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# A Study of Chinese Consumers towards Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability

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## Abstract

This research explores how Chinese consumers adopted a lifestyle of health and sustainability (LOHAS). To investigate this, a questionnaire survey was conducted examining the impact of LOHAS on consumer decision making styles in Macao SAR, China. After completion, a total of 619 usable questionnaires were collected. The results showed that the two most significant criteria for LOHAS among the Chinese consumers were environmental consciousness and a desire for health and fitness. In turn, the most preferable consumer decision making styles were price consciousness and perfectionism. Moreover, consumer who is environmental consciousness tends to be more quality and price conscious. Consumer who cares about health and fitness tends to look for quality and novelty products. The results also show that Chinese consumers who are the females, older in age or have a higher income tend to be more LOHAS. Therefore, if companies want to expand their business in the LOHAS market in China, they should target these segments when they are developing their marketing strategies.

**Keywords:** LOHAS, Consumer Decision Making Styles, Sustainability, Sustainable Lifestyle, Demographic Characteristics

## Introduction

LOHAS is an acronym for lifestyles of health and sustainability, a market segment focused on health and fitness, environment, personal development, sustainable living and social justice. LOHAS consumers are people who do not only care about their living environment but are also concerned about whether their behavior poses any negative impact on the world. The person who introduced this concept is an American sociologist Paul H. Ray who, in 1998, together with the psychologist Sherry Ruth Anderson (Kimura, 2007). They studied a group of educated consumers whose aim is to engage in conscientious purchasing and investing decisions based on social and cultural values which are the basis of the LOHAS market. Nowadays, concepts of LOHAS have already been applied to different aspects of our life, from the product world (Higchi and Avadi, 2015; [Market LOHAS Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability, 2018](#); Pícha and Navratil, 2019) to that of travel (Urh, 2015), beauty (Kan 2010) and

self-care (Puhakka et al. 2021). The idea of LOHAS was introduced into Mainland China in 2005. This development has been linked to the fact that the LOHAS lifestyles share the same principles as the historical Chinese philosophy of balancing a healthy life with a spiritual and emotional well-being (Kan, 2010). Along with other factors the result has been that the number of LOHAS consumers in China is on the rise. This is partly due to the growth of the Chinese middle class, as a result of higher education and higher salaries.

In fact, Chinese households could become one of the largest consumer markets in the world. According to the findings of the National Geographic's Greendex project 2014, (a global study to measure the consumer's progress towards environmentally sustainable consumption in 18 countries), Chinese consumers tied for the second highest "green score" amongst the countries. To what extent do Chinese consumers adopt the lifestyle of LOHAS? Which aspect(s) of LOHAS are Chinese consumers more concerned about? What are the demographic characteristics of Chinese consumers who are more likely to adopt the lifestyle of LOHAS? How does LOHAS influence the consumer decision making styles of Chinese? This research study will endeavour to answer all these questions.

## Literature review

### *Demographic characteristics and LOHAS Chinese consumers*

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2020), demographic segmentation variables include age, family size, family life cycle, gender, annual income, occupation, education, religion, race, nationality and social class. Several studies have shown a significant relationship between certain key demographic variables of consumers and their concern for health and the environment, such key variables include gender, age, education and income (Divine and Lepisto, 2005; Lea and Worsley, 2005; Do Paco and Raposo, 2009; Kassinis et al. 2016).

Dimensions of LOHAS are divided into three categories: health and fitness, environmental consciousness and social justice (Natural Marketing Institute, 2008). Lohasians will buy products or consumer goods that are healthy and environmentally friendly. They will also consider if the product is really necessary to purchase or to have. Moreover, they will purchase products or services from companies that are more socially responsible. With respect to the relationship between demographics and LOHAS, several studies find those demographic characteristics do have an impact on consumers' health or environmental consciousness. According to the study, consumers who pursue a healthy lifestyle tend to be female, older in age and more educated (Divine and Lepisto, 2005). To examine the impact of demographic characteristics on Chinese LOHAS consumers, a hypothesis is offered as follows:

*H1: Demographic characteristics have an impact on LOHAS Chinese consumers*

### *LOHAS and Chinese consumer decision making styles*

A consumer decision-making style is defined as "a mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach to making choices" (Sproles and Kendall, 1986). It is a basic consumer personality, similar to the concept of personality in psychology (Sproles and Kendall, 1986). Sproles and Kendall have identified eight different types of decision-making styles which basically illustrate the mental characteristics of these decision-making styles, as shown below in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of eight consumer decision-making styles

Consumer Decision-Making Styles		
1	Perfectionism / high-quality consciousness	Consumers who systematically search for the best quality products possible.
2	Brand consciousness	Consumers who are concerned with getting the most expensive, well-known brands.
3	Novelty-fashion consciousness	Consumers who like new and innovative products and gain excitement from seeking out new things.
4	Recreational, hedonistic shopping consciousness	Consumers who take pleasure in shopping and who shop just for fun of it.

5	Price consciousness / value for the money	Consumers who are concerned with getting the lowest prices.
6	Impulsiveness / careless	Consumers who tend to buy spontaneously and who are unconcerned about how much money they spend.
7	Confusion from overchoice	Consumers who feel that there are too many brands and stores to choose from and who likely experience information overload in the market.
8	Habitual, brand-loyal	Consumers who shop at the same stores and tend to buy the same brands each time.

Source: adapted from Sproles and Kendall (1986)

LOHAS is a kind of lifestyle selected by people. Lifestyle defines a pattern of consumption that reflects a person's choices on how people live and spend their time and money (Wind, 1972). According to the study, it was seen that lifestyle characteristics have an impact on consumer decision-making styles of young consumers in China (Kwan, Yeung and Au, 2008). People's needs and desires are influenced by their chosen lifestyles. Lifestyles also keep influencing people's purchases and usage behavior. Consumers make consumption decisions based on their desired lifestyle, which in turn reinforces or alters their chosen lifestyle. Lifestyle provides the basic motivation and guideline for the consumers' purchases in unconscious situations (Hawkins, Mothersbaug and Best, 2007). It is therefore hypothesized that:

*H2: LOHAS has an impact on Chinese consumer decision making styles*

## Methodology

This study was based on a questionnaire survey. Data was collected through face to face interviews on streets and surveys on internet. Finally, 663 respondents completed the questionnaire but 44 were found to be invalid and therefore only 619 questionnaires were considered to valid for the data analysis. Among the 619 respondents, 272 were males and 342 were females. Almost half of our respondents were aged between 21 and 25. Respondents with a senior secondary, diploma or undergraduate education level accounted for about 28% to 34%. Most of them have a monthly income of MOP 5000 or less (100 MOP =12.53 USD). The descriptive frequencies of our respondents regarding their gender, age, education level and income level are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Background of the respondents

Background of the respondents	n	%
<u>Gender</u>		
• Male	272	43.94%
• Female	347	56.05%
<u>Age</u>		
• 16-20	78	12.6%
• 21-25	289	46.68%
• 26-30	72	11.63%
• 31-35	57	9.20%
• 36-40	47	7.59%
• 41-45	34	5.49%
• 46-50	27	4.36%
• 51 or above	15	2.42%
<u>Education</u>		
• Primary	14	2.26%
• Junior secondary	68	10.98%
• Senior secondary	173	27.94%
• Diploma	136	21.97%
• Undergraduate	211	34.09%
• Postgraduate	17	2.75%

Income (MOP, Macau Pataca) 100 MOP=12.53 USD		
• 5000 or below	192	31.02%
• 5001-10000	142	22.94%
• 10001-15000	139	22.46%
• 15001-20000	90	14.54%
• 20001 or above	56	9.05%

## Findings

### *LOHAS and Chinese Consumer Decision Making Styles*

The aspects of measuring the adoption of LOHAS and the consumer decision making styles were based on a five-point Likert scale (from 5=strongly agreed to 1=strongly disagreed). Table 3 and Table 4 depict the mean scores of the respondents towards LOHAS and consumer decision making styles. In Table 3, the results show that environmental consciousness and health and fitness were the most popular aspects towards LOHAS in the eyes of those interviewed. The mean values were 3.7966 (SD=0.66605) and 3.2972 (SD=0.75871) respectively. Social justice received lowest scores 3.0315 (SD=0.85956), thus indicating that in the adoption of LOHAS, when using animals for product testing and producing products that promote sex or violence, social justice issues may count for less among Chinese consumers.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of respondents on LOHAS

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
<b>Environmental consciousness</b>	<b>3.7966</b>	<b>.66605</b>	
I oppose using too much packaging on products	4.11	.984	1
I will take action to support companies that reclaim recyclable goods	3.99	.947	2
When I buy electrical products, I will check if they are labeled with energy saving or environmentally friendly tags	3.86	1.048	3
I will try to use less disposable products (e.g. disposable chopsticks)	3.68	1.087	4
I will still purchase environmentally friendly products even if they are more expensive	3.34	.979	5
<b>Health and Fitness</b>	<b>3.2972</b>	<b>.75871</b>	
I will try to eat less oily food	3.68	1.038	1
I will try to eat less sweetened food	3.48	1.073	2
I will try to eat less salty food	3.44	1.074	3
When I buy food, I will check if it has a nutrition label	3.22	1.064	4
I will buy health care products (e.g. vitamins)	3.05	1.098	5
I will use fitness products to keep fit	2.94	1.140	6
<b>Social Justice</b>	<b>3.0315</b>	<b>.85956</b>	
Do they participate in philanthropic events	3.41	1.018	1
Have they produced harmful products in the past for profits (e.g. melamine incident)	3.14	1.577	2
Do they exploit rights of labor in developing countries in return for profits	2.96	1.135	3
Do they produce products that promote sex or violence	2.84	1.293	4
Do they use animals for product testing	2.80	1.193	5
<b>LOHAS</b>	<b>3.3620</b>	<b>0.54416</b>	

Remarks: (1) mean value is based on 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree 5= strongly agree)

(2) sample size = 619

Table 4 shows the mean scores of the consumer decision making styles. Of these, price consciousness and perfectionism were the highest scores in measuring the consumer decision making styles. The mean value of price consciousness and perfectionism were 3.4992 (SD=0.71777) and 3.4430 (SD=0.47145). The least consumer decision making styles were impulsiveness and brand consciousness. The mean values of impulsiveness and brand consciousness were 2.7566 (SD=0.62645) and 2.5482 (SD=0.69018).

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of respondents on Chinese consumer decision-making styles

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
<b>Perfectionism / high-quality consciousness</b>	<b>3.4430</b>	<b>.47145</b>	
When it comes to purchasing products, I try to get the very best or perfect choice	4.09	.837	1
Getting very good quality is very important to me	4.03	.902	2
In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality	3.84	.902	3
I make a special effort to choose the very best quality products	3.59	.949	4
My standards and expectations for products I buy are very high	3.51	.877	5
<i>* I really give my purchases much thought or care</i>	3.27	1.154	6
<i>* I do not shop quickly nor buy the first product or brand I find that seems good enough</i>	2.86	1.093	7
<i>* A product has to be perfect, or the best, to satisfy me</i>	2.37	.932	8
<b>Brand consciousness</b>	<b>2.5482</b>	<b>.69018</b>	
I prefer buying the best-selling brands	3.12	.941	1
Shopping malls and counters offer me the best products	2.65	.964	2
The well-known national brands are best for me	2.57	.996	3
The most advertised brands are usually very good choices	2.42	.931	4
The higher the price of a product, the better its quality	2.31	1.072	5
The more expensive brands are usually my choice	2.20	.974	6
<b>Novelty-fashion consciousness</b>	<b>3.2254</b>	<b>.82197</b>	
It is fun to buy something new and exciting	3.61	.985	1
To get variety, I shop at different stores and choose different brands	3.37	1.045	2
I usually have one or more outfits of the very newest style	3.23	1.079	3
Fashionable, attractive styling is very important to me	2.98	1.025	4
I keep my wardrobe up-to-date with the changing fashions	2.94	1.116	5
<b>Recreational, hedonistic shopping consciousness</b>	<b>3.3759</b>	<b>.71084</b>	
<i>* Shopping is not a waste of time</i>	3.69	.970	1
<i>* Shopping is a pleasant activity for me</i>	3.57	1.097	2
Going shopping is one of the most enjoyable activities of my life	3.41	1.026	3
I enjoy shopping just for the fun of it	3.35	1.018	4
<i>* I do not shop in a hurry</i>	2.86	1.034	5
<b>Price consciousness / value for the money</b>	<b>3.4992</b>	<b>.71777</b>	
I look carefully to find the best value for money	3.67	.926	1
I buy as much as possible at sale price	3.53	.900	2
The lower price products are usually my choice	3.29	.894	3
<b>Impulsiveness / careless</b>	<b>2.7566</b>	<b>.62645</b>	
I should plan my shopping more carefully than I do	3.11	1.042	1
Often I make careless purchases I later wish I had not	3.01	1.072	2
I am impulsive when purchasing	2.88	1.089	3
<i>* I do not carefully watch how much I spend</i>	2.39	.945	4
<i>* I do not take time to shop carefully for best buys</i>	2.38	.856	5
<b>Confusion from overchoice</b>	<b>3.1380</b>	<b>.83436</b>	
Sometimes, it is hard to choose which stores to shop at	3.19	1.017	1
All the information I get on different products confuses me	3.14	1.099	2
There are so many brands to choose from that often I feel confused	3.13	1.036	3
The more I learn about products, the harder it seems to choose the best	3.08	1.063	4
<b>Habitual, brand-loyal</b>	<b>3.3352</b>	<b>.63623</b>	
I have favorite brands I buy over and over	3.73	.981	1
Once I find a product or brand I like, I stick with it	3.58	.981	2
I go to the same stores each time I shop	3.05	1.028	3
<i>* I do not change the brands I buy regularly</i>	2.97	.923	4

Remarks: (1) \* Statements and their respective scores are recoded

(2) mean value is based on 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree 5= strongly disagree)

(3) sample size = 619

*The Impact of Demographic Characteristics on LOHAS Chinese Consumers (H1)*

The results showed that Hypothesis One (H1), which argues that demographic characteristics have an influence on LOHAS Chinese consumers, was partially confirmed (see Table 5). The four demographic variables are used as independent variables while LOHAS stands for the dependent variable. The results showed that gender (B=0.215 and p=0.000), age (B=0.047 and p=0.001) and income (B=0.079 and p=0.000) were found to have significant influence on the LOHAS lifestyle of Chinese consumers.

Table 5. The impact of demographic characteristics on LOHAS Chinese consumers

	LOHAS			
	B	Beta	t	Sig.
(constant)	2.571		23.005	.000
Gender	.215	.199	4.947	.000*
Age	.047	.153	3.383	.001*
Education	.034	.072	1.711	.088
Income	.079	.189	4.081	.000*
Model Summary	F = 19.236 Sig = .000 R = .351 R Square = .123			

Remarks: (1) Significant level \* $p < 0.05$ ; (2) Regression method = enter

*The Impact of LOHAS on Consumer Decision Making Styles in China (H2)*

In the analysis of Hypothesis Two (H2), the argument that LOHAS has an influence on consumer decision making styles in China, was partially confirmed (see Table 6). The results showed that only five consumer decision making styles were found to be influenced by the LOHAS aspects. For example, environmental consciousness had a positive impact on perfectionism (B=0.066 and p=0.039) and price consciousness (B=0.190 and p=0.000), and had a negative impact on brand consciousness (B=-0.178 and p=0.000), novelty-fashion consciousness (B=-0.148 and p=0.008) and impulsiveness (B=-0.118 and p=0.006). Furthermore, health and fitness had a positive impact on perfectionism (B=0.106 and p=0.000) and novelty-fashion consciousness (B=-0.189 and p=0.000). The results also showed that social justice had no impact on any of these consumer decision-making styles.

Table 6: The impact of LOHAS on Chinese consumer decision making styles

Model Summary	F = 12.562 Sig = .000 R = .253 R Square = .064				F = 5.115 Sig = .002 R = .162 R Square = .026				F = 5.817 Sig = .001 R = .173 R Square = .030			
	Recreational, hedonistic shopping consciousness				Price consciousness / value for the money				Impulsiveness / careless			
	B	Beta	t	Sig.	B	Beta	t	Sig.	B	Beta	t	Sig.
(constant)	3.451		17.644	.000	2.735		14.179	.000	3.316		19.489	.000
Environmental consciousness	-.056	-.053	-1.144	.253	.190	.177	3.926	.000*	-.118	-.126	-2.744	.006*
Health and Fitness	.075	.080	1.734	.083	-.007	-.008	-1.170	.865	.015	.018	.391	.696
Social Justice	-.035	-.042	-0.969	.333	.023	.028	.655	.513	-.054	-.074	-1.721	.086
Model Summary	F = 356 Sig = .256 R = .084 R Square = .007				F = 6.523 Sig = .000 R = .182 R Square = .033				F = 4.486 Sig = .004 R = .153 R Square = .023			

	Confusion from overchoice				Habitual, Brand-loyal			
	B	Beta	t	Sig.	B	Beta	t	Sig.
(constant)	3.289		14.190	.000	3.032		17.493	.000
Environmental consciousness	-.071	-.056	-1.221	.223	.007	.007	.160	.873
Health and Fitness	-.003	-.003	-.059	.953	.042	.050	1.081	.280
Social Justice	.044	.045	1.039	.299	.046	.062	1.441	.150
Model Summary	F = .801 Sig = .493 R = .065 R Square = .004				F = 1.540 Sig = .203 R = .090 R Square = .008			

Remarks: (1) Significant level \* $p < 0.05$ ; (2) Regression method = enter

## Discussions and Implications

To summarize, the two most significant aspects of LOHAS among Chinese consumers were: 1) environmental consciousness and 2) health and fitness. The most preferable consumer decision making styles were: 1) price consciousness and 2) perfectionism.

This research contributes to the existing concepts about the consumer behavior of Chinese. Even so, most previous studies have focused solely on the general consumer decision making styles of Chinese. However, this study further explores how Chinese consumers have adopted LOHAS and just how significant the impact of LOHAS on consumer decision making styles in China has been.

Thus, the findings of this study have several important implications concerning the management of enterprises. First, the result shows that Chinese consumers who are the females, older in age or have a higher income tend to be more LOHAS. Therefore, if companies want to expand their business in the LOHAS market in China, they should target these segments when they are developing their marketing strategies. Second, if companies want to target the environmental consumers, they should aware that these consumers are quality and price conscious. And for those consumers who care about their health and fitness, they are also concerned about the quality of goods and are fond of novelty products. Companies should therefore concentrate on developing innovative products and providing excellence quality for this type of consumers.

This research also raises other implications for the government and associates. The results show that the adoption of LOHAS by Chinese consumers was not comprehensive, especially those regarding the issues of social justice. The Chinese Government and its associates should therefore create more campaigns to educate their citizens about the importance of social justice. This could be done by encouraging consumers to participate of philanthropic events, to refuse to use the products of companies that produced harmful substances, to reject the companies who are exploiting the rights of labor for profits, to disallow products that promote sex and violence and to discard products that used animals for testing. Also, according to the findings of this study, younger consumers tend to be less LOHAS. The Chinese Government is therefore suggested to strengthen the civic education about LOHAS on children and teenagers in school.

This study provides an understanding of Chinese consumers adopted LOHAS and the impact of LOHAS on consumer decision making styles in China, in particular Macao, giving rise to a major limitation. In other words, can its findings and conclusions only be applied to the Chinese consumers in Macao or may the results of adopting LOHAS also apply to consumers provinces of China. For this reason, studies on LOHAS in other geographical regions of China should be conducted to obtain the effect of the generalization of the Chinese adoption of LOHAS across the country.



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