

RP3028

# DIGITAL MUMS: SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND DIGITAL MEDIA

## Research Question

### **How does Australian mothers' digital media use relate to sustainable consumption practices?**

This PhD project focuses on Australian mothers as a thread which ties the topics of sustainable consumption and digital media together, in ways that represent an emerging and interesting field of scholarship.

Figure 1: Mother teaching her child about a more sustainable future.



## Methodology

A mixed methods approach will be used to answer the research question.

1. Semi-structured interviews with 14 Australian Mummy bloggers.
2. Online focus groups using a Facebook group, with Australian mothers (with young children, aged 0 – 7 years).
3. Digital analytics – Using the analytics from the Facebook group, the project will determine the demographics of the group and conduct social network analysis.

The data collection will begin in January 2018 and will run until July 2018.

## Literature Review

Mothers are using digital media as a space to reclaim a sense of identity and connect with their community. (Anderson & Grace 2015) This engagement started through blogging (Lopez 2009) and now firmly extends to participation in social networking sites (SNSs) including Facebook and Facebook groups. (Anderson & Grace, 2015) These digital media spaces have been shown to create an 'intimate public', a safe, online space where women can care for each other in a supportive collective environment.

For mothers, it is their caring nature that also links to caring for the environment, but at what cost? The concept of the 'good mother', has been shown to drive a mother's consumption practices, as her desire to meet the ideal of the 'good mother' is greater than her own personal desires (Cairns et al. 2013). Cook (2013) argues that the mother-consumer – must forgo her own desires, for that of her child and the planet.

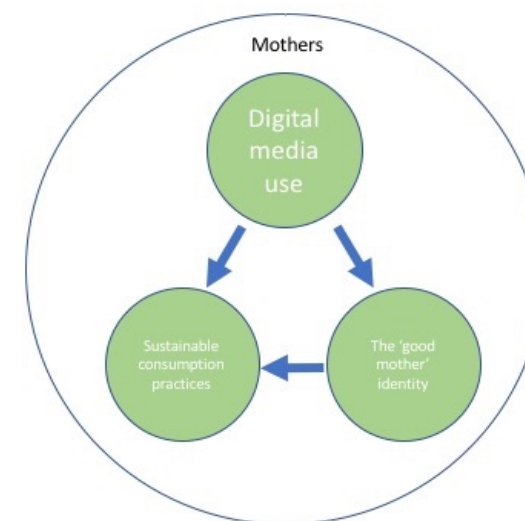
The literature review has indicated that mothers are faced with a moral struggle when confronted with sustainable consumption practices in the home (Atkinson 2014). From a Feminist perspective, Atkinson (2014) argues that these practices add to the existing household labour, further confining women to the domestic sphere. It could be argued that mothers can lose a sense of their individual identity as they navigate the unfamiliar terrain of motherhood, negate their desires to the desires of the child and attempt to

achieve the moral ideal of the 'good, sustainable mother'.

## Conceptual model

This comprehensive literature review has resulted in the development of the conceptual model and research question.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework for the research.



This PhD thesis will gather data on Australian mother's digital media use and sustainable consumption practices.

## Anticipated impacts

This PhD will be contributing to a greater conversation around an Australian mother's sense of identity, creating community online, finding avenues through digital media, in which to have conversations around guilt, overwhelm, having to do it all by yourself, generating discussion and creating social change through increases in sustainable consumption practices, in a way that is supportive for contemporary Australian mothers.

Recognising the value of mothers as a key consumer demographic will encourage a more nuanced and segmented approach to change initiatives, applicable to both government and industry promoting increased sustainable consumption practices.

## Further information

**If you are interested in finding out more about this PhD project, please contact the student via the details below:**

## Contact

Sarah Fiess

Swinburne Centre for Urban Transitions

E [jfiess@swin.edu.au](mailto:jfiess@swin.edu.au)

## References

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