



IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO THE ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS IN FIBER ARTS

ABSTRACT

This report investigates the key hurdles that prevent fiber artists and craft consumers from embracing sustainable materials in their work. Drawing from a comprehensive survey of 1,005 fiber artists on Instagram, it identifies factors such as cost, availability, awareness, and perceived product limitations as the most significant barriers. The implications of these findings are profound, providing a roadmap for targeted solutions that can drive a more eco-conscious approach in the crafting community.



SUSTAINABLE CRAFTING: ADVANCING ECO-FRIENDLY FIBER ARTS

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INTRODUCTION

Despite growing environmental awareness, sustainable materials remain underutilized in the fiber arts world. This study seeks to understand the barriers that prevent broader adoption.

Specifically, the following research questions were explored:



What are the main challenges preventing consumers from using sustainable materials?



How significant does each barrier (cost, access, quality perception, knowledge, etc.) shape consumer decisions?



If barriers were reduced or removed, would consumers increase their use of sustainable materials?



METHODOLOGY

An online survey of 1,005 fiber artists and crafters was conducted, incorporating multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and free-response items. The survey aimed to identify perceptions and behaviors related to sustainable material use, with a focus on limiting factors such as cost, product access, and awareness.

RESULTS

Date Range:
24 September 2024 - 16 July 2025



Importance of Sustainability

- **44.3%** consider sustainability somewhat important
- **16.7%** say it is very important
- **32.5%** do not consider it
- **6.5%** say it is not important

Availability & Access

- **38.7%** reported **difficulty finding sustainable options**
- **35.2%** purchase from local craft stores
- **19.6%** use online sources
- **1.1%** use specialty eco-shops
- **5.4%** DIY from recycled materials

Barriers to Adoption

- **39.1%** cited **cost as the primary barrier**
- **20.6%** reported limited availability
- **26.8%** noted **unfamiliarity with options**
- **13.5%** mentioned a lack of variety or interest

Willingness to Pay More

- **50%** would **pay 10% more**
- **16.3%** would pay 20% more
- **3.2%** would pay 30%+
- **30.5%** are **price-sensitive and prefer the cheapest option**

To understand the current state of adoption in the industry, respondents were asked: Do you currently use natural, sustainable materials in your crafting projects?

Frequency of Use

- **20.2%** said **Never**
- **23.3%** said **Rarely**
- **51.3%** said **Sometimes**
- **5.2%** said **Always**

These results suggest that while more than half of fiber artists have experimented with sustainable materials, consistent and habitual use remains extremely limited. This baseline illustrates a significant opportunity for growth in consistent sustainable crafting behavior.

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm strong latent interest in sustainable materials among fiber artists, but major practical and psychological barriers limit adoption. The findings clearly illustrate a strong interest in sustainable materials within the fiber arts community, yet reveal an equally strong presence of barriers that restrict action.

Interest if Barriers Were Removed

- **84.4%** would **definitely** be **interested** in using more sustainable materials if obstacles were eliminated
- **14.1%** maybe
- **1.5%** not interested

Cost remains the most cited barrier (39.1%), and although half (50%) of respondents would be willing to pay up to 10% more, their willingness sharply declines beyond that. This suggests that while consumers value sustainability, economic feasibility is a crucial consideration for them. For broad adoption, eco-friendly options must be competitively priced.

Limited access and unfamiliarity with options—affecting 20.6% and 26.8% of respondents, respectively—further compound the issue. Many crafters rely on local stores (35.2%) or online platforms (19.6%), but only a slight percentage turn to eco-specific retailers (1.1%). This indicates that sustainable materials are not widely visible within consumers' usual purchasing environments. This lack of access may compound cost issues by making alternatives less visible or more expensive due to shipping.

Crucially, the data reveals a notable knowledge gap: 26.8% of respondents reported unfamiliarity with sustainable options. This suggests that even motivated or environmentally conscious consumers may not know which materials are sustainable, how they perform compared to conventional alternatives, or where to find them. This uncertainty may create hesitation, reducing the likelihood of trial

and eventual habitual use. Educational resources, clearer labeling, and transparent product descriptions could directly address this issue.

The baseline usage data shows that while most respondents (51.3%) have used sustainable materials "sometimes," only 5.2% use them consistently. In contrast, 20.2% have never used them. This gap between experimentation and consistent behavior suggests that while interest exists, there are still critical obstacles to regular adoption, including uncertainty, product trust, and inconsistent availability.

Despite these barriers, 84.4% of respondents indicated they would be interested in using more sustainable materials if these obstacles were eliminated. This highlights a powerful opportunity: efforts to reduce cost, increase visibility, and bridge knowledge gaps could unlock much higher levels of engagement and behavioral change in the fiber arts community.



CONCLUSION

This survey of 1,005 respondents reveals that the barriers to sustainable material adoption in fiber arts are predominantly financial, logistical, and informational. While a substantial majority (51.3%) have used sustainable materials at least occasionally, consistent use is minimal (5.2%).

The dominant issues—cost, access, and lack of familiarity—present clear targets for future intervention. With 84.4% of respondents expressing intent to use more sustainable materials if those barriers are removed, the opportunity to foster widespread behavioral change is evident and urgent. Addressing these issues can pave the way for a more environmentally responsible fiber arts industry.