomes the inadequacy of each independent proposition.

3.3. Mindful consumption

Although early scholars believed that mindfulness and its associated meditation practices were esoteric, bound to religious beliefs, and attainable only by certain people, several decades of empirical research and scientific discovery have defrayed these myths. Research now considers mindfulness an inherent quality of human consciousness—that is, the capacity for attention and awareness oriented to the present moment that varies in degree within and between individuals and which can be assessed empirically and independent of religious, spiritual, or cultural beliefs (Black, 2011). This contemporary articulation of mindfulness dates back to 1979 when Jon Kabat-Zinn founded the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts to treat the chronically ill. This program sparked a growing interest and application of mindfulness ideas and practices, especially in the fields of medicine and psychology (Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth, & Burney, 1985; Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth, Burney, & Sellers, 1987). Kabat-Zinn (1994) defined mindfulness as the act of directing attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmental. Despite this landmark definition of mindfulness,

similar conceptual definitions soon followed his work. These definitions include keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality (Hanh, 1976); the knack of noticing without comment whatever is happening in one's present experience (Claxton, 1990); bringing one's complete attention to the present experience on a moment-to-moment basis (Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999); the non-judgmental observation of the ongoing stream of internal and external stimuli as they arise (Baer, 2003); an open and receptive attention to and awareness of what is occurring in the present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2004); an awareness of present experience with acceptance (Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005); an attention that is receptive to the whole field of awareness and remains in an open state so that it can be directed to currently experienced sensations, thoughts, emotions, and memories (Jha, Krompinger, & Baime, 2007); a frame of mind in which one maintains a continuous attention to detail (Matook & Kautz, 2008); and an awareness that arises from intentionally attending in an open, accepting, and discerning way to whatever is arising in the present moment (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009). Bishop et al. (2004) further suggest that the concept of mindfulness can be broken down into two components. The first component involves the self-regulation of attention with a focus on immediate experience; it involves (1) sustained attention, or the ability to switch back to the experience if the mind wanders, and (2) non-elaborative awareness of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. The second component involves approaching one's experience with curiosity and acceptance, regardless of the valence and desirability of the experience. As such, mindfulness can be broadly conceptualized as a type of non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation is acknowledge and accepted as it is (Bishop et al., 2004). In contrast with mindfulness, mindlessness occurs when attention and awareness capacities are scattered because of a preoccupation with past memories or future plans and worries. In turn, this leads to limited awareness of and attention to experiences in the present moment (Black, 2011).

Although the practice of mindfulness in the business field is nascent compared with fields such as medicine and psychology, business-related research on mindfulness is present from both the general consumer and organizational perspective (e.g. Barber & Deale, 2014; Hales, Kroes, Chen, & Kang, 2012; Mangiameli, 2012; Ndubisi, 2012; Sheth, Sethia, & Srinivas, 2011; Uslay & Erdogan, 2014; Zhu, 2014). Sheth et al.'s (2011) seminal article offers the first extensive conceptual integration of the notion of mindfulness with consumption. They premise mindful consumption on consciousness in thought and beha-

vior of the consequences of consumption. More specifically, Sheth and colleagues contend that the consumer's mindset guides and shapes his or her behavior on whether to consume sustainably or unsustainably. This is in line with existing research suggesting that there are two main facets to consumption: one intangible (i.e. the consumer's mindset pertaining to attitudes, values, and expectations surrounding consumption behavior) and one tangible (i.e. the consumer's behavior of engaging in consumption) (Foxall, 2002; Hogg, 2006; Saad, 2007; Sheth et al., 2011; Solomon, 2010). Both facets assume an imperative role in dealing with the problem of unsustainable consumption because consumer attitudes and values influence consumption choices (Kim, Forsythe, Gu, & Moon, 2002; Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991; Vinson, Scott, & Lamont, 1977; Wang, Dou, & Zhou, 2008) and determine how consumption is deduced, such as whether to increase or decrease a particular consumption practice (Sheth et al., 2011).

In mindful consumption, Sheth and colleagues contend that consumer mindset and behavior are characterized by a core attribute. In particular, the core attribute for mindful mindset centers on consumer sense of care relative to the consequences of consumption. Three realms reside within this core attribute. The first is caring for the self, which is not about being selfish or self-centered but rather about paying heed to one's well-being, which includes eudemonic aspects (e.g. happiness) and economic aspects (e.g. monetary sacrifices). The second realm is caring for the community, which is essential for both collective and individual well-being because most people find happiness in a social context (Chan & Li, 2010; Dennis, Alamanos, Papagiannidis, & Bourlakis, 2016). The third realm is caring for nature, which has intrinsic, instrumental, and aesthetic values (Kilbourne, 2006; Winter, 2007). In contrast, the core attribute for mindful behavior centers on consumer temperance in consumption in the pursuit of enhancing personal well-being in ways that are consistent with personal values. Three types of behavior require temperance. The first is acquisitive consumption, which involves acquiring things at a scale that exceeds consumers' needs or capacity to consume (e.g. buffet). The second is repetitive consumption, which involves the cycle of buying, discarding, and buying again (e.g. technological and fashion products). The third is aspirational consumption, which is often associated with the idea of conspicuous consumption (Lertwannawit & Mandhachitara, 2012; Veblen, 1899; Zhan & He, 2012). Unlike in the past, aspirational forms of consumption, especially conspicuous consumption, are no longer confined to the affluent, for whom competition is a main driver, but also to consumer segments of lower socio-economic standing (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012, 2014). Thus, for consumption to be sustainable, consumer behavior in all three areas must undergo predicate temperance in behavior on a caring mindset.

Notwithstanding the in-depth understanding and conceptualization of mindful consumption offered by Sheth and colleagues, several shortcomings are present. First is the narrow focus of consumption on a constrained set of classifications: acquisitive, repetitive, and aspirational. This potentially creates a problem for future research because it imposes a guide for only this set of definite consumption practices, and

thus ambiguities may arise if consumption practices outside these classifications are present in a research context—for example, convenience and adventurous consumption practices. Second, consumer consumption is not limited to only goods; services are also consumed. Although sustainability implications of services might be less serious at this time, this article argues that a better conceptualization of the behavioral section of the mindful consumption framework could be made—what may not seem useful today may be useful and highly sought after in the future. Third, Sheth and colleagues assume only private consumption in the behavioral section of their framework, whereas the mindset section suggests the possibility to extend implications and consequences to include the public consumption, such as wildlife habitats, watershed services, carbon storage, and scenic landscapes. Lacking a formal market, these natural assets are traditionally absent from society's balance sheet; their critical contributions are often overlooked in public, corporate, and individual decision making (U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, 2012). Thus, the current article's concern with Sheth and colleague's model of mindful consumption pertains to the mindful behavior facet. To advance mindful consumption, this article argues that the two types of temperance in behavior can derive from private public product (e.g. goods, services) consumption on the premise that (1) the private consumption of products falls under the same realm as previous classifications of acquisitive, repetitive, and aspiration, and other potential classifications are applicable to private products, and (2) significantly different strategies may be required for the consumption of public products because their consumption may cause more serious sustainability implications (e.g. the consumption of natural rainforests and exotic animals).

Instead of having specific and narrow product classifications in a guiding framework, this article argues that a wiser choice would be to position these classifications as research contexts that fall under the broad classification of private and public consumption practices, specifically because this classification addresses the previous three main concerns identified (see Fig. 5). On the basis of this article's review of the literature and its current articulation, it offers a new summarized idea of mindful consumption, that is, mindful consumption derives from a mindset of awareness and attention that reflects receptivity to and engagement with the present moment, including a sense of care toward the self, community, and nature, which reinforces temperance in consumption practices that are both private and public in nature. To this end, this article agrees with existing scholars that a focus on mindful consumption can be valuable in aligning consumer self-interests to be free from unrewarding and unsustainable patterns of consumption with business self-interests to fulfill sustainability obligations to meet the expectations of stakeholders. Indeed, mindfulness has the potential to lead to sustainable consumption by encouraging practices that heighten people's sense of awareness, whereby greater awareness of both the self and the ecosystem can serve to dampen the effects of unsustainable practices, such as overconsumption and deviant consumption, thereby fostering more sustainable outcomes.
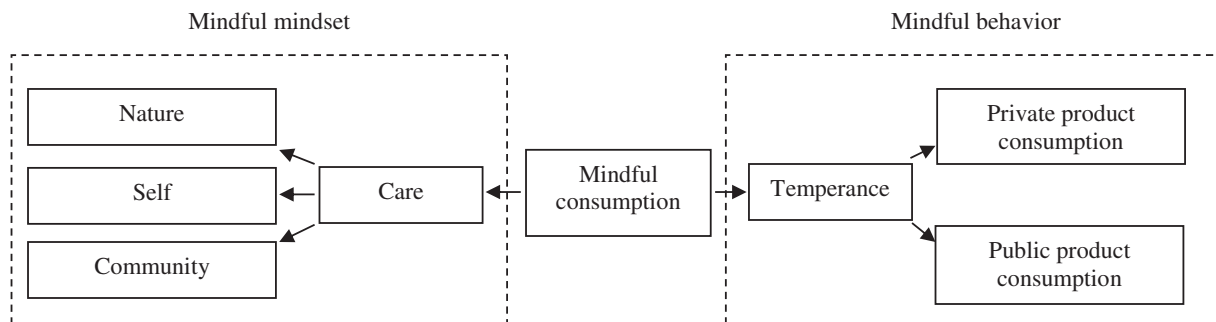

Fig. 5. A new model for mindful consumption.

4. Discussion

The goal of this article was to bring together myriad theoretical perspectives on sustainable consumption that reflect different ways consumption could be practiced in a sustainable manner. Given that the "end" sought by sustainable consumption advocates for ideologies of progress and rationality takes a life-cycle and equitable perspective, this article offers several implications of what responsible consumption, anti-consumption, and mindful consumption, both independently and collectively, mean for achieving this objective.

4.1. Implications for responsible consumption

This article's review of the literature clarifies that responsible consumers consider social concerns, environmental concerns, and ethical concerns and translate them into responsibilities expressed through their consumption choices and decisions. Consumers who embrace and practice responsible consumption are aware of the negative effects of consumption on the world. Decades of protectionism have given way to avid free-market approaches around the world, and thus a state of "consumer sovereignty" exists in which freedom and consumption are inextricably linked and translated into the basis of citizenship (the citizen-consumer; Lunt & Livingstone, 1992; Smith, 1994). Consequently, consumers today feel a duty as citizens to promote the cause of consumerism; the good consumer is a good citizen, especially in neoliberal economic policies (Aldridge, 1994). Although questions have been raised about the legitimacy of "consumer sovereignty" as a reflection of social and economic practices and whether acts of consumption can ever be considered "rational," the responsible consumer approach to consumption does not threaten consumption but strives to incorporate a new preference without impinging on (supposedly) sacred and deeply entrenched lifestyles (Hobson, 2002). Thus, responsible consumers' incorporation of social, environmental, and ethical concerns into preferences and responsibilities enacted through consumption decisions is a way to forge the sustainable consumption agenda.

4.2. Implications for anti-consumption

It is also useful to measure progress toward sustainable consumption in terms of the number of purchases (Carrigan, Szmigin, & Wright, 2004; Young, Hwang, McDonald, & Oates, 2009), because sustainable consumption involves frugality, thrift, and voluntary austerity (Hinton & Redclift, 2009). The co-integration of existing streams of anti-consumption research herein presents a new, useful model that distinguishes between consumers' expressed commitment to anti-consumption as observed through aversion, avoidance, and abandonment and their varied anti-consumption choices (i.e. rejection, restriction, and reclamation). More prominently, this model facilitates understanding of where to target appropriate behavioral change attempts; for example, consumers can undertake restriction and/or reclamation as alternative modes to rejection of anti-consumption practices. This fits well within the discourse of sustainability. More specifically, practices of anti-consumption play a large role in sustainable living because their construction through collaboration between the needs of the individual and the need for ecological preservation allows consumers to seek alternative solutions that balance both needs. Anti-consumption is not an inherent economic threat, and thus research could explore more ways than simply the reduction of consumption—for example, understanding the values, ideas, beliefs, and overall identities of these consumers and providing strategic guidelines on how to cater to them.

4.3. Implications for mindful consumption

Sustainability through mindful consumption was also a key premise herein. This article's review of the literature reveals that mindful consumption remains a scarce area in scholarship and thus demands further investigation. This article posits that mindfulness reflects a general receptivity to and full engagement with experiences in the present moment. Consumers who engage in mindful consumption make conscious choices in accordance with their values and preferences. They are not forced or limited by circumstances or market conditions to consume in a certain way. Instead, mindfulness helps consumers understand the implications and consequences of particular consumption choices and practices. An element of self-consciousness and self-actualization appears to reside within mindful consumption; mindful consumers view themselves as social objects with acute awareness of others in the environment. The satisfaction of lower-level needs (e.g. safety, belongingness) can be met through basic consumption, but consuming in a manner that meets higher-level needs (often for the overall good) is more difficult (Iyer & Muncy, 2009). Because mindfulness creates an awareness of whatever is arising at the present moment (Shapiro & Carson, 2009), a social learning process, or more specifically an observational learning process (Ormrod, 2011), is said to be taking place. This notion is particularly important to the goal of sustainability. Buenstorf and Cordes (2008) note that sustainable consumption patterns can spread throughout a population through social learning processes, even though a strong individual learning bias may favor environmentally harmful products. This suggests that through mindful consumption, consumers can challenge individual perceptual biases and possibly attain self-actualization needs.

4.4. Implications for an integrated theoretical approach to sustainable consumption

To gain a comprehensive understanding (and inclusive solutions) on the topic, future researchers should combine multiple theoretical perspectives to explain consumer behavior with respect to sustainable consumption practices. To illustrate this point, this article demonstrates a combined application of responsible consumption, anti-consumption, and mindful consumption theoretical perspectives in an integrated conceptual model for sustainable consumption to better help academics, practitioners, and policy makers to fully grasp the notion of sustainable consumption as well as encouraging and persuading its practice more prominently among consumers (see Fig. 6).

The basic tenet of the integrated model is governed by the mindful consumption approach to sustainability in the form of sustainability mindset and sustainability practices, and supported by the responsible consumption approach to sustainability in the form of internalized environmental, ethical, and social responsibilities, and the anti-consumption approach to sustainability in the form of aversion, avoidance, and abandonment (through reject, restrict, and reclaim) in consumption practices. More specifically, a sustainability mindset considers and internalizes the sustainability agenda by developing a sense of care for nature, self, and community,[1] and translating this sense of care into environmental, ethical, and social responsibilities.[2] These inner beliefs and felt responsibilities, in turn, govern consumers' attitudes and behaviors with regard to consumption practices. Sustainable consumption practices, therefore, occur when consumers successfully translate their inner beliefs and felt responsibilities around the sustainability into expressive sustainability actions—they avert unsustainable consumption practices by expressing their dislike, disgust, and revulsion to unsustainable consumption practices, and translate this expressed attitude into behavior by avoiding and abandoning consumption practices that are deemed to be unsustainable.[3] More important, the

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[1] See discussion on Mindful consumption in this article for the conceptual boundaries of sense of care for nature, self, and community.

[2] See discussion on Responsible consumption in this article for the conceptual boundaries of environmental, ethical, and social responsibilities.

[3] See discussion on Anti-Consumption in this article for the conceptual boundaries of aversion, avoidance, and abandonment.
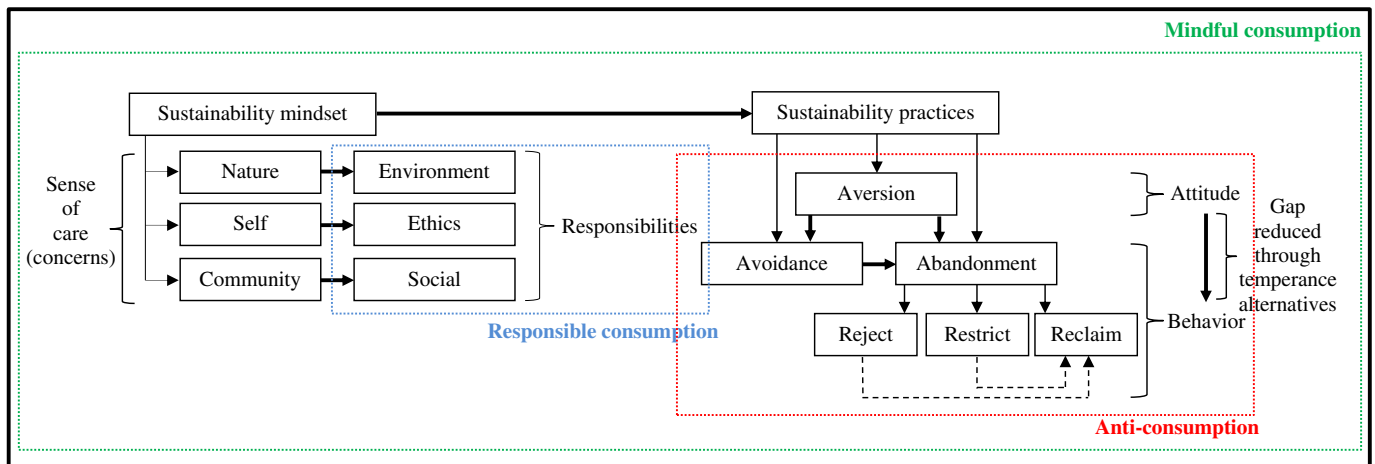
Fig. 6. Integrated model for sustainable consumption.

integrated model offers a viable solution to resolve the extant attitude-behavior gap caused by uninformed and restricted perceptions of behavioral control in consumption (e.g. want to consume sustainably but lack knowledge on restrategizing of consumption practices) by outlining the alternatives for consumers to consume sustainably in the form of rejection, restricting, and reclaiming of products—both private and public—for consumption.[4,5]

The integration of theoretical perspectives for sustainable consumption is advantageous because of the current piecemeal understanding of sustainable consumption from narrowly focused investigations that rely solely on a single theoretical perspective. For example, taking mindful consumption as an independent concept provides only a superficial understanding of the behavioral aspect of sustainable consumption; that is, the avenues in which greater awareness of the self and the ecosystem can be translated into actual performance of sustainable behavior are unclear. Moreover, consumption realities suggest that market forces do play a role in influencing consumers' consumption choices (Phipps et al., 2013) that violate the general assumption that governs mindful consumption (i.e. mindful consumers are not forced or limited by circumstances or market conditions to consume in a certain way). Thus, bringing responsible, anti-, and mindful consumption together is a potential solution proposed in this conceptual article on the premise that the synthesis of theoretical perspectives will facilitate an understanding of the mindset required for sustainable consumption. Such a synthesis will also explain how this mindset is translated into temperance that is reflected through the ways consumption practices are sustainable, both when responsible consumption is engaged (i.e. it is acknowledged that consumption is necessary, and thus purchasing products for consumption will continue, but the purchase decisions made from a mindful mindset will lead to the acquisition and consumption of products that have a less negative impact on the economic, environmental, and social well-being of society than purchases made with a mindless mindset) and when it is avoided/redirected (i.e. anti-consumption). Thus, a sustainability study that brings together responsible consumption and anti-consumption would offer substantial insights into the links between the rationales for and against consumption and consumers' assumed responsibilities for environmental, ethical, and social concerns. The sustainability dilemma of whether to consume differently or to consume less would also become clearer through such an investigation. Adding mindful con-

sumption to responsible consumption and anti-consumption could shed light on whether mindful consumers can improve temperance in behavior by adopting social, environmental, and/or ethical responsibilities and whether mindfulness helps them select the best way to consume not only to meet their own personal needs but also for sustainability and a balanced ecosystem. Combining these theoretical perspectives, therefore, could uncover a set of contingency relationships that might not be obvious from using either theoretical perspective alone.

In addition to combining and contrasting the various theoretical perspectives described herein, further research could expand research horizons by introducing a cross-cultural, international, or demographical dimension into the research questions. For example, this article describes how anti-consumption may be useful for explaining sustainability, but the decisions to reject simply because a consumption is undesirable to the global culture may be difficult because of the practices in the local culture (e.g. consumption of exotic meat). Similarly, what might be considered a social, environmental, or ethical concern in one society might not be in another society (e.g. corruption). Mindful consumption experiences might also differ across cultures. People in countries in which sustainability has weaved its way into the fabric of society may have a heightened sensitivity to sustainability issues and an increased capacity for assessing their effectiveness. As such, combining multiple theoretical perspectives could provide a comprehensive understanding of sustainable consumption as a whole, but further investigations from a single theoretical perspective may be useful when the goal is to target a particular behavioral change in specific contexts. By providing these perspectives (and their streams) in a single article, this article hopes to provide a comprehensive and easy reference point on the theoretical alternatives for further research on sustainable consumption.

Ultimately, for academic researchers, business practitioners, and policy makers, sustainability might be somewhat like the story of the elephant and the blind man, who, when touching the elephant, believes he is feeling a water spout (trunk), a fan (ear), a pillar (leg), or a throne (back) (Jain, 2011). In the same way, these constituencies may view sustainability as an economic liability, a division that assesses environmental impact, a distinct market segment; these limited perspectives are at best incomplete and at worst misinformed (Connelly et al., 2011). By elucidating the consumption theoretical perspectives that are most pertinent to sustainability and considering how they might be applied, this article offers a rich conceptualization of sustainable consumption that is both theoretically derived and practically relevant. Although the ideas herein are mainly intended for empirical research investigation, they also provide a foundation for business practitioners and policy makers to better understand how consumers make sustainable con-

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[4] See discussion on Sustainable Consumption and Anti-Consumption in this article for the conceptual boundaries of sustainable consumption and reject, restrict, and reclaim, respectively.

[5] Implications for future research on sustainable consumption are offered in the Conclusion and future research directions section of this article.

sumption decisions.

5. Conclusion

Sustainable consumption has become a key concept for academics, practitioners, and policy makers. The ongoing debates about climate change, economic growth, population advancement, and related trends make sustainable consumption even more imperative to these groups. The three consumption theoretical perspectives this article discusses (responsible consumption, anti-consumption, and mindful consumption) provide a potent "theoretical toolbox" to understand the concept of sustainability in consumption. A sustainable transformation of consumption and lifestyles will depend on fundamental changes of the dominant worldwide view toward a new ecological systems paradigm (including economic, social, environmental, and ethical dimensions). The importance of preserving the balance of the ecosystem and its operating conditions (marketplace) and recognizing the inevitability of limits to growth is paramount. From this article, three key takeaways are notable: (1) sustainable consumption is a complex concept that requires an adaptive, balanced, and contextualized approach in the crafting of related strategies that meet its general principles, (2) sustainable consumption can be explained by and encouraged using three prominent theoretical perspectives in the form of responsible consumption, anti-consumption, and mindful consumption, and (3) an integrated approach to theoretical development for sustainable consumption sheds immense light on the complexities surrounding sustainable consumption as well as encouraging and persuading its practice more prominently among consumers by leveraging on the strengths and overcoming the shortcomings of each theoretical perspective as compared to when they are taken individually. Ultimately, it is the progress at the margin of humanity that drives civilization forward. As such, knowledge harvested from both ends of the consumption continuum (i.e. for and against sustainable consumption) would increase understanding of consumers toward greater sustainability.

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