

Air travel sufficiency: exploring consumer practices and key drivers of social acceptance for flight reduction

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Abstract: Despite growing environmental concerns, air travel demand continues to rise, driven by deeply embedded socio-cultural norms and systemic constraints. This research explores "air travel sufficiency" through Social Practice Theory to identify how policymakers can foster more sustainable travel behaviors. Based on thematic analysis of 15 semi-structured interviews with French consumers, we identify key barriers to sufficiency, including material constraints (lack of viable alternatives), limited skills (planning and ecological awareness), and the symbolic meanings tied to air travel (freedom and status). Three conditions for promoting sufficiency emerge: perceived fairness of measures, improved infrastructure for alternative travel, and public support through awareness campaigns and reframing the value of slower travel. Additionally, we reveal how air travel behaviors evolve across life cycle stages, from early socialization to maturity, providing actionable insights into the "moments of truth" where sufficiency practices can take root.

Keywords: air travel sufficiency; social practice theory; behavior change

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