
Toward a Theory of Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty

Submitted 13/12/25, 1st revision 05/01/26, 2nd revision 20/02/26, accepted 30/03/26

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Abstract:

Purpose: Contemporary consumption increasingly unfolds under conditions of uncertainty. Although prior consumer research has examined mindful consumption, sustainability, resilience, and anti-consumption independently, limited theoretical attention has been devoted to understanding mindful consumption as an adaptive response to uncertainty. This article develops a conceptual theory of Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU), defined as a reflexive and adaptive consumption orientation through which consumers intentionally regulate acquisition, usage, and meaning-making practices in response to perceived instability and vulnerability.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Drawing on uncertainty management theory, mindfulness theory, consumer culture theory, and behavioral decision research, the article develops an integrative conceptual framework explaining how uncertainty triggers reflexive reassessment, adaptive simplification, resilience-oriented consumption, and value reconfiguration. The paper further proposes a methodological agenda for future empirical investigation through mixed-method approaches, including phenomenology, digital ethnography, experimental designs, and longitudinal analysis.

Findings: The proposed framework suggests that uncertainty functions as a catalyst for more intentional and reflexive consumption practices. Consumers respond to perceived instability by simplifying consumption patterns, prioritizing resilience and psychological security, and redefining consumption values beyond material acquisition. The study positions mindful consumption as a dynamic coping and adaptation mechanism rather than solely an ethical or wellness-oriented practice.

Practical implications: This article reconceptualizes mindful consumption as an uncertainty-responsive market logic and advances a novel theoretical perspective linking mindfulness, uncertainty, and adaptive consumer behavior.

Originality/Value: The study contributes to consumer research, sustainability studies, and marketing theory while offering implications for consumer well-being, resilience, and marketplace governance.

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Keywords: *Mindful Consumption; Consumer Decision-Making; Uncertainty; Behavioral Economics; Sustainable Consumption.*

JEL Codes: *D81, D91, D11, A12, M31.*

Paper Type: *Research article..*

1. Introduction

Contemporary consumption increasingly unfolds under conditions of persistent uncertainty shaped by economic instability, climate disruption, geopolitical crises, technological acceleration, and digital hyperstimulation. Rather than operating in predictable environments characterized by stable preferences and rational decision-making, consumers today navigate ambiguity, informational overload, emotional fatigue, and existential insecurity.

These developments challenge traditional assumptions in consumer behavior research and suggest the need for new theoretical perspectives capable of explaining adaptive consumption practices under uncertainty.

Recent consumer research has emphasized sustainability, anti-consumption, ethical consumption, resilience, and consumer well-being as important areas of inquiry (White *et al.*, 2019; Bahl *et al.*, 2023). At the same time, emerging evidence suggests that consumers are increasingly reassessing material priorities, marketplace dependencies, and purchasing routines in response to social and economic volatility (Hamilton *et al.*, 2015; Witkowski, 2023).

However, despite growing scholarly interest in mindful consumption, limited theoretical attention has been devoted to understanding mindfulness as an adaptive response to uncertainty.

Traditionally, mindful consumption has been associated with conscious awareness, self-regulation, sustainability, and ethical responsibility (Sheth *et al.*, 2011). Yet under conditions of uncertainty, mindfulness appears to assume a broader role as a coping and resilience-oriented logic through which consumers attempt to regain control, reduce vulnerability, and restore psychological equilibrium.

Practices such as simplification, intentional purchasing, digital detoxification, repair culture, delayed consumption, and localism increasingly reflect not only moral concerns but also adaptive responses to instability and overload.

This article develops a theory of Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU), conceptualized as a reflexive and adaptive consumption orientation through which consumers intentionally regulate acquisition, usage, and meaning-making practices in response to perceived environmental, economic, technological, and existential uncertainty.

Integrating mindfulness theory, uncertainty management, consumer reflexivity, and adaptive consumption research, the article proposes a conceptual framework and methodological agenda for advancing future empirical inquiry into mindful consumption in increasingly uncertain marketplace environments.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Mindful Consumption

Mindfulness originates from contemplative traditions and has been adapted within psychology as a form of present-centered and non-judgmental awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Within consumer research, mindfulness has primarily been examined in relation to ethical decision-making, sustainable consumption, well-being, and reduced impulsivity.

Sheth *et al.* (2011) conceptualized mindful consumption as a balancing mechanism between individual satisfaction, social responsibility, and ecological sustainability. More recent studies have linked mindful consumption to intentional purchasing, reduced materialism, experiential orientation, and self-regulation (Bahl *et al.*, 2023).

Mindful consumption encompasses multiple interconnected dimensions, including conscious awareness of consumption consequences, emotional regulation during marketplace interactions, intentional decision-making, reflexive evaluation of needs versus desires, and socio-environmental responsibility. Despite these advances, existing literature largely assumes stable market environments in which consumers voluntarily choose mindful behaviors. Limited attention has been devoted to understanding how uncertainty itself may activate, intensify, or reshape mindful consumption orientations.

2.2 Uncertainty in Consumer Behavior

Uncertainty has become a defining characteristic of contemporary consumption environments. Consumer uncertainty refers to situations in which individuals experience unpredictability regarding outcomes, information reliability, personal security, or future conditions (van den Bos and Lind, 2002). Behavioral decision research demonstrates that uncertainty increases cognitive stress, emotional volatility, and heuristic processing (Kahneman, 2011).

In contemporary markets, uncertainty emerges from multiple sources; namely economic instability, inflation, technological disruption, climate change, health crises, information overload, AI-driven opacity, and institutional distrust. Such conditions significantly alter consumer priorities, encouraging greater risk sensitivity, value orientation, localism, and psychological defensiveness (Minton *et al.*, 2022; Mathios *et al.*, 2020).

At the same time, uncertainty may generate contradictory behavioral responses. While some consumers adopt restraint, simplification, and intentional consumption, others engage in compensatory consumption, panic buying, or escapist purchasing behaviors (Shaw, 2002). These contrasting responses suggest the need for a more nuanced theoretical framework capable of explaining when uncertainty encourages mindful rather than reactive consumption.

2.3 Consumer Reflexivity and Adaptive Consumption

Consumer reflexivity refers to the capacity of individuals to critically evaluate marketplace structures, social norms, and personal consumption practices (Thompson and Kumar, 2021). Reflexive consumers do not passively absorb market meanings; rather, they actively reinterpret consumption in relation to identity, morality, vulnerability, and future concerns. Under conditions of uncertainty, reflexivity becomes increasingly salient.

Consumers begin questioning what constitutes necessity, value, sustainability, and security, while also reassessing which forms of consumption increase dependence and vulnerability. This process contributes to the emergence of adaptive consumption practices such as, for example, minimalism, repair culture, circular consumption and digital simplification. Consequently, reflexivity operates as a central mechanism through which consumers reinterpret consumption in uncertain environments.

2.4 Practice Theory and Consumption Systems

Practice theory offers an important lens for understanding mindful consumption under uncertainty. Rather than conceptualizing consumption as isolated individual decisions, practice theory views consumption as socially embedded routines shaped by meanings, competencies, and material arrangements (Shove *et al.*, 2012). From this perspective, mindful consumption emerges not simply from attitudes or intentions but from evolving socio-material practices.

Contemporary disruptions increasingly reshape everyday consumption systems. For example, remote work alters household consumption rhythms, energy reshape domestic routines, and digital fatigue encourages technology minimization. Accordingly, mindful consumption under uncertainty should be understood as

relational, systemic, and socially embedded rather than purely individual or attitudinal.

3. Conceptualizing Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU)

3.1 Definition

Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU) refers to a dynamic and reflexive system of consumption practices through which consumers intentionally regulate acquisition, usage, disposal, and symbolic interpretation processes in response to perceived uncertainty. Unlike traditional conceptualizations of mindful consumption, which primarily emphasize ethics, sustainability, and personal well-being, MCUU is fundamentally shaped by adaptive responses to instability and vulnerability (Sheth *et al.*, 2011; Bahl *et al.*, 2023).

Traditional mindful consumption has generally been conceptualized as a relatively stable and voluntary orientation centered on ethical awareness, sustainability, and individualized self-regulation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Sheth *et al.*, 2011). In contrast, MCUU represents a dynamic and uncertainty-responsive orientation focused on resilience, adaptive stability, control, and socio-material reflexivity.

Rather than emerging solely from moral concerns, mindful consumption under uncertainty reflects consumers' attempts to reduce vulnerability, manage cognitive overload, and restore psychological equilibrium in volatile environments (van den Bos and Lind, 2002; Kahneman, 2011).

The concept further draws upon consumer culture theory and practice theory by recognizing that mindful consumption is not merely an individual cognitive orientation but also a socially embedded and materially situated practice shaped by marketplace systems, technological infrastructures, and evolving socio-cultural meanings (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Consequently, MCUU should be understood as a dynamic adaptive logic emerging within conditions of uncertainty rather than as a fixed ethical disposition.

3.2 Core Dimensions of MCUU

The proposed framework conceptualizes MCUU as comprising the following five interconnected dimensions that collectively shape adaptive consumption behavior under uncertainty.

3.2.1 Reflexive Awareness

Reflexive awareness refers to consumers' capacity to critically evaluate the consequences, dependencies, and vulnerabilities associated with their consumption practices. Under uncertainty, consumers increasingly reassess what constitutes necessity, value, and security within marketplace environments. This dimension

aligns with research on consumer reflexivity, which emphasizes consumers' active reinterpretation of marketplace norms and identities under changing socio-economic conditions (Thompson and Kumar, 2021).

3.2.2 Intentional Regulation

Intentional regulation involves the conscious management of purchasing frequency, quantity, timing, and exposure to marketplace stimuli. Consumers engage in more deliberate and controlled decision-making processes in an effort to reduce impulsivity and uncertainty-related stress.

This dimension reflects principles of mindfulness and self-regulation theory, particularly the emphasis on conscious awareness and intentional behavioral control (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Bahl *et al.*, 2023).

3.2.3 Adaptive Simplification

Adaptive simplification refers to efforts to simplify consumption systems and everyday routines in order to reduce cognitive overload and perceived instability. Practices such as reduced consumption, digital detoxification, subscription reduction, and minimalist lifestyles reflect this dimension.

Emerging research on digital fatigue, anti-consumption, and marketplace overstimulation suggests that consumers increasingly pursue simplification strategies as adaptive responses to hyper-consumption and informational excess (Witkowski, 2023).

3.2.4 Resilience Orientation

Resilience orientation captures consumers' increasing preference for durability, functionality, repairability, reliability, and long-term value. Under uncertain conditions, consumers become more attentive to forms of consumption that enhance personal and economic resilience.

This dimension draws upon resilience theory and sustainable consumption research emphasizing adaptive capacity, stability, and resource preservation under conditions of disruption (Duchek, 2020; White *et al.*, 2019).

3.2.5 Meaning Reconfiguration

Meaning reconfiguration refers to the process through which consumers redefine value away from material accumulation and toward well-being, autonomy, security, relational experiences, and psychological stability. This dimension reflects a broader transformation in how consumers interpret the role of consumption in everyday life.

Research on post-materialism, experiential consumption, and anti-consumption similarly suggests that consumers increasingly prioritize emotional fulfillment, simplicity, and relational value over accumulation and status-oriented consumption (Hamilton *et al.*, 2019; Jackson, 2021).

4. Proposed Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions

4.1 Antecedents of Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU)

The proposed framework identifies four major categories of antecedents that contribute to the emergence of Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU). These antecedents reflect the environmental, psychological, social, and technological conditions shaping contemporary consumer behavior under uncertainty. Drawing on uncertainty management theory, consumer culture theory, and adaptive consumption research, the framework conceptualizes mindful consumption as a response to increasing instability and marketplace complexity (van den Bos and Lind, 2002; Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

4.1.1 Environmental Antecedents

Environmental antecedents refer to broader structural conditions that intensify perceptions of instability and vulnerability. These include economic instability, inflationary pressures, climate anxiety, technological disruption, institutional distrust, and geopolitical uncertainty. Such conditions increase consumers' awareness of risk and unpredictability, encouraging more cautious, intentional, and adaptive forms of consumption (Minton *et al.*, 2018; Witkowski, 2023).

Environmental uncertainty significantly alters marketplace priorities, increases perceived vulnerability, and intensifies consumers' search for stability and predictability. Climate anxiety and economic insecurity, in particular, may contribute to heightened reflexivity regarding consumption excess, dependency, and sustainability (White *et al.*, 2019).

4.1.2 Psychological Antecedents

Psychological antecedents capture the internal emotional and cognitive conditions influencing consumption behavior. Anxiety, the need for control, reflexivity, future orientation, and self-regulation capacity all shape how consumers respond to uncertain environments. Consumers experiencing heightened uncertainty may increasingly seek stability and psychological equilibrium through intentional and simplified consumption practices (Kahneman, 2011).

This dimension is informed by research on uncertainty management and self-regulation, which suggests that uncertainty increases cognitive stress, emotional volatility, and consumers' motivation to regain control over decision-making processes (van den Bos and Lind, 2002; Bahl *et al.*, 2023). Reflexivity and future orientation further contribute to adaptive reassessment of consumption priorities and marketplace participation.

4.1.3 Social Antecedents

Social antecedents involve broader socio-cultural dynamics that influence consumption orientations. These include digital social comparison fatigue,

community-oriented values, social resilience networks, and cultural shifts toward authenticity and simplicity. As consumers become increasingly disillusioned with hyper-consumption and performative lifestyles, they may adopt more mindful and socially grounded consumption practices (Thompson and Kumar, 2021).

Marketplace meanings are socially negotiated and shaped by evolving cultural tensions, identity projects, and resistance to dominant consumption ideologies (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Consequently, mindful consumption under uncertainty may emerge partly as a response to social exhaustion, digital fatigue, and declining trust in hyper-consumerist norms.

4.1.4 Technological Antecedents

Technological antecedents refer to the growing influence of digital systems and algorithmic environments on consumer decision-making. Algorithmic overload, AI-generated persuasion, digital hyperstimulation, and information saturation contribute to cognitive fatigue and marketplace distrust (Zuboff, 2023). In response, consumers may engage in consumption simplification and digital minimization to regain control and reduce overstimulation.

Emerging research on digital fatigue and technological overstimulation suggests that continuous exposure to algorithmic persuasion intensifies cognitive overload and reduces perceived consumer autonomy (Witkowski, 2023). As digital marketplaces become increasingly personalized and immersive, consumers may seek more mindful and intentional approaches to marketplace engagement.

4.2 Mediating Mechanisms

The framework proposes three key mediating mechanisms through which uncertainty influences mindful consumption orientations: perceived vulnerability, cognitive overload, and existential reflection. Perceived vulnerability heightens awareness of instability and dependence, while cognitive overload results from excessive information and marketplace complexity (Kahneman, 2011).

Existential reflection encourages consumers to reassess priorities, values, and long-term well-being. Together, these mechanisms explain how uncertainty translates into adaptive and reflexive consumption behaviors. Heightened awareness of vulnerability may stimulate intentional regulation, simplification, and resilience-oriented practices as consumers seek psychological equilibrium and reduced dependency (Bahl *et al.*, 2023; van den Bos and Lind, 2002).

4.3 Moderating Factors

Several factors moderate the relationship between uncertainty and mindful consumption. These include income stability, cultural orientation, digital literacy, mindfulness disposition, generational cohort, and sustainability consciousness. Such

factors influence the extent to which consumers respond to uncertainty through mindful rather than reactive or compensatory consumption behaviors.

For example, severe income insecurity may increase defensive and impulsive purchasing behaviors rather than intentional simplification. Similarly, higher levels of mindfulness disposition and sustainability consciousness may strengthen adaptive responses to uncertainty by increasing self-regulation and reflexive awareness (Bahl *et al.*, 2023). Cultural values and digital literacy may further shape how consumers interpret marketplace risks and technological pressures.

4.4 Outcomes of Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty

The proposed framework identifies outcomes at the consumer, marketplace, and societal levels.

At the consumer level, mindful consumption under uncertainty may lead to reduced impulsivity, improved psychological well-being, higher perceived control, greater financial resilience, and lower material dependency. These outcomes reflect consumers' attempts to achieve stability and emotional balance in uncertain environments (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Mindfulness-oriented consumption practices may also strengthen perceived autonomy and emotional regulation.

At the marketplace level, MCUU may contribute to increased demand for transparency, stronger preferences for durable and repairable products, reduced hyper-consumption, and the expansion of circular economy practices (White *et al.*, 2019). Consumers may increasingly prioritize long-term value, reliability, and authenticity over novelty and excess.

At the societal level, mindful consumption under uncertainty may support broader sustainability transitions, reduced resource waste, localized consumption ecosystems, and strengthened community resilience (Jackson, 2021). In this sense, mindful consumption extends beyond individual behavior and becomes part of a wider socio-economic adaptation to uncertainty.

4.5 Research Propositions

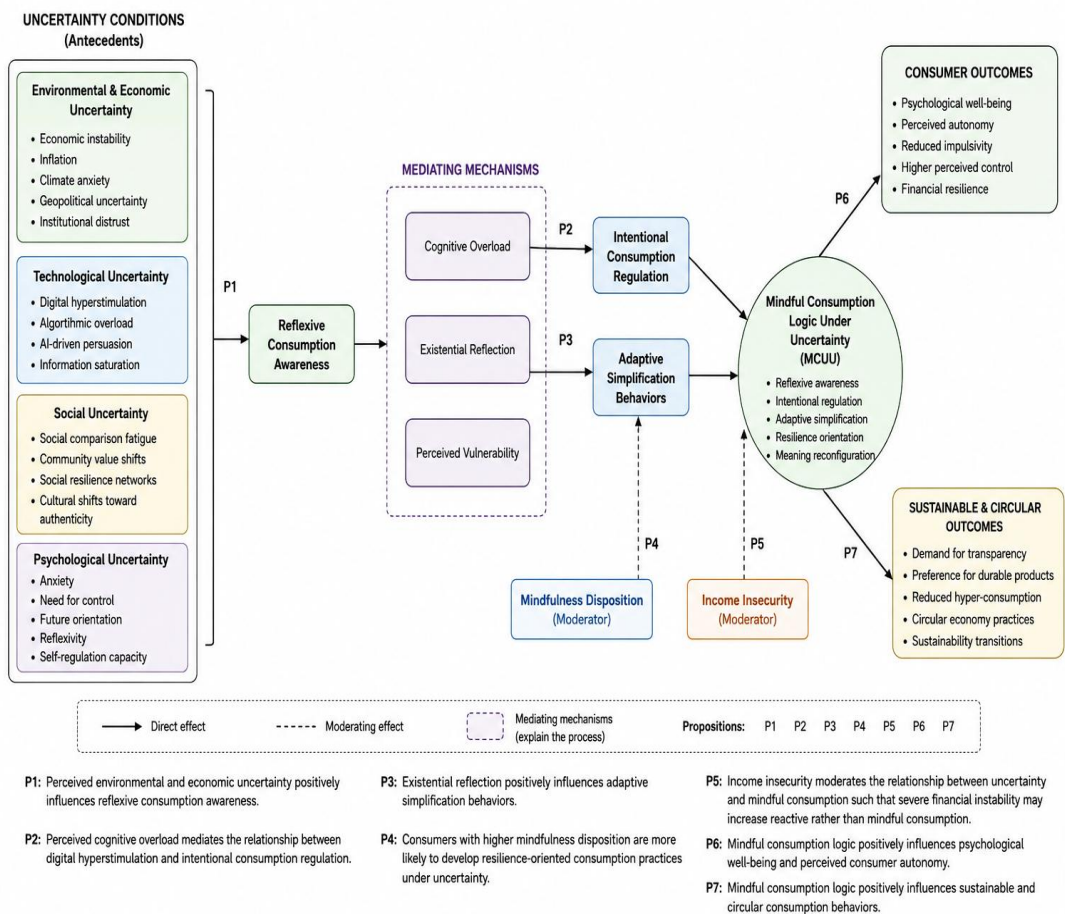
The following propositions emerge from the proposed conceptual framework (see Figure 1).

Proposition 1 (P1): Perceived environmental and economic uncertainty positively influences reflexive consumption awareness.

Proposition 2 (P2): Perceived cognitive overload mediates the relationship between digital hyperstimulation and intentional consumption regulation.

- Proposition 3 (P3):** Existential reflection positively influences adaptive simplification behaviors.
- Proposition 4 (P4):** Consumers with higher mindfulness disposition are more likely to develop resilience-oriented consumption practices under uncertainty.
- Proposition 5 (P5):** Income insecurity moderates the relationship between uncertainty and mindful consumption such that severe financial instability may increase reactive rather than mindful consumption.
- Proposition 6 (P6):** Mindful consumption logic positively influences psychological well-being and perceived consumer autonomy.
- Proposition 7 (P7):** Mindful consumption logic positively influences sustainable and circular consumption behavior.

Figure 1. Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty



Source: Own study.

5. Methodological Architecture

5.1 Philosophical Positioning

The proposed model and research agenda adopts a critical realist perspective to investigate mindful consumption under uncertainty. Critical realism is particularly appropriate because the phenomenon encompasses both objective structural conditions—such as inflation, climate crises, technological infrastructures, and economic instability—and subjective interpretive experiences associated with vulnerability, reflexivity, and meaning-making (Bhaskar, 1978; Sayer, 2000).

This ontological position enables the integration of structural market dynamics, socio-material practices, psychological experiences, and reflexive consumer interpretations within a unified analytical framework (Archer *et al.*, 2013).

Given the complexity and multidimensionality of mindful consumption under uncertainty, the article advocates methodological pluralism (Creswell, Plano Clark, 2018). A pluralistic approach allows researchers to capture the dynamic interactions between contextual uncertainty, consumer cognition, emotional regulation, adaptive practices, and marketplace systems. Accordingly, the proposed framework combines qualitative, quantitative, digital, experimental, and longitudinal approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of MCUU (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010).

5.2 Sequential Multi-Method Research Design

The proposed methodological framework consists of four interconnected stages designed to progressively develop, refine, and empirically validate the concept of Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU). The four stages are:

Stage 1: Phenomenological Exploration:

The first stage aims to understand how consumers experience uncertainty and construct meanings associated with mindful consumption practices. This exploratory phase adopts an interpretive phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences, emotions, and adaptive routines of consumers operating under uncertain conditions (Smith *et al.*, 2021).

Data collection methods include interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), semi-structured in-depth interviews, and consumer diary techniques (Thompson *et al.*, 1989). Purposeful sampling is recommended across diverse demographic and contextual categories, including different age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, urban and rural settings, and varying levels of uncertainty exposure (Patton, 2015).

The analytical strategy combines thematic coding, narrative analysis, and reflexive interpretation in order to identify emergent dimensions of mindful consumption,

emotional responses to uncertainty, and adaptive consumption behaviors (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This stage is particularly valuable for uncovering nuanced meanings and socially embedded practices that may not be captured through purely quantitative methods.

Stage 2: Digital Ethnography:

The second stage focuses on observing mindful consumption discourse and practices within digital environments. Given the growing role of online communities in shaping consumption identities and social narratives, digital ethnography offers an important methodological lens for examining naturally occurring consumer interactions (Hine, 2015).

Potential data sources include Reddit communities, minimalism forums, sustainability-oriented digital groups, TikTok and Instagram consumption narratives, and online repair or anti-consumption communities. These platforms provide insight into how consumers collectively interpret uncertainty, negotiate marketplace pressures, and normalize adaptive consumption practices. Analytical techniques include discourse analysis, visual analysis, and netnographic methods (Kozinets, 2024). This stage enables researchers to examine how uncertainty narratives diffuse socially and how mindful consumption identities are constructed, reinforced, and contested within digital ecosystems.

Stage 3: Scale Development and Validation:

The third stage seeks to develop and validate a multidimensional scale for measuring Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU). Building on insights generated from the qualitative stages, the scale development process begins with item generation and expert validation, followed by pilot testing and psychometric refinement (Churchill, 1979).

The proposed scale includes five core dimensions: reflexive awareness, intentional regulation, adaptive simplification, resilience orientation, and meaning reconfiguration. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are recommended to establish dimensionality, reliability, and construct validity (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2022).

Subsequent statistical analyses may employ structural equation modeling (SEM), partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM), and multi-group analysis to examine relationships between uncertainty conditions, mindful consumption dimensions, and behavioral outcomes across different consumer segments (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Henseler *et al.*, 2015).

Stage 4: Experimental and Longitudinal Research:

The fourth stage aims to establish causal relationships between uncertainty exposure and mindful consumption behavior. Experimental designs may manipulate different forms of uncertainty, including economic instability, AI-related uncertainty, climate

anxiety, and information overload, in order to assess their influence on consumer responses (Kahneman, 2011).

Key dependent variables may include purchase intentions, consumption restraint, sustainability orientation, emotional regulation, and adaptive simplification behaviors. Such designs enable the identification of causal mechanisms linking uncertainty to mindful consumption orientations. In addition, longitudinal research designs are proposed to track consumer behavior over time during periods of societal disruption.

Relevant contexts may include inflationary periods, climate-related events, technological disruptions, and economic downturns. Longitudinal approaches are particularly useful for examining how mindful consumption evolves dynamically in response to changing environmental conditions (Menard, 2002).

Recommended analytical techniques for this stage include latent growth modeling, cross-lagged panel analysis, and Bayesian modeling (Little, 2013). Together, these methods provide a rigorous framework for capturing both the temporal and causal dimensions of mindful consumption under uncertainty.

6. Measurement Considerations

Future research should operationalize Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU) through a multidimensional measurement framework incorporating both reflective and formative indicators (Jarvis *et al.*, 2003). Given the complexity of the construct, MCUU should be conceptualized as a higher-order construct composed of interrelated dimensions that collectively capture consumers' adaptive, reflexive, and resilience-oriented responses to uncertainty.

Building on prior research in mindful consumption, consumer reflexivity, sustainability orientation, and adaptive behavior (Sheth *et al.*, 2011; Bahl *et al.*, 2023; Thompson and Kumar, 2021), the proposed framework identifies five core dimensions of MCUU: reflexive awareness, intentional regulation, adaptive simplification, resilience orientation, and meaning reconfiguration. Each dimension reflects a distinct yet interconnected aspect of mindful consumption under uncertain conditions.

Dimension 1: Reflexive Awareness:

Reflexive awareness refers to consumers' critical evaluation of their consumption practices, dependencies, and vulnerabilities under conditions of uncertainty. This dimension captures heightened consciousness regarding the consequences and necessity of consumption decisions.

Illustrative measurement items may include:

- “I critically evaluate whether my purchases are truly necessary.”
- “I reflect on how uncertainty influences my consumption decisions.”
- “I reconsider my consumption habits during periods of instability.”

This dimension aligns conceptually with reflexive consumer consciousness and marketplace self-awareness (Thompson and Kumar, 2021).

Dimension 2: Intentional Regulation:

Intentional regulation captures the deliberate management of purchasing behavior, consumption frequency, and exposure to marketplace stimuli. It reflects consumers’ efforts to reduce impulsivity and regain control over decision-making processes under uncertainty.

Example measurement items include:

- “I delay purchases until I feel certain they are needed.”
- “I consciously reduce unnecessary consumption.”
- “I try to avoid impulsive purchases during uncertain times.”

This dimension is closely related to research on self-regulation, mindful decision-making, and consumption restraint (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Bahl *et al.*, 2023).

Dimension 3: Adaptive Simplification:

Adaptive simplification refers to consumers’ efforts to simplify lifestyles, routines, and marketplace interactions in order to reduce cognitive overload and uncertainty-related stress. This dimension reflects behavioral adaptation to overstimulation and marketplace complexity.

Illustrative items may include:

- “I simplify my lifestyle to reduce stress and uncertainty.”
- “I avoid excessive marketplace stimulation.”
- “I reduce unnecessary digital and marketplace exposure.”

This dimension connects with emerging research on digital fatigue, minimalist lifestyles, and adaptive consumption simplification (Witkowski, 2023).

Dimension 4: Resilience Orientation:

Resilience orientation captures consumers’ preference for durability, reliability, functionality, and long-term value in consumption decisions. Under uncertainty, consumers increasingly prioritize forms of consumption that enhance stability and reduce vulnerability.

Example items include:

- “I prioritize durable and repairable products.”
- “I value long-term functionality over novelty.”
- “I prefer products that increase my sense of security and stability.”

This dimension is associated with resilience-oriented consumption and sustainable marketplace behavior (White *et al.*, 2019).

Dimension 5: Meaning Reconfiguration:

Meaning reconfiguration refers to the transformation of consumer value systems away from material accumulation and toward well-being, autonomy, relationships, and experiential fulfillment. This dimension reflects a broader redefinition of consumption meanings under uncertainty.

Illustrative items include:

- “I increasingly define well-being independently of material possessions.”
- “I value experiences and relationships more than accumulation.”
- “I believe fulfillment depends less on owning more products.”

This dimension resonates with research on post-materialism, anti-consumption, and experiential consumption (Hamilton *et al.*, 2015).

Future empirical studies should assess the psychometric properties of the proposed scale using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2021).

Reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and predictive validity should be systematically examined across different demographic and cultural contexts. In addition, cross-cultural validation and longitudinal measurement invariance testing may help establish the stability and generalizability of the MCUU construct over time and across marketplace environments.

7. Theoretical Contributions

The present article contributes to the consumer behavior and marketing literature in several important ways. By developing a theory of Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU), the paper advances existing conceptualizations of mindful consumption and provides a broader framework for understanding adaptive consumer behavior in volatile marketplace environments.

First, the article reconceptualizes mindful consumption beyond its traditional association with sustainability, ethics, and personal well-being. Existing research has largely framed mindful consumption as a voluntary and normatively desirable orientation centered on conscious awareness, reduced materialism, and socio-environmental responsibility (Sheth *et al.*, 2011; Bahl *et al.*, 2023).

In contrast, the present framework argues that mindful consumption increasingly functions as an adaptive response to uncertainty. Under conditions of economic instability, technological disruption, climate anxiety, and digital overstimulation, consumers may adopt mindful consumption practices not solely for ethical reasons but also as mechanisms for reducing vulnerability, restoring control, and achieving psychological equilibrium.

In this sense, the article extends mindful consumption theory by incorporating uncertainty management and adaptive resilience into its conceptual foundation (van den Bos and Lind, 2002; Minton *et al.*, 2022).

Second, the article contributes theoretically by integrating several fragmented literature streams into a unified explanatory framework. Specifically, the proposed model bridges insights from mindfulness theory, consumer culture theory, behavioral decision theory, practice theory, and resilience research.

Mindfulness theory contributes understanding of awareness, intentionality, and self-regulation (*Kabat-Zinn, 2003*). Consumer culture theory provides insight into the symbolic and reflexive dimensions of consumption practices (*Arnould and Thompson, 2005*). Behavioral decision theory explains how uncertainty, cognitive overload, and perceived risk influence consumer decision-making processes (*Kahneman, 2011*).

Practice theory highlights the socio-material and routine-based nature of consumption behaviors (*Shove et al., 2012*), while resilience theory contributes understanding of adaptive responses to instability and disruption (*Duchek, 2020*). By synthesizing these perspectives, the article offers a more comprehensive explanation of how consumers navigate uncertainty through adaptive and reflexive consumption practices.

Third, the article advances consumer reflexivity research by positioning reflexivity as a central mechanism through which consumers reinterpret marketplace participation under uncertain conditions.

Existing studies have emphasized reflexivity in relation to identity construction, ethical awareness, and resistance to dominant consumption norms (*Thompson and Kumar, 2021*).

However, limited attention has been devoted to understanding reflexivity as an adaptive response to environmental volatility and systemic uncertainty. The present framework argues that uncertainty intensifies consumers' reflexive evaluation of needs, dependencies, vulnerabilities, and long-term priorities. Consumers increasingly reassess what constitutes necessity, value, security, and well-being in response to unstable marketplace conditions.

Consequently, reflexivity becomes a key mechanism linking uncertainty exposure to adaptive consumption practices such as simplification, intentional regulation, localism, and resilience-oriented purchasing.

Finally, the article contributes by developing a dynamic consumption logic perspective. Rather than conceptualizing mindful consumption as a stable personality trait or fixed ethical orientation, the framework positions it as a dynamic, situational, and context-dependent logic shaped by environmental volatility and marketplace uncertainty.

This perspective aligns with emerging research emphasizing the fluid and adaptive nature of consumer behavior under changing socio-economic conditions (Witkowski, 2023).

The proposed framework therefore shifts attention from static attitudinal models toward process-oriented explanations that account for temporal instability, evolving consumer priorities, and adaptive marketplace responses.

By conceptualizing mindful consumption as an uncertainty-responsive logic, the article opens new avenues for theorizing adaptive consumer behavior within increasingly unstable and digitally mediated market systems.

8. Managerial and Policy Implications

8.1 Implications for Firms

The proposed framework has important implications for firms operating in increasingly volatile and uncertainty-driven marketplace environments. Contemporary consumers are progressively exposed to economic instability, digital fatigue, information overload, climate anxiety, and declining institutional trust, conditions that significantly reshape marketplace expectations and consumption priorities (Witkowski, 2023).

As a result, consumers may increasingly favor forms of consumption associated with transparency, durability, repairability, simplicity, authenticity, and ethical accountability.

Research findings suggest that firms relying heavily on hyper-consumption strategies, algorithmic overstimulation, planned obsolescence, and perpetual consumer engagement may face growing legitimacy challenges.

Excessive digital persuasion and short-term consumption stimulation can intensify consumer fatigue, skepticism, and marketplace distrust, particularly under conditions of uncertainty and cognitive overload (Zuboff, 2019).

Consequently, consumers may increasingly seek brands that provide predictability, reliability, and meaningful long-term value rather than novelty and continuous stimulation.

From a strategic perspective, firms should therefore reconsider traditional growth-oriented marketing approaches and develop more adaptive and resilience-oriented value propositions.

Managers may benefit from reducing manipulative digital intensity and prioritizing transparent communication, consumer well-being, and relational trust-building. Greater emphasis on product durability, repairability, and functionality may also strengthen consumer perceptions of stability and long-term value (White *et al.*, 2019).

In addition, the framework highlights the growing importance of circular and regenerative business models. Practices such as repair services, product life extension, resale systems, subscription simplification, and sustainable supply chain transparency may increasingly align with mindful consumption orientations under uncertainty (Geissdoerfer *et al.*, 2017).

Firms that support consumption simplification, reduced waste, and consumer autonomy may therefore achieve stronger legitimacy and resilience in uncertain markets.

The proposed framework also implies that marketing strategy should increasingly incorporate psychological and emotional dimensions of consumer uncertainty. Consumers may value brands that reduce cognitive overload, simplify decision-making processes, and foster perceptions of control and stability. In this sense, mindful consumption under uncertainty is not merely a sustainability issue but also a strategic issue related to trust, consumer well-being, and marketplace resilience.

8.2 Implications for Public Policy

The article also offers important implications for policymakers seeking to support sustainable and resilient consumption systems. As uncertainty increasingly shapes everyday consumption practices, public policy interventions may play a critical role in facilitating transitions toward more mindful, adaptive, and sustainable forms of consumption.

First, consumer education initiatives may help individuals develop greater awareness of marketplace manipulation, digital overstimulation, and unsustainable consumption patterns. Educational programs focused on financial literacy, digital literacy, sustainability awareness, and mindful decision-making may strengthen consumers' adaptive capacities under uncertainty (Zoll *et al.*, 2020).

Second, policymakers may support mindful consumption transitions through right-to-repair legislation and anti-obsolescence regulations. Such policies can reduce waste, extend product lifecycles, and encourage more resilient consumption systems (Zoll *et al.*, 2020). In parallel, investment in sustainable infrastructure—including public transportation, renewable energy systems, and circular economy initiatives—may facilitate reduced dependency on hyper-consumption models.

Third, the framework highlights the growing importance of transparent AI governance and digital marketplace regulation. Given the increasing influence of algorithmic persuasion and data-driven consumer manipulation, policymakers may need to establish clearer regulatory frameworks governing AI transparency, personalized advertising, and digital platform accountability (Zuboff, 2019). Reducing exploitative digital practices may help mitigate cognitive overload and strengthen consumer autonomy.

Finally, mindful consumption under uncertainty may contribute to broader sustainability and societal resilience agendas. Policies supporting localized production systems, community resilience networks, resource efficiency, and anti-waste initiatives may strengthen both environmental sustainability and social stability under conditions of systemic uncertainty (Jackson, 2021).

Consequently, mindful consumption should be viewed not solely as an individual behavioral issue but as part of a broader socio-economic transition toward more resilient and sustainable marketplace systems.

9. Future Research Directions

The proposed framework opens several promising avenues for future research on Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU). As uncertainty increasingly shapes marketplace behavior and consumer decision-making, further theoretical and empirical development is necessary to refine understanding of adaptive and reflexive consumption processes across different contexts and levels of analysis.

First, future studies should examine cross-cultural variations in mindful consumption under uncertainty. Cultural norms, institutional structures, social values, and economic conditions are likely to influence how consumers interpret uncertainty and adopt mindful consumption practices.

Comparative research across developed and emerging economies may provide important insights into how collectivist versus individualist orientations, risk perceptions, and societal resilience shape adaptive consumption responses (Hofstede, 2001). Such research may also clarify whether mindful consumption under uncertainty represents a globally emerging phenomenon or one that varies substantially across socio-cultural contexts.

Second, future research should investigate the role of artificial intelligence and algorithmic personalization in shaping mindful versus reactive consumption behavior. AI-driven recommendation systems, predictive analytics, personalized advertising, and algorithmic persuasion increasingly structure contemporary consumption environments (Zuboff, 2019).

While personalized systems may simplify decision-making and reduce uncertainty for some consumers, they may also intensify cognitive overload, impulsivity, and dependency. Future research could therefore examine how consumers negotiate autonomy, self-regulation, and digital resistance within increasingly algorithmically mediated marketplaces.

Third, additional research is needed to explore generational differences in mindful consumption orientations, particularly among Generation Z consumers. Younger consumers are uniquely positioned within environments characterized by digital saturation, climate anxiety, economic precarity, and social media hyperconnectivity (Francis and Hoefel, 2018).

These conditions may contribute to distinctive forms of reflexive consumption, digital fatigue, anti-consumption behavior, and sustainability-oriented identity construction. Future studies may therefore investigate how generational experiences influence adaptive consumption logics under uncertainty.

Fourth, future inquiry should extend the framework beyond individual consumer contexts and examine organizational and business-to-business (B2B) dimensions of mindful consumption logic. Existing mindful consumption research has focused predominantly on individual consumers, with limited attention devoted to organizational purchasing behavior, inter-organizational resilience, or adaptive supply chain practices.

Future research could investigate how firms adopt mindful procurement strategies, simplify organizational consumption systems, or integrate resilience-oriented decision-making under uncertain market conditions (Christopher and Holweg, 2011). Such work may broaden the relevance of MCUU to industrial marketing and organizational behavior research.

Fifth, future studies could examine the relationship between mindful consumption and post-growth or degrowth economic models. Emerging debates surrounding sustainable prosperity, reduced material dependency, and alternative economic systems increasingly challenge conventional assumptions regarding perpetual consumption growth (Jackson, 2021).

Mindful consumption under uncertainty may therefore represent not only an adaptive consumer response but also a broader socio-economic transition toward post-growth consumption systems emphasizing well-being, resilience, and

sustainability over accumulation and expansion. Exploring these macro-level implications may significantly enrich both marketing theory and sustainability research.

Finally, future methodological work should continue refining measurement approaches and testing the longitudinal stability of MCUU across different periods of societal disruption. Longitudinal and mixed-method studies may be particularly valuable for capturing the evolving and dynamic nature of mindful consumption under changing environmental, technological, and economic conditions.

10. Conclusion

This article introduced the concept of Mindful Consumption Under Uncertainty (MCUU) as a dynamic, reflexive, and adaptive consumption orientation emerging within increasingly volatile marketplace environments.

The proposed framework advances current understanding of how uncertainty reshapes consumption meanings, practices, and priorities in contexts characterized by economic instability, technological disruption, climate anxiety, and digital hyperstimulation. In doing so, the article responds to growing calls within consumer research for more context-sensitive and adaptive perspectives capable of explaining consumer behavior under conditions of systemic uncertainty (Witkowski, 2023).

The article demonstrates that mindful consumption should not be understood solely as an ethical, sustainability-oriented, or wellness-related phenomenon. Rather, mindful consumption increasingly functions as an adaptive response through which consumers seek to reduce vulnerability, regain control, and restore psychological equilibrium in uncertain environments.

Practices such as intentional purchasing, adaptive simplification, digital minimization, repair-oriented consumption, and resilience-focused decision-making reflect broader attempts to manage instability and cognitive overload (Sheth *et al.*, 2011; Bahl *et al.*, 2023).

By integrating mindfulness theory, consumer reflexivity, practice theory, resilience research, and uncertainty management perspectives, the article provides a comprehensive conceptual foundation for future inquiry into adaptive consumption behavior.

The framework contributes theoretically by reconceptualizing mindful consumption as an uncertainty-responsive market logic rather than a static ethical orientation. In addition, the article advances a process-oriented perspective linking uncertainty exposure, cognitive overload, existential reflection, and adaptive consumption practices within a unified explanatory model (Kahneman, 2011; Thompson and Kumar, 2021).

Importantly, the paper also develops a rigorous methodological architecture capable of capturing the complexity and dynamism of mindful consumption across digital, social, psychological, and material contexts. Through the integration of phenomenological inquiry, digital ethnography, experimental methods, scale development, and longitudinal research designs, the proposed framework offers a robust agenda for future empirical research.

As uncertainty increasingly becomes a defining characteristic of contemporary markets, understanding mindful consumption under uncertainty will become progressively more important for consumer research, marketing strategy, sustainability transitions, and public policy development. Consequently, the concept of MCUU provides a valuable foundation for examining how consumers adapt to instability while simultaneously redefining value, well-being, and marketplace participation in the twenty-first century.

***Acknowledgments:** The authors acknowledge the use of ChatGPT for improving sentence structure and readability in parts; however, the authors take full responsibility for the content of this manuscript.*

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