



Why Do They Sew? A Need to Discover the Motives of Young Women to Sew Their Own Clothing

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Home sewing has seen a rise in participation in the last decade with the largest segment of growth among young women (IBISWorld, 2014). These consumers tend to be interested in creating and customizing unique clothing and accessories for themselves (IBISWorld, 2014). A renewed interest in sewing and do-it-yourself fashion grew with the economic down turn in 2008 and is predicted to continue increasing until 2019 (Highbeam, 2015; IBISWorld, 2014). Currently, 20% of U.S. households are participating in sewing (IBISWorld, 2014). Sewing and craft stores have seen increases in their sales for the last six years (Highbeam, 2015). This all leads to an important question: What are the motivations of these women to use their free time and money to make their clothing, when ready-to-wear clothing is cheaply accessible?

Despite home sewing industry information indicating growth and interest in individuals sewing clothing for personal consumption, no research has been conducted on the motivations of participation in these activities. Prior research looking at sewing motivations is more than 20 years old and looked at home sewing motivations across all age groups. It also does not focus specifically on women sewing apparel for themselves. The existing research on motivations found that participants fell into five categories of motivation: economics, better quality, improved fit, creativity, and psychological benefits. The results indicated sewing to be more of a leisure activity than economic necessity (Schofield-Tomschin, 1994). Other research has that looked at home sewing participation segmented home sewers into five consumer groups based on their orientation to sewing: utilitarians, practicals, craft-oriented, upscales, and indifferenters (Kean and Levin, 1989).

Understanding the motivations of today's young female home sewers could provide valuable insight to the home sewing industry on the fastest growing segment. It could advance the understanding of how to market and provide desired products to satisfy these women, as well as provide consumer spending information. This research could provide valuable insight for both the fashion industry and academia into the motivations of female consumers to make clothing instead of buying in an age of fast fashion and inexpensive ready-made clothing. This study should expand on existing sewing motivation research by providing insights into the current motivations of home sewers, and provide insight to how home sewing motivations have changed.

The authors propose a study to be conducted using qualitative methods through a series of in-depth interviews with female home sewers ages 20- 35. Participants will be solicited through Facebook posts in popular sewing-related groups, selected from various English-speaking geographical regions in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. The proposed study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the motivations for home sewers to sew apparel for themselves?
2. What are the benefits for home sewers to sew apparel for themselves?
3. How much time do home sewers spend making apparel for themselves?
4. How much money do home sewers spend making apparel for themselves?
5. How do the motivations of current home sewers compare with the motivations found by previous research on home sewing motivation?

The psychological motivations for sewing may be informed by uses and gratifications theory. This theory has previously been used to interpret knitting motivations (Stannard & Sanders, 2015) and could provide valuable interpretation into women's psychological sewing motivations. A grounded theory approach will likely be used in interpret non-psychological motivations, time spent sewing, and sewing related expenditures.

To test the viability of this concept, a pilot study was conducted with three women between 20-35 years old. Participants were solicited through a Facebook post in a popular garment sewing group. Qualitative methods were used for this study to explore in-depth the motivations and perceived benefits of female home sewers who sew clothing for themselves. The interviews were coded for sewing motivations to test and further develop the study interview coding guide. The pilot study's data provided initial emergent motivational themes related to garment fit, confidence, and self-expression. The women were particularly interesting in sewing garments that fit their body shape. The data also revealed themes related to approval of their garments by others, sewing support online and in-person, and inspiring others to sew. The data also revealed that these women spent time sewing on a weekly basis and spent a significant amount of money on fabrics and patterns to make their garments. The pilot study for this research indicates interesting motivational changes from previous research and confirms the need to further investigate the motivations of young women to sew garments for themselves.

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