

Meditating for the planet: quantitative results of a mindfulness intervention study on sustainable consumption

Sonja M. Geiger¹, Daniel Fischer², Ulf Schrader¹, Laura Stanzus¹, Tina Böhme¹, Paul Grossman³

¹ Technical University Berlin, Institute for Vocational Education and Work Studies, Marchstraße 23, 10587 Berlin, Germany

² Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Institute for Environmental and Sustainability Communication (INFU), Scharnhorststr. 1, 21335 Lüneburg, Germany

³ European Center for Mindfulness, Merzhauser Str. 177, 79100 Freiburg, Germany

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Numerous academic studies have dealt with the effects of mindfulness meditation. Studies in the field of health behavior have shown that mindfulness might help to translate intentions into actual behavior (e.g. Chatzisarantis & Hagger, 2007). Such closure of the attitude-behavior gap would also be highly relevant for sustainable consumption. Although many academic publications combine the topics of mindfulness and sustainable consumption, in a systematic literature review we only identified seven which have analyzed the relationship empirically (Fischer et al., submitted); all of them propose small, but consistently positive relationships. However, as none of them was based on a controlled mindfulness intervention, it is still speculative to presume a positive effect of mindfulness on sustainable consumption and not vice versa.

This presentation will summarize the main results of the project BiNKA (German acronym for *education for sustainable consumption through mindfulness training*). The project aims to fill the identified research gap with a controlled randomized trial with a pre/ post/ follow-up intervention design (n= 137). The intervention comprises an 8-week mindfulness training based on the established MBSR course-format, albeit subtly introducing consumption topics. The training was delivered to university students and employees in medium-sized companies. Sustainable consumption was measured in the areas of nutrition and clothing (including circular economy issues), potentially being most sensitive to a mindfulness intervention. Whereas no immediate effects of the intervention on sustainable consumption behavior, nor a closure of the attitude-behavior gap were found, we detected significant effects on mediating variables such as a reduction of material values (Richins, 2004) and an increase in connectedness to nature (Mayer & Frantz, 2004). A possible cause for the lack of behavioral change might be the relative short intervention time. Results of the follow-up measurement, half a year after the completion of the course, will be available next June. Thus, we can show if an ongoing meditation practice might increase the effects on values and attitudes and even influence reported behavior.

References

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