

ABSTRACT

WU, DOROTHY EN-YIE. Motivations and Implications of Behavior of Participants of The Great American Apparel Diet. (Under the direction of Dr. Marguerite Moore).

The purpose of this study was to examine the motivations of participants of The Great American Apparel Diet (GAAD) as well as the implications of these behaviors. The population studied included participants who began the GAAD between the dates of September 1, 2009 and October 1, 2010 and posted blog entries to the GAAD website. Content from each posted blog entry during this time frame was qualitatively analyzed with content analysis for any trends or patterns.

The GAAD began as a small project by founder Sally Bjornsen, her sister, and several friends, quickly growing into a movement of over 300 members. Participants in the GAAD chose to abstain from purchasing new apparel for a period of one year. Specifically, as a requisite for the diet, they were not to purchase any new clothing for themselves for the one year period excluding underwear and accessories. Bjornsen, of Seattle, Washington, “was sick of what was happening in our country with consumerism” as she realized that even amid the recession, people were still spending beyond their means (Gomstyn, 2010, p. 1). The GAAD became a means for participants to achieve the lifestyle of voluntary simplicity.

From the 834 autobiographies and blog entries posted by 140 participants, the following general categories of motivations were discovered: Personal, Lifestyle, Social, Economic, Financial, Environmental, and Miscellaneous. These general categories were further broken down into within category findings, the largest of which was Personal Motivations, consisting of 25 separate motivation sub-categories. It appeared that the single most important motivation was the financial desire to “Make/Save Money.” The top cited

categories reflected motivations internal to the participant as opposed to motivations that were derived from external influences. The researcher generalized that internal motivations, which provided a level of personal control, were the most influential reasons to participate in the GAAD, a form of frugal consumer behavior.

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Motivations and Implications of Behavior of Participants of
The Great American Apparel Diet

by
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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandfather, Captain Shaw-John Loui, who fought pirates and entertained celebrities as he effortlessly commanded large vessels across the sparkling seas; and in special memory of my childhood dog, Shiny, whose loyalty, forgiveness, and companionship fostered my lifelong love of animals.



BIOGRAPHY

Dorothy En-Yie Wu was born in Ithaca, New York in March of 1985. She is the daughter of Drs. H. Felix and Ling Loui Wu, and the younger sister of brother, Osmond. Dorothy interned at Nordstrom in Bethesda, Maryland during the summer of 2007. In December of 2007, she graduated from East Carolina University (ECU) in Greenville, North Carolina with a Bachelor of Science in Apparel Merchandising with a minor in Business Administration. Upon graduation, she accepted a position in the Executive Training Program (formerly the Assistant Buyer Training Program) with the now defunct Linens ‘n Things in Clifton, New Jersey. In May of 2008, she began working as an Assistant Buyer at Scully & Scully, Inc., a luxury retailer located on prestigious Park Avenue in New York City. Dorothy assisted the company President in assortment planning and forecasting, product development, and vendor negotiation for store, catalog, and website.

In the spring of 2009, Dorothy decided to pursue the idea of graduate education. She began graduate school at North Carolina State University in August of 2009 and was granted a graduate assistantship funded by North Carolina State University. Dorothy was the graduate assistant for the Textile Management Science Laboratory (TMSL), a state-of-the-art facility providing students and faculty with global connectivity in learning and research in a business environment, while forming relationships and collaborating with private industry and government agencies. Dorothy helped to facilitate the official TMSL dedication and the first annual Internship Showcase, which took place on September 30, 2010. This high-profile event provided networking opportunities for student interns,

faculty, and industry professionals. Dorothy also assisted the department with the bi-annual Industry Advisory Board meetings as well as various College of Textiles Open House programs.

Dorothy plans to complete the requirements to graduate in the summer of 2011 with a Master of Science in Textiles. She will pursue her doctoral degree upon graduation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Great American Apparel Diet (GAAD) began as a small project by founder Sally Bjornsen, her sister, and several friends, quickly growing into a movement of over 300 members. Participants in the GAAD chose to abstain from purchasing new apparel for a period of one year. Specifically, as a requisite for the diet, they were not to purchase any new clothing for themselves for the one year period excluding underwear and accessories. The original 20 members began on September 1, 2009, with new members joining on various starting dates (The Great American Apparel Diet, 2010, "About," para. 4). Bjornsen, of Seattle, Washington, “was sick of what was happening in our country with consumerism” as she realized that even amid the recession, people were still spending beyond their means (Gomstyn, 2010, p. 1). The GAAD became a means for participants to achieve the lifestyle of voluntary simplicity.

Voluntary simplicity is a lifestyle choice with the “defining characteristic” of “reduced material consumption and the removal of clutter from one’s life” (Ballantine & Creery, 2010, p. 45). Etzioni (1998) defined the practice to be a “choice out of free will (...) to limit expenditures on consumer goods” (p. 620). During this time of increasing economic debt and the diminishing of valuable natural resources (Bove, Nagpal, & Dorsett, 2009), frugal consumer behavior has begun to replace what was once a lifestyle of conspicuous consumption. Nash (2007) determined that some of the features of this behavior include:

Conscientious conservation of resources, sustainable production and consumption, care and maintenance of possessions, living within available means (...) comprehensive recycling of products, social deterrents to waste and incentives for constrained consumption (...) and the sacrifice of excess goods for the common good. (p. 2)

Voluntary simplicity has become a way of the norm for shoppers due to recessionary trading conditions. In an article written for The Associated Press, Aversa and Condon (2010) stated that even as the economy slowly recovers, American consumers might not be returning to their previous spending habits. In December 2008, “trend forecaster Irma Zandl found a growing number of people describing the recession as something akin to an overdue wake-up call and characterizing their consumption as out of touch with reality” (Seckler, 2009, p. 1). Marshal Cohen, an analyst at the NPD Group, stated that buyers are moving from conspicuous consumption to a calculated consumption (Rosenbloom, 2010). This new behavior could prove costly for the apparel industry. Retailers and marketers will not only need to research these new behaviors and implement new tactics, but also consider using them as lasting business strategies (Rosenbloom, 2010).

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this study is to identify the motivations to participate in the GAAD, characterize these motivations, and consider the implications for the apparel industry (i.e. manufacturers, marketers, retailers).

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the motivations of consumers to participate in the GAAD?

RQ2: What are the implications of participants' behaviors in the GAAD for the apparel industry?

Objectives

O1: Identify the motivations to participate in the GAAD.

O2: Categorize and characterize these motivations.

O3: Consider the implications for the apparel industry (i.e. manufacturers, marketers, retailers).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of previous literature presents an overview of the current academic research that focuses on voluntary simplicity, frugal consumer behavior, and sustainable consumption. This literature review specifically discusses the motivational themes of voluntary simplicity, and also presents a brief synopsis of the origin and development of the GAAD, as well as other anti-consumption movements.

Origin of Voluntary Simplicity

The pervasive consumer trait of frugal consumer behavior has been largely ignored in scholarly consumer behavior literature (Lastovicka, Bettencourt, Hughner, & Kuntze, 1999). Specifically, voluntary simplicity is considered an emerging field of research (McDonald, Oates, Young, & Hwang, 2006). Ballantine and Creery (2010) determined that the current academic literature on voluntary simplicity is limited to focusing on defining the term and examining the experiences of voluntary simplifiers. Todd and Lawson (2003) concluded that “the need for marketers to understand non-consumption, as well as consumption, has recently been recognized, with research being undertaken in areas such as frugality and voluntary simplicity” (p. 271). With the recent economic recession, there has been a significant increase in loss of retail sales, thus increasing the need to conduct research in this area. “If consumers end up sticking with their newfound spending habits, some tactics that retailers and marketers began deploying during the recession could become lasting business

strategies” (Rosenbloom, 2010, p. 1). In addition to marketing, the practice of voluntary simplicity has also attracted the attention of researchers in psychology (Huneke, 2005).

Voluntary simplicity is a lifestyle choice that has received increasing media attention over time. A defining characteristic of voluntary simplicity is reduced material consumption and the removal of clutter from one’s life, thus suggesting the topic of disposition may inform our understanding of voluntary simplifier lifestyle behaviour. (Ballantine & Creery, 2010, p. 45).

Lastovicka, Bettencourt, Hughner, and Kuntze define frugal consumer behavior as “the limiting of expenditures on consumer goods and services, as is characterized by both restraint in acquiring possessions and resourcefulness in using them” (as mentioned in Pepper, Jackson, & Uzzell, 2009, p. 126). Specifically, Gregg (1936) first defined voluntary simplicity as having “singleness of purpose, sincerity and honesty within, as well as avoidance of exterior clutter, of many possessions irrelevant to the chief purpose of life” (p. 4). The practice of voluntary simplicity in relation to discouragement of excess in acquisition and encouragement in constraint is deeply rooted in many world religions (Lastovicka, Bettencourt, Hughner, & Kuntze, 1999, p. 86). In his thesis, Max Weber (as cited in Iannaccone, 1998), noted the Protestant Reformation and the advent of modern capitalism with its emphasis on personal diligence, frugal consumer behavior, and thrift in relation to individual responsibility. In Hinduism, the fourth stage of Ashrama (life), Sannyas, requires the surrendering of everything worldly (Lastovicka, Bettencourt, Hughner, & Kuntze, 1999). Watson, Jones, & Morris, (as cited in Pepper, Jackson, & Uzzell,

2010) summarized that intrinsic religious orientation related positively to retention attitudes and behaviors such as prudent expenditure and financial planning for the future.

There is evidence of voluntary simplicity in America dating back to the colonial 1700s. Colonists were limited to basics, decreasing the demand and need for imported luxury products from the motherland. The Puritan and Quaker settlers of the seventeenth century favored productive work and prudent consumption, thus being able to contribute the most to church and society (Witowski, 1989). In the 1990s, clusters of individuals became “fueled by a variety of concerns such as the environment, overconsumption, abuse of developing nations, and extensive advertising,” thus causing them to engage in a range of anticonsumption activities (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002, p. 187-188). More recently, “the Great Recession” has “bred a new frugality that will endure well into the recovery” (Aversa & Condon, 2010, p. 1).

Frugal Consumer Behavior and Sustainable Consumption

Voluntary simplicity has also been associated with frugal consumer behavior and sustainable consumption. Frugal consumer behavior “is a unidimensional consumer lifestyle trait characterized by the degree to which consumers are both restrained in acquiring and in resourcefully using economic goods and services to achieve longer-term goals” (Lastovicka, Bettencourt, Hughner, & Kuntze, 1999, p. 88). Pepper, Jackson, & Uzzell (2009) discussed sustainable consumption as “a field of enquiry and a course of action (...) within a context of growing awareness of the ecological limitations on human activity” (p. 126). The development of sustainable consumption, “a broad and contested concept that concerns the

interaction of social and ecological issues such as environmental protection, human needs, quality of life,” encourages the growth of the “agenda for issues such as ecological efficiency into the realm of consumption and the consumer” (Pepper, Jackson, & Uzzell, 2009, p. 126). Thus it is concluded that voluntary simplicity, frugal consumer behavior, and sustainable consumption are all considered to be proactive lifestyle choices made by an individual involving restraint or avoidance of acquiring or possessing goods as a means to achieve a longer-term goal. “The negative impact of consumption-orientated cultures has resulted in mounting consumer concern, and voluntary conscientious consumers’ action for change” (Shaw & Moraes, 2009, p. 215). The results of this study will help market researchers better understand this new behavior and develop proper tactics and business strategies to react to the change.

Peattie (1999) suggested that in order to understand sustainable consumption, one must view each individual’s consumption behavior, including decisions to participate in alternate consumption behavior as well as not to participate in consumption activities at all. McDonald, Oates, Young, and Hwang (2006) concluded that “looking at sustainable consumption in this way leads to a microfocus on individual purchases, which reveals competing priorities, paradoxical outcomes, and the nature of compromises reached in real decision processes” (p. 529).

Motivational Themes of Voluntary Simplicity

Craig-Lees and Hill (2002) identified the following five motivational themes of voluntary simplicity: freedom of choice in leading a simpler life, reducing material

consumption, wealth, control/personal fulfillment, and the drive of values (including humanism, self-determination, environmentalism, spirituality, and self-development). In addition to environment and overconsumption, Craig-Lees and Hill (2002), also identified concerns of abuse of developing nations and extensive advertising in leading to the anticonsumerism movement. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggested that once satisfying lower-end needs, an individual may turn to voluntary simplicity as a practical option for achieving higher-end needs (Etzioni, 1998). Individuals who choose to practice voluntary simplicity are also trying to expand their control over their daily lives (Leonard-Barton, 1981).

Gregg (1936) determined the following to be reasons for simplicity: economic, political, social, non-violence, religious, personality, psychological, and beauty. When discussing economics, he determined that out of its three divisions of consumption, production, and distribution, consumption "is the area within which every person can exercise his control" (Gregg, 1936, p. 14). In 1935, Professor E. L. Thorndike, of Columbia University (as cited in Gregg, 1936, p. 17-18) stated that "less than one-third of what we spent for wants which must be satisfied to keep the human species alive and self-perpetuating."

Elgin (as cited in Huneke, 2005) identified ten different approaches to voluntary simplicity including: choiceful simplicity, frugal simplicity, and ecological simplicity, each of which has a somewhat different emphasis and different impact on daily life. Shaw and Newholm (2002) identified two different motivations for voluntary simplicity including: downshifting and ethical consumption. Downshifting refers specifically to the "self-centered

responses to the perception of the hurried and unsatisfactory lifestyle of contemporary society,” with little focus on larger moral issues (Shaw & Newholm, 2002, p. 169). Ethical simplifiers have concerns regarding environmental, social, and animal welfare issues (Shaw & Newholm, 2002). For downshiffters, quality of life is improved as it “frees time and other scarce resources of non-materialistic satisfaction, from acquiring music appreciation to visiting museums, from slowing down to enjoying nature to relearning the reading of challenging books to watching a rerun of a classical movie on television” (Etzioni, 1998, p. 637). “Ethical simplifiers respond to complex and swiftly developing social and environmental debates that they see as having an impact on their role in consumer society” (Shaw & Newholm, 2002, p. 170). Etzioni (1998) explained that these individuals experience continual inner tension caused by conflicts among their basic urges, desires, and morals.

Elgin and Mitchell (as cited in McDonald, Oates, Young, & Hwang, 2006) identified five key values of voluntary simplifiers: material simplicity, human scale, self-determination, ecological awareness, and personal growth. Material simplicity implies consuming less, including items that are resource efficient, durable, and have a smaller ecological impact. Leonard-Barton and Rogers (1980) identified the following three groups of voluntary simplifiers: Conservers, Crusaders, and Conformists. Conservers choose the lifestyle as a means of reducing waste, Conformists are responding to guilt or peer pressure, and Crusaders are motivated by social concern.

The Great American Apparel Diet

The Great American Apparel Diet (GAAD) began as a small project by founder Sally Bjornsen, quickly growing into a movement of over 300 members. Participants were required to refrain from purchasing new apparel for a one-year period. They were not to purchase any new clothing for themselves excluding underwear and accessories. The original 20 members began on September 1, 2009, with new members joining on various starting dates (The Great American Apparel Diet, 2010, "About," para. 4). Bjornsen, of Seattle, Washington, “was sick of what was happening in our country with consumerism” as she realized that even amid the recession, people were still spending beyond their means (Gomstyn, 2010, p. 1).

Some of us have recently lost our jobs while others are looking to change careers. (...)

We are all collectively reevaluating our habits—shopping habits in particular. Some of us are motivated to curb our carbon footprint while others are motivated to curb spending. Some are sick and tired of consumption in general while others are concerned about consumption and the environment. Many of us want to share our trials and tribulations on the blog. (The Great American Apparel Diet, 2010, "About," para. 3).

A similar movement in combating overconsumption is The Compact, a group co-founded in December 2005 by John Perry, of San Francisco, California (Anderson, 2008). During dinner with nine of his friends, the group decided to go an entire year without purchasing anything new besides food, medicine, and hygiene products. After two years, The Compact had grown to more than 8,000 followers. Marisa Lynch of West Hollywood, California started another movement after being laid off from her job right before her

thirtieth birthday. Inspired by the movie, *Julie & Julia*, Lynch began the New Dress A Day blog, vowing to make a new fashion piece everyday on a budget of only one dollar per day, for the period of one year (Ju, 2010). Lynch began blogging on November 26, 2010, and has continued to up-cycle vintage pieces into presentable modern-day apparel on a daily basis.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to identify the motivations to participate in the GAAD, categorize and characterize these motivations, and consider the implications for the apparel industry (i.e. manufacturers, marketers, retailers). The investigation was conducted using a content analysis approach. Individual blog entries posted by the participants of the GAAD were analyzed to address the research questions and objectives. Each entry was examined and reviewed for general topical categories of motivations to participate in the GAAD. All entries were accessed through the public GAAD website.

Population and Sample

Blog entries posted by the participants of the GAAD within the dates of August 24, 2009 to October 1, 2010 were analyzed. A total of 719 blog entries and 115 autobiographies posted by 140 participants were examined and reviewed for general topical categories of motivations. The entries and autobiographies written by the 140 participants constituted the focal unit of measure (n=834). All entries were accessed by the researcher through the public GAAD website. Individual blog entries and autobiographies may have contained more than one articulated motivation. Multiple motivations within a blog entry or autobiography were individually counted.

Data Collection

The data collection process consisted of printing out all autobiographies and blog entries of participants who posted to the GAAD website from the dates of August 24, 2009, one week before the official start date of the GAAD on September 1, 2009, to October 1, 2010, one month after the official end date of the GAAD on August 31, 2010. The original start date of the GAAD was September 1, 2009, ending a year later on August 31, 2010. However, additional participants joined the diet after the start date, with some deciding to participate for a total of one year, and others deciding to end their diets with the original group on August 31, 2010. Participants were invited to send in a picture and brief autobiography, and were then set up with a username, password and administrative login within the GAAD website. The participants were then able to post blog entries, publically available through the website. A total of 115 of the participants included an autobiography. Approximately 99 percent of the participants contributed at least one blog entry. The average number of entries posted per respondent was approximately five. The sample characteristics captured include whether or not an autobiography was posted, the number of blog entries posted, location (city, state, country), gender, age, and occupation. Not all of the participants stated or alluded to each one of these characteristics, therefore missing values for the sample characteristics are common. After collecting sample characteristics for each individual, each autobiography and blog entry per individual was analyzed for motivations influencing a participant to join. Each cited motivation was documented across a horizontal spreadsheet. These motivations were then generalized.

Analysis

In order to identify the primary motivations that influenced participants to join the GAAD, characterize these motivations, and consider the implications for the apparel industry, a content analysis approach was used in this study. Content analysis provides an “objective, systematic, quantitative, and generalizable description of communications content” (Kassarjian, 1977, p. 10). Holsti (1969) defined content analysis as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (p. 14). Content analysis enables researchers to examine large quantities of data with ease in an efficient manner (GAO, 1996). According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2007), “qualitative content analysis emphasizes an integrated view of speech/texts and their specific contexts” (p. 1). Furthermore, it goes beyond tabulating word frequencies by extracting objective content in order to generate underlying meanings, patterns, and themes (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2007).

“What makes the technique particularly rich and meaningful is its reliance on coding and categorizing of the data” (Stemler, 2001). Weber (1990) defined a category as “a group of words with similar meaning or connotations” (p. 37). For example, Thomas, Peters, and Tolson (2007) used content analysis to affectively sift through a total of 6,623 individual posts within a MySpace.com forum subgroup to determine general topical categories of content relating to fashion and style. In their study, Thomas, Peters, and Tolson (2007) were not only able to tabulate the frequency of occurrence of each category, but were also able to interpret the specific meaning of each category.

Kozinets (2002) determined that consumers are using online formats such as newsgroups, chat rooms, e-mail list servers, personal websites, and other online formats “to share ideas, build communities, and contact fellow consumers who are seen as more objective sources” (p. 61). The author explained that “‘netnography’ is ethnography adapted to the study of online communities,” providing a faster, simpler, more naturalistic and unobtrusive way to study a social group (Kozinets, 2002, p. 61). “It provides information on the symbolism, meanings, and consumption patterns of online consumer groups” (Kozinets, 2002, p. 61). One type of online community is that of bloggers. A weblog (blog) “is a frequently updated online journal or diary” that allows the author to express oneself to the world by sharing his thoughts and passions (Odtan, 2011 p. 1). “Bloggers are driven to document their lives, provide commentary and opinions, express deeply felt emotions, articulate ideas through writing, and form and maintain community forums” (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Prior to examining the motivations of participants, sample characteristics for participating GAAD bloggers were evaluated based primarily on demographics. Seven general categories of motivations for participation were identified using a content analysis approach. The seven categories were further divided into 52 sub-categories, referred to henceforth as within category findings. Additionally, motivation occurrence was analyzed across the entire sample, category-free, to determine the most frequent influence on GAAD participation.

Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of 834 autobiographies and blog entries written by 140 participants. The average reported age of participants was approximately 36.88 years, with a minimum age of 19 years and a maximum age of 60 years. The majority of the study's participants were female, with only a single male participant (0.7 percent) represented in the sample. Of those participants who reported their locations, 89.3 percent were from the United States with 15.7 percent from the state of Washington, 10.7 percent from the state of California, and 5 percent from the state of New York. A total of 7.7 percent of participants who reported their locations were from countries outside of the United States including Canada (2.1 percent), Australia (1.4 percent), England (1.4 percent), Germany (1.4 percent), Croatia (0.7 percent), and Italy (0.7 percent). The remaining participants who reported their

locations were from various states within the United States. A total of 46 (32.9 percent) participants did not specify a location. Participants reported a broad range of occupations that varied from working professional, to higher education student, to stay-at-home mom (Appendix A).

Content Analysis Results

A total of seven general categories of motivations emerged from the content analysis of the sample data (Table 1). These large categories included a total of 52 sub-categories referred to as within category findings (Tables 3-9). Motivations were analyzed and presented across the seven general categories as well as within the 52 sub-categories. Further, motivation occurrence was analyzed across the entire sample, category-free, to determine the most frequent influence on GAAD participation, regardless of general category membership.

General Categories of Motivations

The general categories consisted of seven motivations including: Personal, Lifestyle, Social, Economic, Financial, Environmental, and Miscellaneous categories (Table 1). These categories were not mutually exclusive.

Table 1

Definitions of General Categories of Motivations

Category	Definition
Personal	Relating to personal issues including goals, weaknesses, challenges, and problems, etc.
Lifestyle	Relating to lifestyle issues including living situation, shopping behaviors, consumption behaviors, etc.
Social	Relating to social issues including country of origin, fair trade, fair labor, etc.
Economic	Relating to economic issues including job loss, unemployment, recession, etc.
Financial	Relating to financial issues including spending habits, bills, debt, savings, etc.
Environmental	Relating to environmental issues including environmental impact and footprint, green or eco-friendly products and materials, re/up-cycling, etc.
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous issues

The Personal category contained the most significant number of citations with 498 (44.03 percent) total separate citations. A group of categories indicated responses between 15.21 and 10.52 percent, respectively, including: Financial, Miscellaneous, Environmental, and Economic. The Social category contained the least number of citations with a total of only 37 (3.27 percent) separate citations (Table 2, Figure 1).

Table 2

General Categories of Motivations Citations

Label	Category	Number of Citations	Percentage of Citations
M1	Personal	498	44.03%
M2	Lifestyle	119	10.52%
M3	Social	37	3.27%
M4	Economic	56	4.95%
M5	Financial	172	15.21%
M6	Environmental	118	10.43%
M7	Miscellaneous	131	11.58%
	Total	1131	

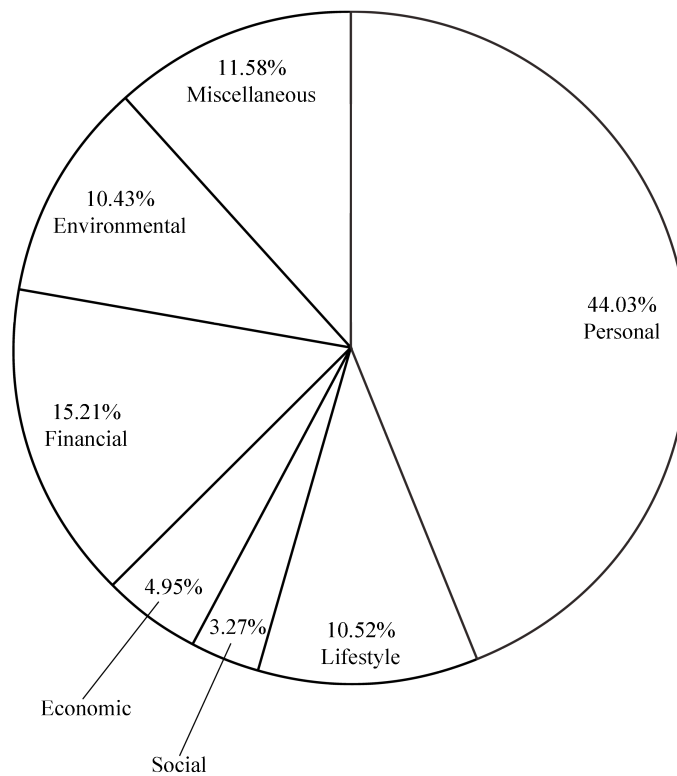


Figure 1

General Categories of Motivations

Within Category Findings

The seven large categories of general motivations were further broken down into within category findings. The largest category was Personal Motivations, consisting of 25 separate motivation sub-categories. The Lifestyle Motivations and Financial Motivations categories each contained seven separate motivation sub-categories. Environmental Motivations contained six separate motivation sub-categories, Social Motivations contained three, and Economic and Miscellaneous Motivations contained two each.

Personal Motivations

Twenty-five separate motivations were cited within the Personal general category with a total of 498 citations (Figure 2). The motivation of “Want vs. Need” was cited 84 times, accounting for 16.87 percent of the total. Subject number 005 from Santa Cruz, California, stated in her first blog entry that she wanted to “be able to differentiate between a want and a need and gain self-control to say ‘no’ to the wants.” Subject number 016 from Colorado stated that her wardrobe was “large enough” that she “should not need to buy new clothes for the next ten years.” Also admitting to having more than she needs, Subject 080, a thirty-year-old female from Montana, was matter-of-fact in her statement:

I probably reached an acceptable wardrobe level about a year ago but the feeling of ‘should’ was still there, so the shopping, the ‘stocking up’ on tall sized clothes continued (...) Now this diet is helping me begin the down-swing of that cycle...I DON’T need to dress fashionably according to magazines (...) I DON’T need a perfect little black dress for parties (...) What I NEED is a decent dress or skirt/shirt

combination to wear to funerals, ditto for weddings, and an assortment of semi-professional shirts and layering pieces to wear to work and possibly out for the night. I mean, I'm 30. I don't care how 'big this season' sequined tank tops are, I don't need to own one.

"Use Current Wardrobe" and "Change Shopping Habits" were both cited 60 times, each accounting for 12.05 percent of the total. Subject 038 from Baltimore, Maryland, stated that she had subscribed to a number of "refashion blogs and newsletters" which forced her to think about how she could "rework" what she had in her closet "instead of rushing to buy something online." Subject 041, a native and resident of Seattle, Washington, blogged on January 14, 2009 that while she was tired of her "winter uniform," and "unable to go shopping to "spice it up," she had turned to "mining" her "closet for 'new' finds." She reiterated that she had "an unjustifiably large number of short-sleeved shirts for someone living under the perpetually gray skies of Seattle."

There were 50 (10.04 percent) citations for "Guilt," 35 (7.03 percent) citations for "Self Improvement/Control," 34 citations (6.83 percent) for "Contentedness," 31 (6.22 percent) citations for "Adequate Wardrobe," and 21 citations (4.22 percent) for "Challenge." Both "Secrecy" and "Hypocrisy" received only 1 (0.20 percent) citation each and "Obsession" was only cited twice (0.40 percent). After dropping 25 pounds in eight months, subject 066 from Maryland cited her obsession with purchasing new clothes that fit her new body to replace the old clothes in her closet that were now too large. "I was never going to stop unless I did something about it," she said. "I plan to blog about this challenge so it stays as a commitment."

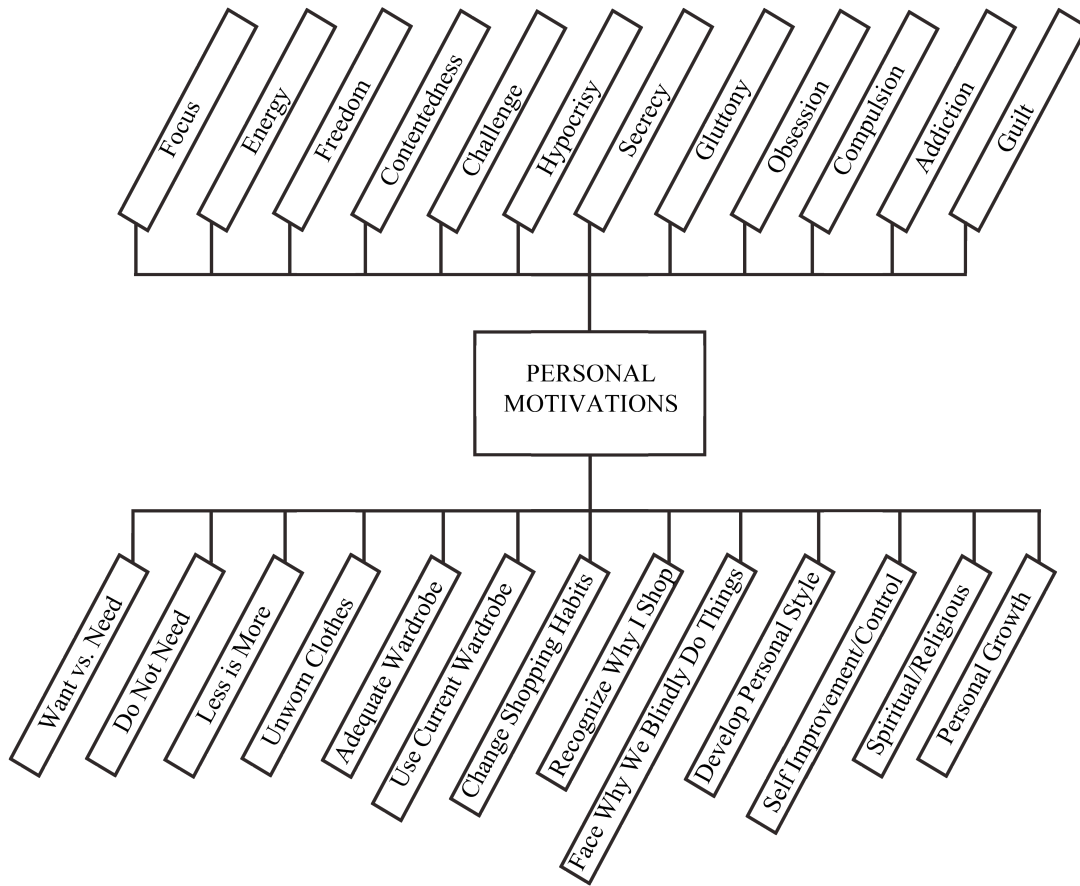


Figure 2

Personal Motivations

Table 3

Personal Motivation Citations in Descending Order

Label	Sub-Category Motivation	Number of Citations	Percentage of Citations
M1H	Want vs. Need	84	16.87%
M1C	Use Current Wardrobe	60	12.05%
M1D	Change Shopping Habits	60	12.05%
M1A	Guilt	50	10.04%
M1E	Self Improvement/Control	35	7.03%
M1K	Contentedness	34	6.83%
M1B	Adequate Wardrobe	31	6.22%

Table 3 Continued

Label	Sub-Category Motivation	Number of Citations	Percentage of Citations
M1G	Do Not Need	14	2.81%
M1L	Less is More	14	2.81%
M1S	Personal Growth	12	2.41%
M1J	Face Why We Blindly Do Things	11	2.21%
M1N	Unworn Clothes	10	2.01%
M1P	Freedom	9	1.81%
M1W	Develop Personal Style	8	1.61%
M1R	Focus	7	1.41%
M1O	Compulsion	4	0.80%
M1Q	Energy	4	0.80%
M1F	Recognize Why I Shop	3	0.60%
M1I	Gluttony	3	0.60%
M1Y	Spiritual/Religious	3	0.60%
M1X	Obsession	2	0.40%
M1U	Secrecy	1	0.20%
M1V	Hypocrisy	1	0.20%
	Total	498	

Lifestyle Motivations

Seven separate motivations were cited within the Lifestyle general category with a total of 212 citations (Figure 3). “Closet Makeover” was cited the most with 48 citations, accounting for 22.64 percent of the total. Subject 131 celebrated the first day of her diet by spending three hours in her closet “planning a quick reorganization.” Prior to the diet, she had stocked up on a pair of black pants as an essential item in her wardrobe, but upon reorganizing her closet, discovered she already had black pants. “Well lo and behold, I already do have black pants. EIGHT PAIR.” She encouraged other bloggers to also complete a wardrobe reorganization as one might find things that they did not even remember owning.

For others, such as 36-year-old Subject 085 of Seattle, Washington, “The diet has led me to become merciless with my clothing....if I haven’t worn it in the last 4 months, it really doesn’t belong with me. This has resulted in some aggressive culling of elderly workout gear.”

“Save Time” was cited 42 (19.81 percent) times, “Lifestyle Change” was cited 40 (18.87 percent) times, and “Simplicity” was cited 39 (18.40 percent) times. “Save Space” was cited only 3 (1.42 percent) times. Subject 005 mentioned in her autobiography that she hoped to “stop wasting time purchasing and returning and ‘virtual’ window shopping online.” In a later blog entry, she cited her need to “find freedom” from her “sometimes compulsive shopping habits” and to spend her “time more productively.”

Subject 127, a 21-year-old Emerging Media and Communications student from Texas, stated that due to moving around the country, she had “discovered the benefits of living with less” and “the ease of simplicity.” While sorting through her wardrobe, she realized that “simple, solid items go a lot further” than “complex, printed items” that “seem more difficult to dress up.” Subject 028, a 44-year-old mother and teacher from Costa Mesa, California, took a more general approach to simplicity, stating that she was “trying to downsize and simplify her life” as she began to realize that she needed less. Subject 082, a 41-year-old lawyer from San Francisco, California, declared that she could no longer “spare the space” in her closet, and that she was “saying no to clutter and waste.”

Table 4

Lifestyle Motivation Citations in Descending Order

Label	Sub-Category Motivation	Number of Citations	Percentage of Citations
M2G	Closet Makeover	48	22.64%
M2F	Save Time	42	19.81%
M2A	Lifestyle Change	40	18.87%
M2C	Simplicity	39	18.40%
M2D	Overconsumption	25	11.79%
M2B	Cut Back	15	7.08%
M2E	Save Space	3	1.42%
	Total	212	

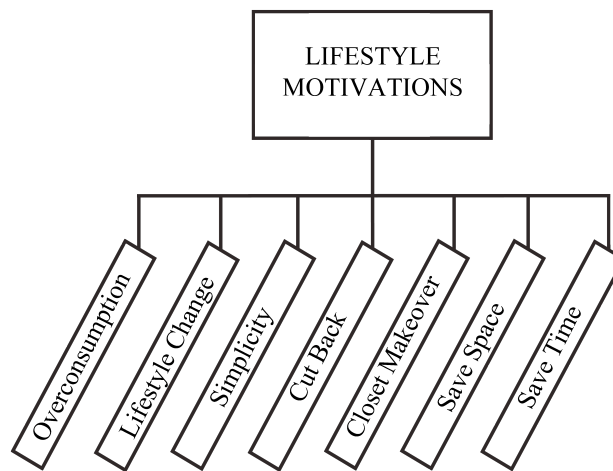


Figure 3

Lifestyle Motivations

Social Motivations

Three separate motivations were cited within the Social general category with a total of 37 citations (Figure 4). “Local/Basics/Grassroots” was cited 19 times, accounting for

51.35 percent of the total, while “Non-Profit” was cited only twice, accounting for 5.41 percent of the total. Subject 003, a 38-year-old artist from Seattle, Washington, explained in her autobiography that she had already been on a “three-year mission to transition” her “wardrobe to be 100% ‘eco-friendly,’ retiring old items in favor of Green Festival and local fashion finds.” Citing the GAAD rules of exception for purchasing underwear, she devoted an entire blog entry to recommending a brand of underwear that represented “functional fashion and eco-friendly manufacturing.” She mentioned that the undergarments were “made from organic cotton, sustainably manufactured” and that ten percent of every purchase went to a non-profit organization. Another participant, subject 036, cited a socially conscious motivation. This 25-year-old Serbian student studying in Italy, mentioned her awareness of how many of her favorite brands were “made in third world [*sic*] countries by workers who are poorly paid, maybe even using child labour.”

Table 5

Social Motivation Citations in Descending Order

Label	Sub-Category Motivation	Number of Citations	Percentage of Citations
M3B	Local/Basics/Grassroots	19	51.35%
M3A	Socially Conscious	16	43.24%
M3C	Non-Profit	2	5.41%
	Total	37	

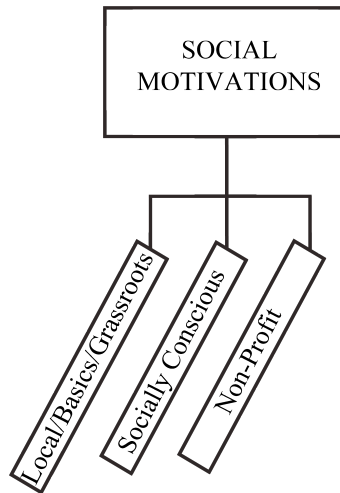


Figure 4

Social Motivations

Economic Motivations

Two separate motivations were cited within the Economic general category with a total of 56 citations (Figure 5). “Recession” was cited 33 times, accounting for 58.93 percent of the total, while “Job Loss” was cited 23 times accounting for the remaining 41.07 percent. Due to her husband’s job loss in April of 2009, subject 022, a 42-year-old mother-of-two, stated that she had “been in ‘imposed frugality’ mode” for over six months prior to starting the diet. “I view the ‘Great American Apparel Diet’ as an opportunity to take back that feeling of control over my frugality.” In a March 15, 2010 blog entry, the subject stated that “this recession and unemployment thing” had changed even the “normal” task of “keeping up with household repairs.” Three months later, the subject blogged about her appreciation for the support of the GAAD in the “form of encouraging feedback” about her “family’s

struggles with unemployment,” as well as the kind words regarding her successful weight loss.

Subject 087, a mother-of-two from Warren, Michigan, blogged about her husband’s job loss on April 10, 2010. She said that she had considered her family to be blessed, as her husband had continued working “even through this recession,” but that the sudden change would force them to change the way they live. “Now I have another reason why I needed to join this diet.”

Table 6

Economic Motivation Citations in Descending Order

Label	Sub-Category Motivation	Number of Citations	Percentage of Citations
M4A	Recession	33	58.93%
M4B	Job Loss	23	41.07%
	Total	56	

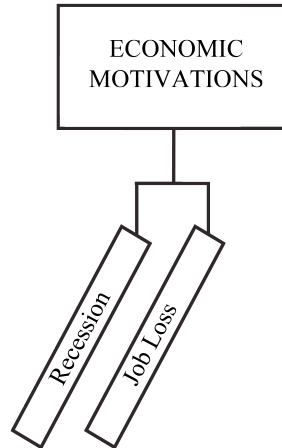


Figure 5

Economic Motivations

Financial Motivations

Seven separate motivations were cited within the Financial general category with a total of 172 citations. “Make/Save Money” was cited the most with 89 total citations, accounting for 51.74 percent of the total, followed by “Pay Bills/Debt,” which was cited 37 times, accounting for 21.51 percent. “Live Within Means” and “Overbuy” were each cited twice, accounting for 1.16 percent each. Subject 001, a 24-year-old interior designer from Akron, Ohio, had just accepted a new position at work when she realized she needed to go through her wardrobe to make sure she had “outfits that really do say ‘Interior Designer.’” While doing so, she made a list of essential items she was lacking, as well as essential items that would need to be replaced due to normal wear and tear. “I just hope that there aren’t too many things on the list that it negates the whole reason I am doing this in the first place, to save money. It would suck if the money I am saving equaled the amount that I would need to

spend in September to replace and update my closet. Let [*sic*] hope I save more than that!”

Subject 135, a 28-year-old mother from North Carolina, stated that she had “more than enough clothes now so it’s time to diet.” She wanted “to participate to save money” for her family, as they are close to “being completely debt free” and would “love to put money normally spent on clothes towards debt.”

Subject 074, a 22-year-old Elementary Education student at Ball State University in Indiana, decided to join the diet for a “peace of mind from excessive and unnecessary spending.” She also expressed the desire to have “savings enough” to visit her younger brother who would be studying abroad in Europe in the spring. In her autobiography, subject 018, a 26-year-old Marketing Coordinator, expressed her desires to “live within and below” her means and to pay off her credit card debt.

Table 7

Financial Motivation Citations in Descending Order

Label	Sub-Category Motivation	Number of Citations	Percentage of Citations
M5C	Make/Save Money	89	51.74%
M5E	Pay Bills/Debt	37	21.51%
M5A	Bad for Finances	17	9.88%
M5B	Do Not Have Money	16	9.30%
M5D	Waste of Money	9	5.23%
M5F	Live Within Means	2	1.16%
M5G	Overbuy	2	1.16%
	Total	172	

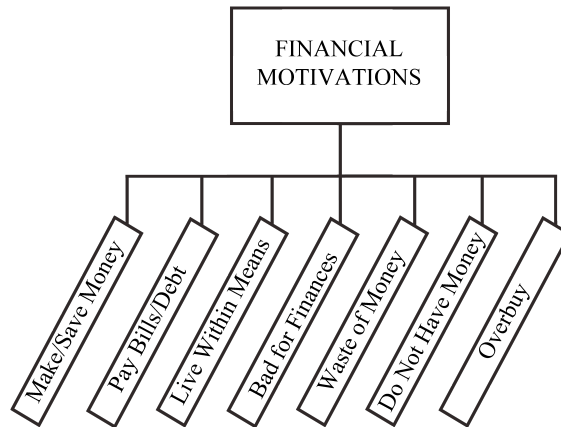


Figure 6

Financial Motivations

Environmental Motivations

Six separate motivations were cited within the Environmental general category with a total of 118 citations. “Green/Eco-Friendly” was cited the most with 58 total citations, accounting for 49.15 percent of the total, followed by “Reduce Carbon Footprint” and “Re/Up-cycling,” each of which had 24 citations, accounting for 20.34 percent each. “Wasteful” was cited only twice, accounting for 1.69 percent. Subject 077, a 26-year-old designer, writer, and entrepreneur from Hilo, Hawaii, “has been conscious of social and environmental problems since childhood.” In her autobiography, she stated that “The Great American Apparel Diet is one of 365 commitments she will make in 2010 to live more sustainably.” On February 11, 2010, she blogged about British fashion designer, Vivienne Westwood, who made an appearance on BBC News to encourage “viewers to give up shopping for at least six months—unless they had to—to keep our landfills from filling up.”

Subject 078, a 41-year-old marketing executive from San Diego, California, expressed her desire to become “a more thoughtful, sustainable fashionista—wearing what is already in her closet, saving money, and experiencing that ‘high’ from other areas in her life, including within.”

Table 8

Environmental Motivation Citations in Descending Order

Label	Sub-Category Motivation	Number of Citations	Percentage of Citations
M6B	Green/Eco-Friendly	58	49.15%
M6A	Reduce Carbon Footprint	24	20.34%
M6E	Re/Up-Cycling	24	20.34%
M6C	Organic	7	5.93%
M6D	Bad for the Environment	3	2.54%
M6F	Wasteful	2	1.69%
	Total	118	

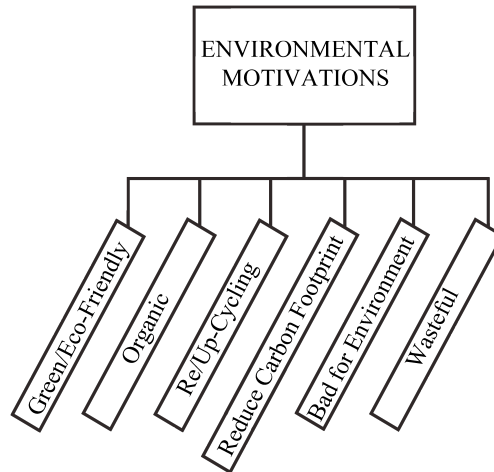


Figure 7

Environmental Motivations

Miscellaneous Motivations

Two separate motivations were cited within the Miscellaneous large category with a total of 38 citations. “Too Many Clothes” was cited the most at 35 times, accounting for 92.11 percent of the total, while “No Reason” was cited only three times, accounting for the remaining 7.89 percent. Subject 063, a 28-year-old student who lives in Gainesville, Florida, bypassed the exceptions of the GAAD and decided to abstain from purchasing shoes and accessories in addition to apparel. “I mean, seriously, why does a person who lives in Florida need 20 scarves?” Subject 041 agreed, hoping to “weed out unworn items in her overstuffed closet, and either discard or remake them into something she will wear again.” She discovered that she had “more than enough clothes stashed away” in her closet, some only needing cleaning or minor repairs.

Table 9

Miscellaneous Motivation Citations in Descending Order

Label	Sub-Category Motivation	Number of Citations	Percentage of Citations
M7B	Too Many Clothes	35	92.11%
M7A	No Reason	3	7.89%
	Total	38	

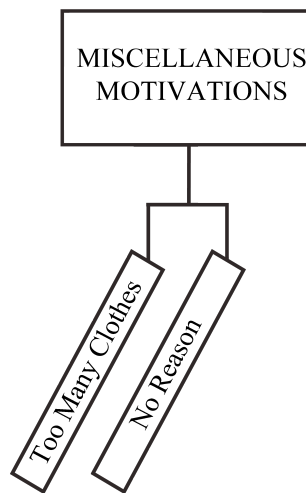


Figure 8

Miscellaneous Motivations

Cross-Category Findings

The top twenty-five sub-categories contained a total of 961 citations, accounting for 84.97 percent of the total. Of these, nine (36 percent) were in the Personal general category, five (25 percent) were in the Lifestyle general category, four (16 percent) were in the Financial general category, three (12 percent) were in the Environmental general category,

two (8 percent) each were in the Social and Economic general categories, and one (4 percent) was in the Miscellaneous general category (Table 10).

The top five most cited sub-categories contained a total of 351 citations (31.03 percent). Of these, approximately 58.12 percent were from the Personal general category while 25.36 percent were from the Financial general category, and 16.52 percent were from the Environmental general category (Table 11). The bottom five least cited sub-categories contained a total of eight citations (0.71 percent). Of these, 50 percent were from the Financial general category, 25 percent were from the Personal general category, and 25 percent were from the Environmental general category (Table 12). The Lifestyle, Social, Economic, and Miscellaneous general categories were neither in the top five or bottom five of the list.

Table 10

Top 25 Most Cited Sub-Categories

General Category	Sub-Category	Number of Citations
Financial	Make/Save Money	89
Personal	Want vs. Need	84
Personal	Use Current Wardrobe	60
Personal	Change Shopping Habits	60
Environmental	Green/Eco-Friendly	58
Personal	Guilt	50
Lifestyle	Closet Makeover	48
Lifestyle	Save Time	42
Lifestyle	Lifestyle Change	40
Lifestyle	Simplicity	39

Table 10 Continued

General Category	Sub-Category	Number of Citations
Financial	Pay Bills/Debt	37
Personal	Self Improvement/Control	35
Miscellaneous	Too Many Clothes	35
Personal	Contentedness	34
Economic	Economic Recession	33
Personal	Adequate Wardrobe	31
Lifestyle	Overconsumption	25
Environmental	Reduce Carbon Footprint	24
Environmental	Re/Up-Cycling	24
Economic	Job Loss	23
Personal	Challenge	21
Social	Local/Basics/Grassroots	19
Personal	Addiction	17
Financial	Bad for Finances	17
Social	Socially Conscious	16
	Total	961

Table 11

Top Five Most Cited Sub-Categories

General Category	Sub-Category	Number of Citations
Financial	Make/Save Money	89
Personal	Want vs. Need	84
Personal	Use Current Wardrobe	60
Personal	Change Shopping Habits	60
Environmental	Green/Eco-Friendly	58
	Total	351

Table 12

Bottom Five Least Cited Sub-Categories

General Category	Sub-Category	Number of Citations
Financial	Live Within Means	2
Financial	Overbuy	2

Table 12 Continued

General Category	Sub-Category	Number of Citations
Environmental	Wasteful	2
Personal	Secrecy	1
Personal	Hypocrisy	1
	Total	8

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH

Conclusions and Implications

Participants mentioned a total of seven general motivational categories for participating in the GAAD: Personal, Lifestyle, Social, Economic, Financial, Environmental, and Miscellaneous. These categories are further broken down into within category findings, consisting of anywhere from 25 separate motivation sub-categories to only two separate motivation sub-categories. The analysis of these within category findings helps to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the motivations of consumers to participate in the GAAD? and 2) What are the implications of participants' behaviors in the GAAD for the apparel industry? Implications are suggested based upon the findings of the study.

Research Questions

Research Question One. Research question one is “What are the motivations of consumers to participate in the GAAD?” Discussed in the previous section, the analysis indicated there were a total of seven general motivational categories for participating in the GAAD: Personal, Lifestyle, Social, Economic, Financial, Environmental, and Miscellaneous. These categories are further broken down into 52 within category findings, consisting of anywhere from 25 separate motivation sub-categories to only two separate motivation categories (Tables 3-9).

Research Question Two. Research question two is “What are the implications of participants’ behaviors in the GAAD for the apparel industry?” It appears that Personal Motivations accounted for the most frequently cited category. Among the single most important motivation, however, was the financial desire to “Make/Save Money.” In fact, every one of the top cited categories reflected motivations internal to the respondent (i.e. Personal, Financial, and Lifestyle) as opposed to motivations that are derived from external influences (i.e. Social, Economic, and Environmental). As Leonard-Barton (1981) wrote, “I define voluntary simplicity as the degree to which an individual selects a lifestyle intended to maximize his/her direct control over daily activities and to minimize his/her consumption and dependency” (p. 244). Therefore, the researcher generalized that internal motivations, which provide the participant with a sense of control, such as Personal, Financial, and Lifestyle Motivations, were the most influential reason to participate in the GAAD, a form of frugal consumer behavior.

Methodological Limitations and Future Research

The qualitative/inductive and conceptual limitations of the study are presented along with directions for future research. The purpose of this study was to identify the motivations to participate in the GAAD, categorize and characterize these motivations, and consider the implications for the apparel industry (i.e. manufacturers, marketers, retailers).

Qualitative/Inductive Limitations. The analytical method of content analysis may have limited the ability to generalize the data. As the researcher was dealing with a self-

selected ethnographic sample, as such do not represent any sort of probability sample. This qualitative study provided insight on participant motivations, but did not provide a broad overview. The data analyzed contained only the activity of participants who posted during an approximate one-year period, many of which began the GAAD on different dates. There may be additional ways to more accurately categorize and interpret this data. For conducting further research, perhaps using an alternative method of qualitative analysis and a more proficient data selection method may produce more precise results. It may also be advantageous to conduct additional analysis on those participants that did not participate in blogging, as well as develop a method to examine each GAAD participant's experience for an entire year. Future analysis of motivations as they change from year to year may allow members of the apparel industry to better predict the patterns of frugal consumer behavior and to react appropriately.

Conceptual Limitations. As a part of the deep analysis of looking at motivations to participate in the GAAD, which is an instance of frugal consumer behavior, additional motivations, attitudes, and behavior likely reflect this phenomenon. However, the GAAD provides a fruitful virtual environment for unobtrusively examining the variables that motivate consumers to participate in this online community.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Reported Occupations

Occupation/Field	Frequency	Percentage of All Reported Occupations
Accountant	1	1.04%
Administrative Assistant	3	3.13%
Advertising	2	2.08%
Artist	2	2.08%
Business Owner	4	4.17%
Camp Counselor	1	1.04%
Chef	1	1.04%
Communications	2	2.08%
Conservation	1	1.04%
Consultant	2	2.08%
Corporate Counsel	1	1.04%
Educator	13	13.54%
Environmental Engineer	2	2.08%
Government	1	1.04%
Graphic Designer	2	2.08%
Horticulturalist	1	1.04%
Human Resources	1	1.04%
Interior Design	2	2.08%
Lawyer	4	4.17%
Librarian	2	2.08%
Manager	2	2.08%
Marketing	5	5.21%
Microsoft	1	1.04%
Mother	6	6.25%
Music Producer	1	1.04%
Non-Profit	2	2.08%
Nurse	1	1.04%
Pastor	1	1.04%
Psychotherapist	1	1.04%
Public Health	1	1.04%
Public Relations	1	1.04%
Publishing	1	1.04%
Real Estate	1	1.04%
Recruiter	1	1.04%
Retail	1	1.04%
Student	13	13.54%
Television	1	1.04%
Unemployed	2	2.08%
Writer	6	6.25%
Yoga Instructor	1	1.04%

Appendix B

IRB Exemption

From: Carol Mickelson, IRB Coordinator
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board

Date: January 10, 2011

Title: Motivations and Implications of Behavior of Participants of The Great American Apparel Diet

IRB#: 1827

Dear Ms. Wu,

The research proposal named above has received administrative review and has been approved as exempt from the policy as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (Exemption: 46.101. b.4). Provided that the only participation of the subjects is as described in the proposal narrative, this project is exempt from further review.

NOTE:

1. This committee complies with requirements found in Title 45 part 46 of The Code of Federal Regulations. For NCSU projects, the Assurance Number is: FWA00003429.
2. Any changes to the research must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
3. If any unanticipated problems occur, they must be reported to the IRB office within 5 business days.

Please forward a copy of this letter to your faculty sponsor, if applicable. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Carol Mickelson
NC State IRB