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Spark Joy and Slow Consumption: An Empirical Study of the Impact of the KonMari Method on Acquisition and Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

In the context of resisting throwaway culture and aiming for a sufficiency-based circular economy, it is vital that consumption is slowed down—both in terms of reduced acquisition and reduction of the volumes of material resources moving through the system. To date it has been difficult to engage mainstream consumers with sustainable consumption practices, including sufficiency, but we suggest that the recent growth in popularity of decluttering, self-care and other wellbeing movements, exemplified here by Marie Kondo’s globally successful method for tidying up, may help. We review the topics of sufficiency and wellbeing, the potential of material interaction or ritualised reflection for behavioural transformation, our interpretation of consumption “moments” and the KonMari decluttering method before introducing the empirical study which took place in Sweden and the UK and Ireland. Participants were recruited through Facebook groups, with around 300 surveyed and 12 interviewed in each geography, and the interviews were qualitatively coded and analysed. Findings were surprisingly similar, highlighting a significant shift reported by participants in their approach to consumption following their introduction to and practice of the method, in particular a more reflective and restrained approach with regard to the acquisition of new things. Taking into account initial increases in disposal, the method of reporting findings and dangers of rebound, we cannot conclude that KonMari is a straightforward route to reduced consumption. Nevertheless for those who have embraced the ritual and created a more desirable home environment by discovering what “sparks joy” for them, it seems that a change in the meaning of material acquisition or possession and a slowing down of consumption through a reduction in shopping can be an unintended result.

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INTRODUCTION: DECLUTTERING, SUFFICIENCY AND THE KONMARI METHOD

In 2014 Japanese tidying consultant Marie Kondo introduced her KonMari method in the international bestseller *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, followed by *Spark Joy* in 2016 and the Netflix series *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* in 2019. The widespread success of both the books and the series together with the numerous blogs and articles that they have spawned and the global reach of her brand signals that Kondo's approach has struck a chord with people in different cultural contexts. In a recent article, Khamis presents Marie Kondo's method as part of a trend of decluttering, minimalism and alternative consumption that seemed to emerge following the global financial crisis in 2008 and growing awareness of and discomfort with the implications of neoliberal capitalism [1].

Decluttering itself emphasises the value of having less, of replacing assumptions that "more is better" with the concept of "enough" [1], and releasing the stress and anxiety associated with multiple possessions. As such it coincides with the recent rise in popularity of trends such as minimalism, slowing down, making more time to relax, exercise and eat healthily and replacing an ethic of self-improvement and economic success with one of self-love, acceptance and finding meaning outside the pursuit of material possessions [2–4]. Concepts such as these may have significant consequences for environmental as well as social sustainability, since ideas of personal wellbeing are associated with leaving the "hedonic treadmill" of ever-accelerating work and consumption in pursuit of a less materialistic happiness [5,6].

In her books and other media, Marie Kondo frames her method of decluttering as a way to achieve wellbeing. In contrast with alternative consumption movements from the literature on sustainable consumption (e.g., anti-consumption, see below) which have seen restraint as a moralised response to capitalist cultures of overconsumption and waste [7,8], or as a route to sustainable living [9], Kondo presents her method as a joyous route to personal freedom and the end of physical and mental clutter [10]. Khamis terms this the "aestheticization of restraint", indicating that the KonMari method is part of a wider trend of alternative practices that tend towards a shift or reduction in consumption, but that nevertheless remain consistent with current neoliberal economic frameworks [1]. A moral standpoint against consumerism, or a green living crusade is not part of Kondo's narrative: one can be a consumer *and* practice the KonMari method, and if material belongings "spark joy" (Kondo's phrase) then they should be kept and appreciated.

KonMari somewhat contrasts with other more minimalist decluttering methods, such as Swedish Death Cleaning or the One Method (getting rid of one item per day), in its emphasis on the joy that comes with putting one's house in order rather than on the imperative of ridding. Consumers' material relationships are influenced by culture, tastes and trends, and

rituals of disposal or non-consumption as well as acquisition or possession can be markers of distinction and consumer value [1,11,12]. Just as people create meaning and identity through material goods [12–14], so the activities of sorting, discarding and decluttering can allow for new selves and meanings to be created, with or without possessions. In shifting the focus from stuff to self moreover, such activities may represent an implicit resistance to marketplace ideologies of acquisition and accumulation, and the reassertion of people as autonomous self-authors rather than victims or even sovereign consumers [1,15]. In other words, although practitioners are primarily concerned with personal happiness rather than environmental or social altruism, decluttering may represent an accidental entry point to more intentional forms of alternative consumption.

In terms of the literature on sustainable consumption and pro-environmental behaviour, common criticisms have been that only a small niche of consumers with strong green values or identities are addressed and mainstream consumers with conflicting priorities are ignored [16,17]. Moreover a reliance on labelling or information campaigns and cognitive behavioural methods have resulted in a lack of active engagement with more sustainable practices on the part of consumers [18]. At the same time, it is increasingly evident that material consumption—especially in the affluent parts of the world—needs to be reduced in order to not further exceed planetary boundaries [6,19–21]. In this context we suggest that cultural phenomena such as KonMari decluttering may prove interesting when it comes to the potential for reducing consumption, and that there is a need for empirical studies such as the one presented here to explore this further. The practices of divestment, disposal and creation of waste and their connection to consumption have been researched to an extent within the field of geography [22], but there is a research gap when it comes to the relation between these practices and sustainable consumption and, more specifically, to the impact such practices have on acquisition or the purchase of new things. The research on different decluttering methods is still limited and the existing research on the KonMari method is rarely based on empirical studies of practitioners but rather on theoretical analyses of Kondo's books and the Netflix show [1,23]. The empirical studies of KonMari practitioners [24] have primarily focused on the wellbeing aspects of the method. We thus believe there is a contribution to be made in exploring the links between sufficient consumption on the one hand and decluttering practices, specifically the KonMari method, on the other.

Aim and Focus of the Study

In this study, we follow the definition of Evans [25] (after Warde [26,27]) of consumption as a series of six “moments” that occur during the performance of other practices. More specifically as “acquisition”, which refers to processes of exchange and access to goods and services,

“appropriation” and “appreciation” which refer to the ways in which people incorporate these commodities into their daily lives, give meaning and derive pleasure from them, their counterparts “devaluation” and “divestment” which describe the loss of attachment, meaning or value and finally “disposal” which is the counterpart to acquisition and the physical act of ridding [25]. This understanding of consumption as a process involving different moments provides a frame of reference for our study of practitioners of the KonMari method (henceforward called KonMariers or participants), as we aim to show how their experiences—centering primarily around divestment and disposal but also to a large extent around appreciation—might impact their interpretations of wellbeing and experience and view of consumption, specifically on the moment of acquisition.

In the context of overconsumption and planetary boundaries, we acknowledge that ecological values and political arguments may not be enough to change mainstream consumption practices, and that unintentional rather than voluntary entries to more sufficient consumption practices may be necessary [28]. With this in mind, the aim of this empirical article is to ask if and in what ways the extensive, reflective and ritualised sorting and discarding of belongings that the KonMari method promotes might affect other practices and interpretations of consumption. Specifically, we explore the impact of the KonMari method on *acquisition* as one central “moment” of consumption [25], and on people’s interpretation of and relationship with the material goods they surround themselves with. We further ask if it has any effect on their wellbeing. Our study gathers interview and supporting survey data from practitioners of the KonMari method in two affluent European geographies, Sweden and the UK & Ireland, and discusses the findings accordingly. Before exploring the empirical findings however, we find it useful to briefly introduce some concepts of sufficient consumption, material interaction and wellbeing from relevant literatures, as well as some core tenets of Marie Kondo’s method.

Sufficiency, Sustainable Consumption and Wellbeing

In this article we understand sustainability as the need to stay within the planetary boundaries or in the “safe operating space for humanity”, as defined by Rockström et al. [29], and likewise the concepts of sufficiency and circular economy as the most recent iterations of progressive paradigms in sustainability [30].

The growing literature on sufficiency [9,28,31–36] addresses the issue of limits: that ecological restraints necessitate absolute limits for the resource use of societies and individuals. The concept of sufficiency has for example been used to describe an organising principle or logic [32,37], a voluntary chosen lifestyle for lower environmental impact [9,38,39], and to frame concrete political suggestions for a more sustainable society [31,33]. In terms of consumption, a focus on sufficiency thus highlights the

need to reduce the *volume* of consumption, not only of material things but also of energy and resources, and, consequently, to address affluence as a source of overconsumption and of serious environmental impacts [40,41]. Of course, this in turn means questioning the paradigm of continued economic growth that fuels and stabilises current linear economic systems and to a large extent relies upon this consumption [31,35,42].

The circular economy (CE) is a practical concept for the implementation of sustainability that has gained significant traction amongst business communities and governments in the last ten years, for instance being adopted as an action plan by the EU [43]. Nevertheless, CE models [44] have not yet explained how consumers will engage with and adopt new practices or business propositions despite the critical role of these consumers in using and allocating resources [45–47]. Likewise, the existence of sufficiency or “reduction” is implicit in most definitions of CE, with various waste hierarchies or “R” frameworks seen as a core component and the suggested hierarchy of action usually pointing to a version of “reduce”, “refuse” or “rethink” as the priority—but this is rarely explained and often neglected in favour of a focus on recycling or economic prosperity [46]. However, a sufficiency-based circular economy is emerging as a sustainability paradigm which seeks to prioritise health and wellbeing over growth-based consumption through strategies such as “slowing and closing” material resource loops, and curbing end-user consumption whilst enabling people to enjoy meaningful, healthy lives [30,46,48].

Although sustainable consumption literature acknowledges the importance of material objects in the search for authenticity, pleasure or happiness [49,50], there is also research within this field which describes voluntary, forced or inadvertent reductions in material consumption (e.g., eco-sufficiency, movements such as asceticism, downshifting and non-materialism, and constrained consumption due to strained finances) [9,49,51–55]. Voluntary simplicity and anti-consumption for example represent differing perspectives, with adherents of the former characterised by their pursuit of freedom, contentment and prosperity through a more simple, less stressful lifestyle and of the latter by their explicit avoidance or rejection of a brand or consumer practice for the sake of political or ethical arguments, or in the name of personal fulfilment, self-expression or social belonging [54,56–58].

Most consumers are complex and make inconsistent, paradoxical choices. They are neither victims nor sovereign choosers, hedonists nor rebels, symbolic communicators nor identity builders—but a combination of all these and more [15]. Their consumption and lifestyle patterns are shaped by diverse elements, often performed as part of everyday routines rather than conscious ethical decision-making, and their activities often belie the environmental, social or political values they profess [59–61]. Most are unlikely to prioritise sustainable actions in day to day life even though they have knowledge about environmental issues [60,61] and

“green” consumer identities which conflict with core identities (such as “mother” or “employee”) will usually lose out [16,51].

In recent years the fields of sustainable consumption and the sociology of consumption have moved from a preoccupation with identity and culture to embrace concepts of materiality, performance, infrastructure and routine [25,27,62–64]. Environmental impacts are contingent upon consumers’ daily routines and activities and consumption can happen as a result of involvement in many different practices, often shaped by commercial interests such as design and marketing [25,26]. A growing body of sustainable design and other literature (emotionally durable design, positive design, slow design, design for product attachment, mindful consumption, presencing etc.) considers forms of reflection or mindfulness prompted by material interaction to be critical in reorienting consumers towards sustainability through highlighting emotionally meaningful relationships and recreating consumers as participants [65–67]. Not only acquisition but also ridding or divestment from objects and the practice of accumulation may be seen as evidence of the “competent” consumer, who is able to engage reflexively with the ways in which objects are used and not used [22]. These reflexive internal conversations and deliberations that people conduct in their heads can be seen as the very thing that allows them to define projects and concerns and make their way through the world [68]. The relations between consumption and wellbeing are complex and tricky to navigate, and there is not space to recount them in any detail here. Research has shown the negative association between materialism and happiness [69,70], yet the “double dividend” concept that reducing material consumption will inevitably help both the environment and ourselves has also been debunked, as material goods are important mediators in the negotiation of value and identity and the communication of social and personal meaning [59]. Realising sufficient, circular consumption may thus necessitate a reorientation of meaning [71] of the ways in which we perceive material goods, experience consumption and satisfy human needs, rather than a moralistic criticism of the goods or suppression of the needs themselves [34,72]. People are engaged more effectively through emotion, enjoyment and self-expression than through information, labels and measurements or sacrifice [6,49,51,58], and considerations of the future consumer in a circular economy must take into account intrinsic human requirements such as freedom, authenticity and quality of life. Soper’s concept of “alternative hedonism” [73,74] for example highlights the pleasures to be gained from changing the way we think about and perform consumption and suggests that the “good life” can be seductive as well as virtuous; whilst drawing attention to the negative sides of consumerist culture can remove its sheen, people must be able to feel that alternatives are not only viable and available but also attractive.

Studying the KonMari Method

At the centre of the KonMari method is Kondo's idea about the home being a place where people surround themselves with the things they love, and nothing more. Clutter can be stressful, a mental as well as physical burden, and the decluttering process is seen as a means of detoxification, reducing excess "noise" in the house and restoring balance, identifying values and supporting decision-making accordingly [10]. Kondo stresses the importance of going through every single item in one's home (in a certain order, by category), holding it and reflecting on whether or not it "sparks joy". If not, it should be discarded. In her opinion, the question about what people want to own is actually a question about how they want to live their lives, and "putting one's house in order" by engaging with feelings about one's home environment is also a tool for confronting past choices, familiarising oneself with what feels good and even examining and changing one's self-perception or inner state [10]. In line with the Japanese Shinto tradition she also encourages people to treat their belongings with care and respect, and express gratitude towards them before "freeing" (getting rid of) or putting them away [10]. To discard everything that does not spark joy means, of course, to get rid of *a lot* of things. According to Kondo, this is the secret behind the method: a thorough ridding and reorganisation of items means that people never have to go through such a drastic process again, because they will reach a "just right" point surrounded by no more possessions than those that have meaning and bring joy. Their "stock" of belongings will decrease, she predicts, and they will hereafter buy only what they love and need [10].

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research deals with the interpretation and transformation of the world and addresses the meanings which people apply to situations or phenomena [75]. Our study took a social constructivist approach [75], using survey results to triangulate and complement the main interview findings in which participants shared their phenomenological, lived experience [76] of the relationship between decluttering, consumption and wellbeing.

Our research was conducted as a comparative study of KonMari practitioners ("KonMariers") in Sweden and the UK & Republic of Ireland. Participants were found via the KonMari UK and Ireland and KonMari Sweden Facebook groups, and surveys were conducted in January 2018 (Sweden) and October 2018 (UK & Ireland), when the total membership of the groups was around 11,000 (Sweden) and 19,000 (UK & Ireland). A total of 318 (Sweden) and 314 (UK & Ireland) responses were received, following which the survey was closed. The surveys elicited socioeconomic information about the participants, their motivations for starting KonMari and their experiences of the process—with particular focus on their feelings and behaviours with regards to current belongings and the

consuming of new things both before and after practising KonMari. The two surveys were identical apart from three additional questions in the UK & Ireland survey which were added after the Swedish survey had identified a need to address possible rebound effects of the method [77].

Following the surveys, we conducted qualitative and semi-structured interviews (45–60 min) with willing participants (11 in Sweden, both online and in person, and 12 in the UK, all online or over the phone) and completed these by December 2018. No survey participants from the Republic of Ireland put themselves forward for the interviews, so these came solely from Sweden and the UK. In the interviews we also focused on the experiences of participants with regards to consumption before and after the KonMari process, going into more depth about changing interpretations or feelings towards material goods, both in terms of current possessions or living environments and of shopping for new items. We also asked more about the motivation that people had for embarking on their KonMari process, the reactions of friends and family and what it meant to them. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and the material was then analysed, coded (both emic and etic codes were used) and triangulated using a combination of Nvivo software and manual approaches. Attention was paid to the validity of data, interpretation and evaluation [78] with comparable findings from two Northern European countries serving to increase internal generalisability and the likelihood of similar findings amongst KonMari practitioners in other affluent Western geographies [78].

Participants in both the surveys and interviews were self-selected, choosing to answer call-outs in the respective Facebook groups. We acknowledge that this comes with a bias in favour of individuals who are likely to be more engaged and motivated by the KonMari method than others—in the first instance to join the group, and in the second to answer our call-outs—and that this in turn is likely to affect the results of the study. Since our research focuses on the relationship between decluttering and consumption and the transformative experiences of those who have participated in the KonMari process however (rather than the success or otherwise of the method itself), we suggest this can be an advantage and argue that it is more useful to study enthusiastic participants of this community rather than an average sample of people who may have read about it but not put it into practice, or people that may have embarked on the process but not followed through.

The KonMariers

The interview participants were all female and between 17 and 55 years old in both countries. The majority were in the age span 36–44 years, both in the UK and Sweden. This is reflected in the larger group of survey respondents, where 98.5% overall identified as women and most were in the age span 36–44 years (31% in Sweden and 42% in the UK), followed by the group 45–54 years (30% in Sweden and 23% in the UK). Most lived in

or close to large towns or cities. Of those who answered the survey, most respondents lived together with partner and kids (51% in Sweden and 74% in the UK). 21% in Sweden and 12% in the UK lived with a partner, 11% in Sweden and 6% in the UK lived in single households and 15% in Sweden and 8% in the UK lived as single parents with children. A majority of respondents reported having higher education (75% in Sweden, 85% in the UK). With regards to the socioeconomic situation of the KonMariers, the majority of those responding to the Swedish survey—76%—agreed with the statement that they have a stable financial situation, and 21% with the statement that they earn more than most people. The numbers in the UK & Ireland survey were 70% and 13% respectively. Conversely, 18% of the survey respondents in Sweden and 20% of those in the UK reported having a strained financial situation.

EXPERIENCES OF KONMARIERS IN SWEDEN AND THE UK

Although the surveys were conducted first in order to scope out the research and provide a basis to build from and refer to, the interview data was most detailed and formed the main thrust of our study. As previously stated, our aim is to explore the impact of the KonMari process on people's experience of consumption (specifically acquisition) and wellbeing. Attempting to reflect the transformation processes that our interviewees described, we begin with the KonMariers' motivations for starting the process and progress to their experiences of the method itself. This is followed by a specific section which focuses on results relating to perceptions of wellbeing and consumption behaviour. Supporting survey data was statistical rather than descriptive, focusing on reported changes in attitudes towards shopping and material possessions, and we have integrated the most relevant findings into the final section accordingly. All participant names have been changed.

“Something Has to Change”: The Start of the KonMari Process

The reasons behind starting with the KonMari method were various; however, a few motivations stood out as most common both in the survey and in the interviews. One trigger frequently mentioned by interview participants was a discontent with their homes in one or several ways: it could be that it was too cluttered, that they felt that they did not have enough space, or that it was just too difficult to keep the home tidy or that “something had to change” (Jelena, UK). Related to this was the experience of simply having too much stuff, often combined with a sense of feeling overwhelmed, of not having control over their things, and/or a frustration stemming from a feeling of not having enough, or not having the *right* things, even though they may have owned an abundance of things; according to Lena (Sweden):

I think it started with frustration. This feeling of...“I have nothing to wear!” And I have a walk-in closet, so there's quite a lot of clothes

there (and there used to be more). So to stand there and have that many clothes and still never have anything one feels good in or that fits well...that's not fun.

In the UK one woman, Maisie, who lived in a small city flat had “reached the point where it was like Jenga to put stuff away in the cupboards”, whilst another, Ellie, had been used to buying things and “shoehorning” them in but was feeling that there were “so many toys and so many little clothes and so many people in the house that it was just getting on top of me”. Another motivation of the participants was simply a wish to facilitate everyday life, in a couple of cases specifically in order to combat depression, and an interest in trying out various methods that could be of help in tidying and organising the home.

In addition to the motivations of physical and emotional “stuff overwhelm” in their own homes around one third of participants noted significant life events or external triggers as prompting the KonMari process, for instance moving house, inheriting an estate, losing a job, the arrival of a child or an illness in the family. To carry on with KonMari then became a way of dealing with the chaos occurring elsewhere in their lives. One final important point to note about those starting the KonMari process, whether they had come across it through a magazine article, reading the book or recommendation by a friend, was that it had often resonated with them: as Jo (UK) put it, “you’ve got to be in that headspace, in that position where you are searching for something—you’ve got to recognize that you need something...”

The KonMari Process

What sparks joy? Ritualised reflection, appreciation and divestment

Marie Kondo instructs participants of the method to collect all of the items from a particular category (clothes, books, papers, miscellaneous and belongings of sentimental value) in one place and then to hold each thing and ask themselves whether it sparks joy for them. If it does they can keep it, but if not, they should ritually thank the object for its service before they get rid of it. This embodied and somewhat animistic ritual process stems from the Japanese Shinto tradition which has influenced Marie Kondo’s thinking and the development of her method, and seems to have the effect of reconnecting people with how they feel about the material objects in their homes, and to prompt a process of reflection which carries through to other areas of life. Kathy (UK) said:

When I first heard about it I was like “well, I won’t do that”...but as soon as you start doing it, there’s a lot of stuff that actually once you hold it in your hand you’re like “oh actually no, I don’t like this”—and until you try it you don’t realise it would feel that way...until you do it you don’t realize that actually, this does work.

Zara (UK) hated the idea of waste and its associated impacts, and so “to sort of treat it like it has a soul somehow made it more meaningful”. For many, this ritualised method of touching each individual item and reflexively considering their own emotions in relation to it seemed to be helpful in facilitating a more intuitive knowledge of what the interview participants really loved or valued. Maylin (Sweden) saw it as an advantage of the KonMari method that “you really sit down and *feel*, and that is a matter of practice, to really practice your ability to feel”, and claimed that it gets easier with time because you get used to it. This seemed to be the case for most participants: the more they practised, the more ingrained and intuitive the process became. Several suggested that it had a lasting impact such that previous habits were shifted and future activity just involved “keeping on top of” the new status quo. Some participants also noted a change in their appreciation for things they already owned, being more grateful for the possessions they chose to keep and even proudly taking photos of their beautiful drawers or cupboards to show other people the transformation. Linda (UK) said:

I think I've taken on board a lot about really caring about the things that you have chosen to keep. So really appreciating what I do have and enjoying it more I suppose...it's like you are not wearing stuff that feels rubbish just because you've got it, but actually just having things that make you feel good.

A minority of interviewees nevertheless found the idea of ritually acknowledging or thanking their belongings before they got rid of them culturally strange or amusing; some eventually got used to it, whilst others decided to bypass this activity. The phrase “spark joy” also seemed to polarise certain people, especially in the UK. Around a quarter found it problematic and reinterpreted or translated it into more comfortable language, for instance asking themselves instead how they *felt* about something, whether they really loved it (one person actually likened it to the feeling of falling in love), or it made them happy. A couple only found the phrase difficult at first, but once they had tried the process decided that it was indeed the right phrase to use: “the word spark makes me think that everything you own has to cause some kind of a feeling”, said Aisling (UK). For others, it represented a simple and impactful way of deciding on the belongings they wanted to surround themselves with, cutting out any rational deliberations of whether something might be useful or not. The Swedish KonMari Facebook group chose to use the expression that something “glitters” (*glittrar*) as a translation of “spark joy”. This term was not appreciated by all the interviewed participants however, who instead chose to use the English “spark joy”, or to say that something is “tokimeku”, which is the original expression in Japanese.

As mentioned, the reflection process did not stop at the relation with people's belongings, but rather expanded into other areas of the

informants' lives such as economy, activities and relationships. One Swedish woman elaborated on this:

I think you can apply the thought of trying to find what brings you joy not only when it comes to material things but more generally in life. I have moved on to decluttering my calendar and prioritizing things. I did that before as well, but perhaps more now, and I am conscious about finding the small things of joy. [...] So that is a positive effect. And the second thing is that... because there is so much focus on what it is that “glitters”, or is tokimeku, it also means that that which doesn't glitter is...dirtying. So I have, like...had less patience for crap. (Maylin, Sweden)

The KonMari journey was of course personal and different for every interviewee, but the theme of home organisation or decluttering carrying through to other areas of life was a common one. Moreover, several of the interviewees commented on the KonMari method being different to other decluttering or minimalist techniques, in that the focus is not so much on ridding or throwing things away but on identifying and being intentional about what it is they want to keep. The process seemed to represent a shift in the way participants perceived their stuff, moving from collecting things as it were to “cover all bases”, “just in case”, towards surrounding themselves only with things that made them feel good—and simultaneously discovering that objects that represented social or cultural norms might not in fact be what they really wanted. “It means...having a clear space and making sure I own my things, you know...I don't want my things to own me!” said Jelena (UK). According to Ellie (UK), “it's not a decluttering process at all in fact...it's a process of discovery...of what brings you joy—it goes beyond physical objects.”

Disposal: implications and environmental concerns

The process of going through one's belongings and deciding to discard a great deal of them was also described, particularly by Swedish participants, as difficult and at times painful. Not only could the sheer amount of stuff that had to be dealt with seem almost impossible, but the process also implied confrontation with many unnecessary purchases (and related costs) from the past as well as with hopes and dreams that were once attached to certain belongings; parting from objects with particular memories attached could feel like parting from the memory itself. In this sense, the KonMari process can be seen as one of simultaneously confronting one's belongings and learning to let go of them, a process that seemed to become easier with time as the KonMariers gradually improved their sense of what sparked joy for them. As Sophie (UK) put it, she honed her “joydar” through the process and noticed that over time this sense become more acute.

Although one or two people were already trying to consume more sustainably, none of the interviewees embarked on the KonMari method

for environmental reasons. Nevertheless, several felt that a byproduct of the process of sorting and decluttering their homes was to make them more conscious of the social and environmental impacts of consumption. As Ellie (UK) said:

Once we've bought something, well where is it going to end up? You know...it's either going to be recycled or it's going to rot or it's going to sit in landfill and our oceans. And that's not something I would have thought about before, because I thought "well I'm buying something, I'm going to use it and that's ok"—but now I'm like "do I want this plastic toy", because this plastic is going to be on the planet for however long and I'm going to be responsible for that... because I've bought it.

Most of the participants felt guilty about the waste they were generating especially during the initial phase of decluttering, and a couple were upset that Marie Kondo had not talked more about how to dispose of unwanted stuff responsibly in her book. On the contrary, she emphasises the volume of discarded belongings of her clients as a sign of the method's efficiency, proudly highlighting in her book from 2014 that clients had discarded 28,000 bags or more than one million items to date [10]. Considering the success of her book and the Netflix series, these numbers can be expected to have multiplied several fold, and the environmental impact of this tidying method has been brought to attention elsewhere [79].

However, this sense of wastefulness was partially mitigated by the participants feeling that they were donating to good causes through charity shops or aiming to recycle as much as possible and, further, by the fact that they had significantly reduced their consumption after going through the KonMari process. Susanne (Sweden) pointed out that one might feel ashamed of all the bags of stuff that are thrown out or given away, but for her this was partly compensated for by looking at what her family had purchased during the two years after having finished with the KonMari process, a total of which she estimated would fit in two paper bags. She said that discarding all that stuff felt shameful at the time, but commented that "afterwards you can think that you will never do that again. You will never again make these wrong decisions about what to buy".

"It's Not Just about Decluttering": Reported Wellbeing Effects of the KonMari Process

One experience that most KonMariers in both geographies seemed to have in common was a new sense of ease or harmony in relation to their homes, with interview participants viewing the method as more than decluttering, often describing how it had changed their life beyond enabling a tidier home.

A calm and tidy home; easy routines

There was a common enthusiasm about the newfound ease or efficiency in cleaning and tidying their homes once people had got rid of superfluous stuff. Lena (Sweden) had measured that the time she and her husband dedicated to cleaning (including to put things away in order to enable the cleaning) had been reduced from five hours to one and a half hours per week. Most participants were also delighted with the calm or peaceful environment they had created, for instance noting pride in a linen cupboard—“it was an absolute joy after I’d done it, a real absolute joy!” (Diana, UK) or in having a house that was ready for visitors. According to Aisling (UK),

I used to think that tidying was having everything organised, but now I’ve realised that it’s not about being tidy and organised, it’s about having only the things that you want or love or need—so I have far less things and it just means that I can do my daily routine really easily...everything is to hand, if I go to the bathroom it’s just my cleanser, ready to go, and my toothbrush -there’s not a whole pile of different cleansers to choose from and different moisturisers and samples of things, it’s just what I use and what I know that I love, so it’s definitely shortened my time with things...

Mental health

It was striking that several of the interview participants were vocal about the beneficial effect of the KonMari method on their mental health, noting how it had helped to relieve their anxiety or boost their confidence or otherwise had a positive effect on their wellbeing, describing it in words similar to “tidy house, tidy mind” and commenting on the tangible feelings of achievement—even in just filling a bin bag with paper. Removing visual clutter seemed to enable people to be more mindful and to focus on what was really important for them. One Swedish participant who had been suffering with burnout and fatigue felt that it provided a manageable and practical project to take on as part of her rehabilitation:

It was very hands-on...now I can see what I’ve done. So that has been really helpful for me. To move forward and train myself in this feeling of what it is that is positive and that is good and what I want and need. Because that is what a lot of the rehabilitation is about—to find that which makes you feel good... I think that if you just start with the things and stuff you have at home, then that mindset comes to you also in other areas (Jessica, Sweden).

A sufferer of depression in the UK, Sophie also found that removing excess stuff from her life allowed her headspace to focus on other things; she tied this in with the wider “self-love” movement (“drinking almond milk and doing yoga”) and reflected that it was more “acceptable” than it used to be to take care of oneself and one’s environment.

More control, more freedom

Feelings of increased control or routine at the same time as increased autonomy to focus on what was really important to them were also common among participants. For instance, having fewer things meant that fewer choices had to be made and resulted in reduced stress levels or feeling “lighter”. For Diana (UK), the method helped her “to create some sort of order when there were lots of things happening that I couldn’t control...” and to get rid of stuff that was dragging her down without feeling guilty about it. The increased control was further mentioned in relation to finances, where several informants had extended their KonMari process to include “discarding” of unnecessary expenses and thus gaining control of how they spent their money.

Sophie (UK) declared that “if you’re prepared to put in the time and invest in it, actually it’s a really empowering process... it’s almost like taking control of your life again and taking control of the things in your life in order to be able to kind of free yourself”. This feeling of freedom was frequently mentioned by participants, who had not only “KonMari’d” their belongings but also their work schedule or other areas of their lives, getting rid of obligations or jobs that were no longer bringing them joy. The experience of liberation or relief among the KonMariers seemed to increase as more and more things were discarded. It was not always expressed in terms of freedom but sometimes rather as a sense of harmony, as expressed by Julia (Sweden): “[S]omeone said that to come home should feel like an exhalation. And the more I have discarded, the more I have felt somehow that the ceiling has kind of lifted, that there is a better possibility to breathe...Something has eased”.

A few who had been brought up by parents with experience of wartime or rationing also mentioned being liberated from their “scarcity mentality” which had led them to stockpile items and fill their cupboards with things “just in case” they were needed at some point in the future. Others felt that they had been freed from obligations which were not making them happy—like keeping things which they had inherited or been given or were part of a set or only buying useful, sensible furniture; likewise, many mentioned having been freed from the guilt of throwing things away which “might come in useful” at some unspecified future moment. Dealing with their stuff, it seemed, led them to deal with other life priorities.

More time and money

Participants also noticed that they had saved time on shopping or cleaning activities, which they were able to spend either with their families or on personal interests. A few noticed that they were able to save money or pay off debts by getting not only their home but their finances in order—though this was certainly not universal. In general however there was a shift towards valuing experiences rather than stuff, and a

couple even claimed to have made more dramatic changes such as leaving a job or pursuing a new career. According to Ellie (UK), “KonMari made me realise it’s not just about your things and your living space, it’s about your time as well—spending your time better—and I was basically just working all the time.” Elisabeth (Sweden) commented that she had thought a lot about how we often consider whether or not we can *afford* something, “but”, she said, “we very seldom ask ourselves the question ‘do I have *time* to own this?’, and I think we need to ask that much more often than we do”.

“Life changing”

A surprising number of interviewees supported the seemingly hyperbolic claim made in the title of the original KonMari book about the method being “life changing”, enabling them to address and change situations (jobs or relationships as well as homes) that were no longer making them happy: “I know the title Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up is a bit far-fetched, especially for the English, but I really truly believe it has been life changing. And so I don’t think it’s a far-fetched title, but I do think it puts people off” (Jo, UK). Not all participants took this view however, and a few remarked that KonMari had *not* been life-changing for them, even though they had benefited from the process.

“It’s Ruined Shopping for Me”: Changes in Approach to Consumption

Shopping habits

One finding that stood out in both the interviews and in the survey was that people changed their shopping habits and reduced their acquisitions, often quite drastically, following the KonMari experience. One Swedish interviewee described how she had previously bought books and clothes on impulse, but now found it almost impossible to buy anything, even when she actively tried to:

I can’t anymore, it’s completely impossible. You don’t find what you want—specifically because you try to feel. It’s this concept of tokimeku—if it sparks joy or not...and most things don’t. And then it’s impossible to buy it. It’s like some kind of barrier you have, it’s really strange (Marianne, Sweden).

Most of the interviewees confirmed that they had become less impulsive and more “fussy” or discerning with the things they bought, even if they walked past tempting shops every day, and that the practice of asking themselves whether something “sparked joy” had carried through from a home to a shopping context.

I think differently and my whole attitude towards things and shopping has changed...it’s ruined shopping for me, I can’t go shopping really anymore...now I’ll look at things and say “oh it’s really nice”, and before I’d have bought it but now I’m like “well where am I going to

put it and do I really love it, and does it spark more joy than the other objects that have been in that place already?” (Ellie, UK)

Some participants noted that they had saved money as a result of this changed perspective on shopping, but also that rather than focusing on the cost, utility and whether they could afford a new item at the time of purchase, they rather considered how they felt about it or whether it would feel good in their house. One woman started turning down freebies after realising that these were actually never things that brought her joy or she really wanted, and another found that she would put things in her shopping basket but then end up putting them back on the shelves after doing a “joy check”. A third woman who had previously felt obliged to follow fashion trends discovered that many of her purchases were not joy-based and so reduced them significantly. A couple more realised after going through the KonMari process that many of the things which they would previously have bought they actually already had stashed in their cupboards. On the other hand, one interviewee (Jelena, UK), conversely started spending *more* money on better quality things after going through KonMari, as she was more sure of what she wanted and less paralysed by uncertainty and her frugal upbringing. In general, there was a consensus amongst interviewees that they were happy with their new home environments and actually no longer *wanted* to buy stuff, rather than feeling that they *shouldn't* because of ecological or ethical reasons. With the increased appreciation of their home environment and awareness of the stuff around them they felt less likely to “bounce back” to their previous shopping habits and most interviewees reported already having maintained these changes for one or two years, with all reporting feeling that this was a lasting shift for them. Of course, for those that had saved money there was the potential for rebound purchases, but although the UK interviewees were asked specifically about this and several Swedes referred to it, only two confirmed that they had put this money towards extra travel and in particular long-distance flights. The great majority of the interviewees did not seem inclined to use the extra money for activities and/or consumption with high environmental impact, but rather to dedicate it to savings or localised activities with their families and friends.

The surveys supported the findings of the interviews with regards to consumption behaviour, and findings from the UK & Ireland and Sweden showed remarkably similar results particularly when it came to the impact of KonMari on participants' attitude towards acquisition. 95.6% of the participants in the Swedish survey and 96.1% in the UK & Ireland survey stated that KonMari had changed their attitude towards buying new things (see Figure 1).

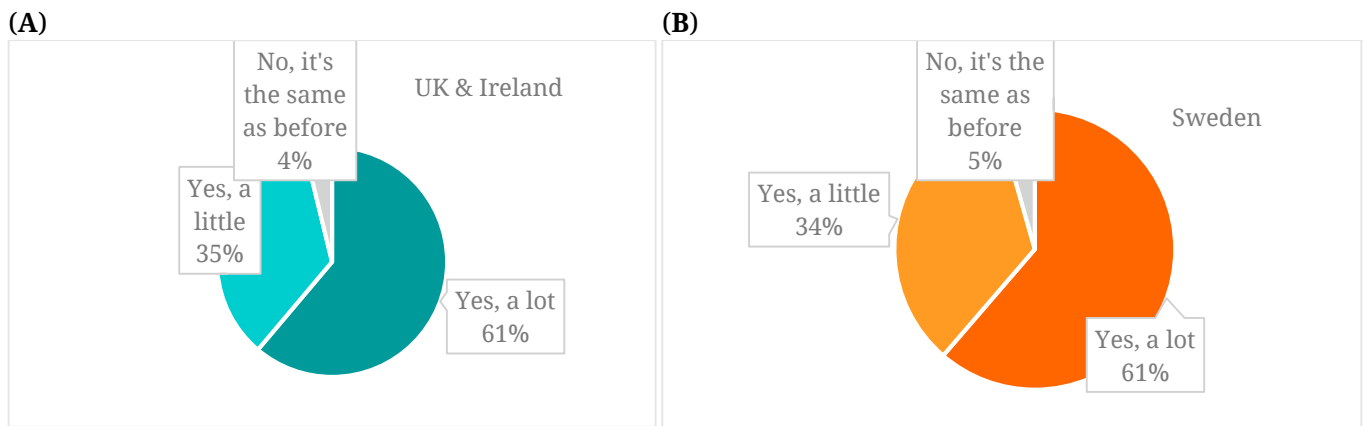


Figure 1. Survey answers to the question “Has your attitude towards buying new things changed after you started KonMari”? (A) UK & Ireland; (B) Sweden.

Respondents of the survey were asked to choose which statements best described their consumption habits before and after KonMari, by selecting up to three statements out of ten. Once again results were very similar in the Swedish and UK & Ireland surveys, with around 50% of the participants in both agreeing with the statement “I shop on impulse” before KonMari, and this figure being reduced to 2% in both surveys after the KonMari process (see Figure 2). Instead, the statements best reflecting the consumption habits of respondents after having conducted KonMari were “I think carefully before I buy anything” and “I only buy what I really need” (Figure 2), suggesting that most of the participants had become more discerning about what they bought, reflecting on whether it was something that they really needed or wanted.

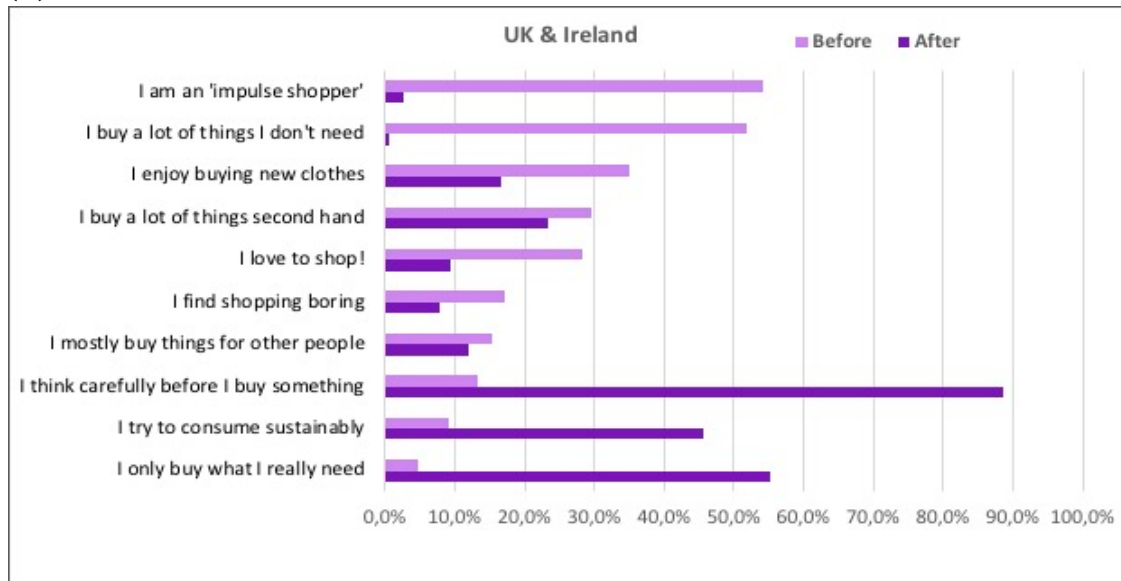
Mentioned in free text answers in the surveys as well as frequently recurring in the interviews, this altered consumption behaviour seemed to be directly linked to an increased ability among the participants to feel and decide what it is that sparks joy for them—whether current belongings or prospective purchases—and what does not.

Shopping for others

A common theme amongst interviewees was how their new perspective on shopping had spilled over to also affect their attitude with regards to giving and receiving gifts. In general, they found themselves reluctant to buy things that were not explicitly desired as they wanted to spark joy rather than contributing to clutter in other people’s homes, and this made shopping for other people much more challenging. As Linda (UK) reported:

I try and buy other people experience gifts rather than stuff gifts. Because I think “well I don’t just want to give them more clutter, I don’t want it in my house so I don’t want to give it to other people either.” But it’s hard for other people I think—you know, they’re a bit like “Oh no you want presents to open don’t you!”

(A)



(B)

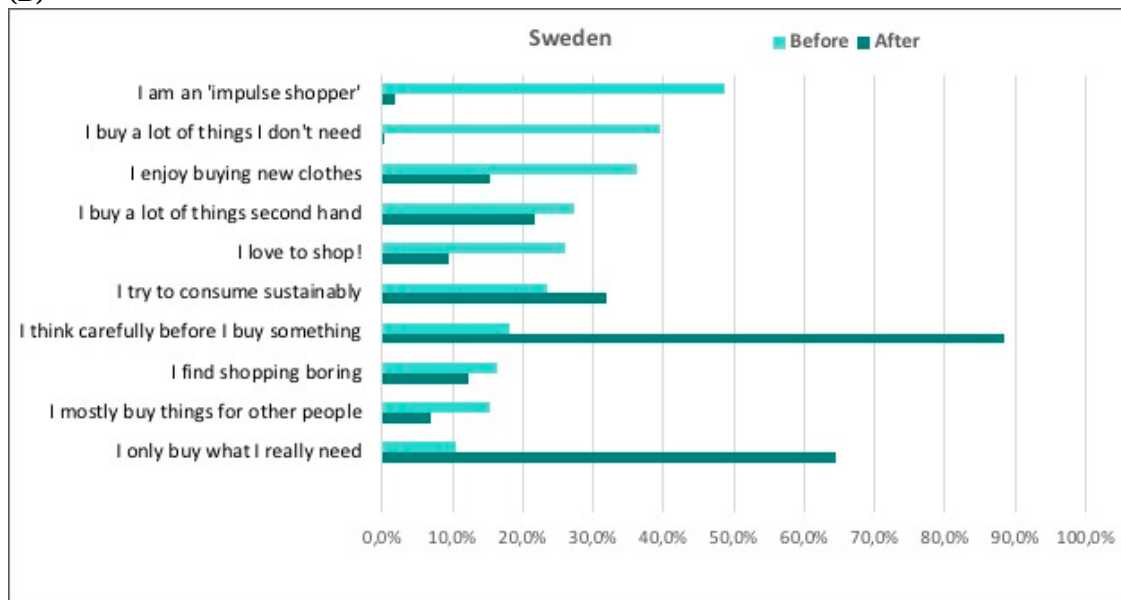


Figure 2. The KonMariers' responses to survey questions comparing their consumption habits before and after they started with KonMari. The responses are sorted by answer frequency in the "before" category. (A) UK and Ireland; (B) Sweden.

Particularly in Sweden, interviewees were now much more concerned about giving gifts that they were sure the receiver wished for, or preferred to give money instead (especially to teenagers). Furthermore, around half of the participants in both countries reported a more skeptical attitude towards receiving gifts and described how they did not appreciate getting things they had not asked for:

...a very big change that I feel inside, is that I don't like to receive presents anymore. I guess I wasn't an extreme "gift person" before either, but when I had my birthday recently I just felt like "no no NO, what if someone comes and gives me books!" I don't like to get books.

And I guess I never really have liked it, but somehow I felt it very strongly now. (Karoline, Sweden)

This made it particularly hard at Christmas when there is a strong cultural obligation to give and receive gifts, and some people reported that their friends or families found it very difficult to comprehend the idea of not giving them something. Around one third of UK interviewees for instance reported that their immediate friends, partner or children eventually came round to the concept and process of KonMari and even started to do it themselves, but that parents or older relatives who were part of a generation that experienced scarcity and sometimes war in the past were puzzled and even offended by the decluttering method. Nevertheless, it was striking that several people had managed to influence the attitudes and activities of close family or friends in particular with their KonMari practice and new, more considered perspective on material objects.

DISCUSSION

As a method of decluttering, KonMari seems to exemplify an emergent consciousness about the implications of consumption in so-called developed economies, and a trend for reducing “stuff” or “clutter” in favour of increased time or personal wellbeing which we see played out through movements such as minimalism or self-care on social media. Although in this study we relied on self-reported data rather than observational or ethnographic research, the narratives that we collected from committed KonMari practitioners through the interviews and supporting surveys told a story of people who had changed their approach towards material possessions in a fairly radical way (e.g., impulse buying reduced from 45–55% to less than 3% in both countries and more than 60% reported that their attitude to buying new things had changed “a lot”). Potentially this could have far-reaching implications for the problems of overconsumption and affluence in developed economies, if consumers were to shift their focus and the meaning of wellbeing from material acquisition to other activities more compatible with a sufficient circular economy.

Other than its global popularity, we have not found any evidence to show that the KonMari method is more effective than other decluttering methods in terms of creating a tidy home (indeed this was not the purpose of the study), but its focus on what brings people joy or happiness and what they want to keep in their home contrasts with other methods which focus on what they want to get rid of. We received specific comments from interviewees who had tried other methods (e.g., “Swedish Death Cleaning”, the “Flying Lady Method” or the “One Method”) and found this to be a small but significant shift in focus that turned their attention away from difficult feelings of guilt or loss aversion and towards positive feelings associated with meaningful possession. This shift in focus and feeling

away from guilt or loss and towards enjoyment reflects the contrast between KonMariers who reduce their shopping, and voluntary simplifiers or other “sufficient” consumers who might reduce their acquisition for reasons of sustainability or ethics. Rather than wanting to stop shopping, a majority of the KonMariers we spoke to had stopped wanting to shop so much, a finding which was supported by the survey results. Of course, a major consideration is whether these participants’ new perspective translated into behaviour that would last, or was a temporary trend and they would relapse to their previous position. Although most reported that this was a lasting shift that they had maintained for one or two years, a definitive conclusion would of course necessitate a longitudinal study over several more years including the gathering of detailed quantitative data about the participants’ shopping (in financial value and number of items) before, during, and after their KonMari process (see Limitations, below).

In terms of the moments of consumption, the KonMari process occurs during the central phases of ownership and use, working to either accelerate devaluation and divestment and hence disposal or to reinforce appreciation and appropriation, thus delaying disposal of some belongings. Moreover, as shown above, the method has clearly affected the moment of acquisition: the KonMariers report having reduced their shopping, both in terms of the number of moments of acquisition (i.e., time dedicated to consumption) and in terms of the volume of new purchases. In creating and becoming more aware of the kind of home or lifestyle they wanted, the KonMariers seemingly reduced the moments of acquisition associated with things they did *not* want.

Although most participants suggested that they tried to ensure their unwanted items were recycled or reused, obviously a certain amount still end in landfill or incineration—an undesirable outcome from the perspective of a circular economy, and which the concept of sufficiency ultimately aims to avoid. Of course a study such as this cannot guarantee that the initial wastefulness of decluttering is offset by more sufficient behaviours later on in terms of reduced acquisitions and material use. We even came across a small minority of participants who, freed from previous feelings of guilt about throwing things away, felt able to spend more money on quality things they really liked, and although they reported reduced quantity of purchases there can be no guarantees that this equates to reduced environmental impacts. In terms of slowing material flows it could even be argued that storing unwanted objects in the home at least takes up space that cannot be filled by new items, and that an attitude of frugality (as opposed to decluttering) is fundamental for facilitating the kind of slower consumption necessitated by planetary boundaries and resource limitations. Nevertheless, our findings appear to support a new perspective or changed relationship between participants and their material belongings after performing KonMari, such that the vast majority of those who have created more meaningful or desirable

homes and lifestyles report being significantly less likely to acquire new things in the same degree afterwards. The value of having more stuff is apparently overtaken by the value in having a calm, ordered or convenient home environment (i.e., the value in *not* having stuff), with more time and money for family, friends and hobbies. This being the case, we must nevertheless beware the dangers of rebound [77], and that reducing expenditure on material acquisitions can make money available for more environmentally damaging purchases such as cars or flight travels.

Although the prompt for embarking on the KonMari method is often an external trigger (whether ill health, house move or build-up of clutter), the material interaction that the process necessitates is a form of ritualised reflection that facilitated greater reflexivity amongst our participants, and seemed to prefigure a new interpretation of material objects and environments. As a decluttering *project* [80], KonMari integrates and reproduces familiar practices such as sorting, tidying, organising and clearing in a new way, in the course of which meanings can be shifted and links with other consumption-related projects or practices can also be transformed [64]. The ritualised method of touching or holding things to decide whether they “spark joy” comprises a more reflexive approach to decluttering activities, reinforcing appreciation of the objects themselves and the tidier, calmer home environment and more intentional lifestyle. Through the KonMari process consumption can once again become a “site of creativity and resistance” [25] where KonMariers learn to appreciate their belongings more (sometimes start using them again in new ways) and resist shopping impulses that go against their “joydar”—a transformation which was aptly illustrated by the woman who put back things she had habitually collected in her shopping basket when she realised they did not have the “spark”. This ties in to the focus within sufficiency literature on the necessity to renegotiate the ways in which needs are satisfied and material consumption is given meaning [34,72].

Given that most consumers do not prioritise sustainable actions [60,61], our studies suggest that the KonMari method may have an important role to play in slowing and reducing consumption, as it can serve as a sort of unintentional entry into sufficiency-oriented consumption practices [28], particularly for those consumers that are motivated to act to improve their wellbeing or home life. Personal interests or benefits such as these are easier to comprehend and more likely to be acted on than altruistic (e.g., voluntary simplicity) activities [16], which have sustainability-related outcomes that may be far off in time or space. Attention to the ritual or practice of decluttering it seems can be transferred to the practice of shopping, and rather than *wanting to stop* consuming KonMariers seem to *stop wanting* to consume because, for instance, they start to perceive unloved material objects as clutter that can also create a psychological burden, rather than evidence of wealth or success. The meaning of these objects changes, they become—as Khamis pointed out—superfluous to or

even in conflict with a new sense of self [1]. As the KonMariers become more reluctant to buy things that do not spark joy to them, the method works to slow down the sheer pace and reduce the volume of consumption of new things, and consequently slow the flow of material resources through the system [48]. We might also assume that the parallel process of the KonMariers strengthening their appreciation of their belongings that *do* spark joy to them further feeds into the slowing down of consumption by delaying the disposal and thereby prolonging the lifetime of those belongings. Of course the KonMari method will not appeal to everyone, but we suggest that this unintentional slowing of consumption may have significant implications for the spread of sufficiency approaches among consumers as part of a circular economy, and, further, for drawing attention to the potential association between wellbeing and reduced consumption. This may in turn provide insights for designers, policymakers and some businesses as to how mainstream consumers can be engaged with new practices and perspectives by shifting the meanings of material goods and appealing to elements of wellbeing.

Limitations and Further Research

Certain limitations must be acknowledged, first and foremost that our study was based on self-reported claims, which reflected our exploration of participants' interpretations of the decluttering process and of their physical environments before and after. Further, considering that the surveys were performed by the participants *after* having started or completed their KonMari process, the survey results about consumption behaviour before starting with KonMari may suffer from retrospective bias.

As previously mentioned, in the traditions of qualitative work [78] our study is not generalisable to wider populations but rather represents a detailed analysis of small groups of fairly dedicated KonMari practitioners in the affluent geographies of Sweden and the UK. The strikingly similar survey results and interview findings in each country nevertheless suggest that these may be common to practitioners in comparable cultural contexts too, such as other Northern European or North American regions. We acknowledge that despite its reach and popularity, the KonMari phenomenon may represent a passing trend, and of course is limited in its uptake and practice. Perhaps unsurprisingly, all interviewees and around 99% of survey participants in both regions were female, which also reflects the distribution of gender in the Facebook groups where the surveys were posted. We speculate that this might be due to the historically gendered nature of domestic activities and of consumption as characterised by the various moments, from acquisition to disposal. In her books, Marie Kondo also clearly directs herself almost exclusively to women and her brand plays into a more traditionally female narrative, something that is likely to represent a gender-based barrier for those who identify with roles that are traditionally male. Likewise, certain linguistic and ritualistic tropes

were seen by some respondents as culturally strange or distasteful, and these may also have distanced those who might otherwise have participated.

With these issues in mind, we suggest that further research should explore the gendered nature of decluttering with particular relation to acquisition or shopping, as well as the influence of other related practices such as gift giving, of cultural mores or meanings and of feelings or emotions on the various phases of consumption. The different channels, media and language through which people come to learn about the method also merits more in-depth analysis, as do the various prompts which seem to trigger adoption; for instance, do people need to experience particular feelings of overwhelm or some kind of crisis as well as being influenced by media or culture in order to take up decluttering? Furthermore, if the disruption of decluttering means that people are more open to other changes in their lifestyle approach, does this perhaps warrant further discussions of the “spillover” effect in sustainable consumption research?

In the context of a growing environmental crisis and need for sufficiency, future research could also explore the relation between decluttering practices and possible increased interest in the implications of overconsumption, as demonstrated by some of our interviewees. Related to this, in order to verify to what extent material acquisitions were in fact reduced and whether this represented an example of sufficiency, it would be valuable to control the self-reported reduced consumption of the informants in these studies with quantitative studies and ethnographic observations of KonMariers’ actual consumption before and after having started with the method, including controlling for the ecological footprints of their purchases, and as mentioned to conduct a longitudinal study over five or even ten years. This would give some idea of the potential percentage for consumption reduction amongst KonMari groups and also help check for possible rebound effects of decluttering with regard to other practices such as increased holiday spending. Lastly, it would be interesting to study KonMari participants in the context of brand communities [81], and the extent to which participants’ decluttering practices and reduction in consumption are related to their involvement in the Facebook, social media or other KonMari communities.

CONCLUSION

This article has taken a cross-disciplinary approach to explore the need for greater focus on the role and wellbeing of consumers in the development of a circular economy, as well as on non-conventional ways people may engage in resisting throwaway consumerism. Exploring sustainable consumption literature, we identified a requirement for sufficiency or “slower” consumption models in response to affluence and overconsumption and identified a lack of research on the impact of decluttering trends such as the KonMari method on practices and attitudes

related to consumption. At the same time we called for greater acknowledgement of mainstream consumers as complex, often conflicted individuals who act emotionally or routinely to fulfil immediate human needs rather than distant ecological or ethical values. We also drew attention to literature, e.g., from the field of design, which outlines the importance of material interaction and reflexivity in transforming consumption activities. Drawing on Evans's definition of consumption as a series of "moments", we focused our empirical study on practitioners of the KonMari decluttering method. After initial scoping surveys distributed to practitioners who were members of the official KonMari Facebook groups in the UK & Ireland and Sweden, we conducted a series of interviews in both countries to explore the influence of the KonMari method on the practitioners' approach to material consumption. By qualitatively coding and analysing the interviews, we uncovered common themes that seemed to show the potential for practices such as KonMari decluttering to reorientate people's relationships with their material possessions and their approach to acquisition, as well as their related experiences of wellbeing. We cannot conclude that Marie Kondo's method of tidying is a direct route towards reducing material streams or environmental impacts, since this would require detailed material flow analysis on a larger scale and of course decluttering also involves an initial increase in disposal. Moreover KonMari practitioners are likely to be more predisposed towards the benefits of tidying and decluttering since they were initially motivated to read about and begin the method. Nevertheless, our findings show that participants report significantly different approaches towards the organisation and enjoyment of their current home environment and material belongings as well as a reduced interest in shopping for new items. The ritualised process of reflecting on what actually brings them joy, or makes them happy, appears to lead to a reinterpretation of the meanings of possession, to a new sense of autonomy and even to increases in physical and psychological wellbeing. Practitioners seem able to connect with their own feelings about their homes and belongings and hone their "joydar" accordingly to become more discerning about bringing new things into their home and much less prone to shop on impulse or to buy things they do not really need or want. Amongst committed KonMari practitioners in affluent geographies such as Sweden and the UK therefore there seems to be a correlation between the KonMari process and reduced acquisition, and these results therefore offer some hope as to the possibilities of reducing material consumption in such contexts. We suggest that the increased focus on people's feelings about their material environment and its impact on their wellbeing can be associated with the unintentional slowing down of consumption among participants and that this, in turn, could provide an important way to engage mainstream consumers with a sufficient circular economy.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The study was jointly conceived and executed by both authors, with the survey and interview guide initially conceived by ÅC and conducted by her in Sweden, and subsequently adapted and conducted in the UK by LC. The introductory and methodology sections were jointly agreed upon and written, with LC contributing particularly to sections involving circular economy, sufficiency and sustainable consumption and ÅC to those involving sufficiency, consumption, wellbeing and the KonMariers. The majority of the results and discussion sections and the conclusion were written by LC, but many rounds of iteration and editing were conducted by both authors.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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