

Sustainable Consumption Knowledge and Practices of Kansans: An Exploration of Accuracy and Depth of Understanding



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Are you concerned about:

High levels of consumption and waste and have changed your shopping habits?

The fast pace in our society and have decided to slow down, focusing on what is most important?

Increased complexity and materialism and have simplified your life?



The Problem

Perception that U.S. lags behind European countries in concern for and initiatives to address sustainability

HOWEVER...

A collection of independent movements flourishing in the U.S. , when taken together, represent a real move toward sustainability (Cohen, Comrov, & Hoffner, 2005)

3 Lifestyle Reinvention Movements

Voluntary Simplicity

To live deliberately with purpose and intention (Elgin, 1981)

To seek a materially sufficient lifestyle in order to live a more meaningful life (Cohen, Comrov, & Hoffner, 2005)

Slow Philosophy

Began as Slow Food Movement in Rome in response to opening of a McDonalds.

Expanded to include Slow Cities

Ethical consumption

Using purchase behavior as a tool for change by avoiding products and firms that use questionable labor practices or that have a record of environmental degradation (Cohen, Comrov, & Hoffner, 2005)



The Purpose

Study objectives:

To identify how Kansans, self-identified as concerned about consumption, define sustainability

To identify whether these Kansans consider themselves to live a sustainable lifestyle

To determine whether they also practice sustainable apparel consumption practices

The Approach

Focus group interviews of Kansans concerned with levels of consumption and waste, complexity and fast pace of life

- Semi-structured interview
- Flexible discussion flow



Sample Characteristics

Gender	#	% of Respondents
Male	5	22.7
Female	17	77.3

Age Category	#	% of Respondents
18-25	0	0
26-35	1	5
36-45	4	18
46-55	8	36
56-65	4	18
66-75	3	14
Over 75	2	9

Sample Characteristics

Education Level	#	% of Respondents
8 th grade	0	0
HS or equivalent	1	4.5
Associate Degree	1	4.5
Professional/Vocational	2	9
Bachelor's	9	41
Master's	7	32
Doctorate	2	9

Household Income#	#	% of Respondents
Less 12,499	0	0
12,500-24,999	3	13.6
25,000-37,499	4	18.2
37,500-49,999	2	9.1
50,000-62,499	2	9.1
62,500-74,999	2	9.1
75,000-87,499	3	13.6
87,500-99,999	3	13.6
100,000-112,499	1	4.5
112,500-124,999	1	4.5
125,000-137,499	0	0
137,500-149,999	0	0
150,000+	1	4.5

The Findings: Sustainability Defined

Themes Identified

Responsible agriculture, concern about pesticides and a safe food system

Responsible use of natural and finite resources

Stewardship, leaving the world better for next generation

Frugality and guarding against clutter

Durable and long lasting

The Findings: Sustainable Lifestyle

Themes Identified

Conscious about energy usage and attempt to consume less by buying energy efficient products and driving less

Buy less and keep longer

Recycling

Most were reluctant to identify themselves as living a sustainable lifestyle

Interesting Perspective

Sustainability is a journey, not a destination.
We learn more as we progress through our life phases and there may be variation from one day to the next.

The Findings: Sustainable Apparel Consumption

Themes Identified

Buy second-hand

Buy natural fibers

Buy less

Keep longer

Pay more for higher quality

Interesting Perspective

Sustainable agriculture and organic food movement has worked well by getting certification program in place and well recognized, but many organic minded people do not focus on fiber related agriculture.

Other Interesting Finding

Key reasons striving to become sustainable consumers:

Grew up on a farm

Developed love of nature when young

Observation of role models

Question: Will growing presence of Nature Deficit Disorder in young people result in disregard for ecological sustainability in the future?

The Conclusion

Do Kansans know about sustainability?

Yes – primarily from an environmental standpoint.

Do Kansans practice sustainable lifestyles?

Yes – however most practices are related to energy use, recycling and food.

What about their accuracy and level of understanding?

Not as accurate or deep related to sustainable apparel consumption.

Key Implications

Increased education required to help citizens understand the three pillars of sustainability

- social responsibility (people)
- environmental responsibility (planet)
- economic responsibility (prosperity)

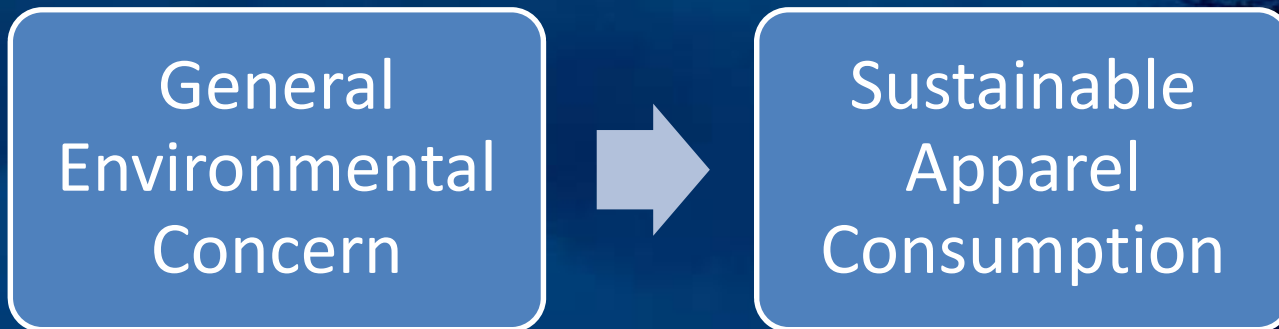
Increased education required to clarify sustainability as a journey of continuous improvement toward greater sustainable behavior

- it is not about yes you are or no you're not
- small steps are better than no steps

What's Next?

Investigate whether apparel environmental knowledge is a pre-requisite for sustainable apparel consumption

This



Or This





Any Questions?

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