

## Lifestyles Of Health And Sustainability

To this market segment, marketing “Green” ain’t enough, you need to keep it real  
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Does it seem to you that everywhere you turn people are talking about “green?” I’ve noticed and I’m not surprised. With the recent increase of green awareness in the mainstream media and market it seems only natural that there is a segment of marketing called “green marketing.”

Like all large market segments the green market is diverse—from hard core “Deep Ecology” enthusiasts to “Light Greenies” and of course everything in between. The people who make up the in-between might be solely focused on health issues while others strictly on energy savings and the durability of a product. Still, the largest group of in-betweens want all that and more.

### Meet Paul and Ann

Long-time residents of San Francisco, they moved to The City for cultural and educational reasons. Both studied creative arts in college. They’ve maintained a vegetarian diet for twenty-plus years and have always shopped at alternative, health-oriented grocery stores. Paul operates his own consulting business out of their home and Ann rides the bus to her job at a publicly funded library and archive. They could make more money in the corporate world, instead they opted for jobs that give them more fulfillment.

Paul and Ann own a car but they purchase carbon offsets based on the amount of miles they drive per year. Because they live in a centralized neighborhood in a city, they mostly walk or take the bus to do shopping and errands. They have a yard and garden and are looking into growing their own food but are also concerned about conserving water.

Both have a good sense of style but when they make purchase decisions they always follow a few factors before buying. These decisions could be translated into: How does it fit into their lifestyle?

#### Or:

- How much of the product or packaging goes into the waste stream and is there a less wasteful alternative?
- If it’s a body-care product, does it contain harmful ingredients like parabens?
- If it’s a food product is it delicious and nutritious, and is it organic, is it locally produced, is it fair-trade, or does it contain artificial ingredients?
- Will it contribute harmful contaminants to the house?
- How is it made and what is it made of?
- Did the production of this product exploit workers in developing countries or use child labor to produce?
- Does it reduce energy or water use and our environmental footprint?
- And if so, how?
- Is it designed well and fit into our aesthetic sense?

### Familiar terrain or strange land?

If this scenario sounds familiar to you, you may be like Paul and Ann yourself or you know someone like them. In either case, welcome to LOHAS land. If you’ve never heard of it, LOHAS (Lifestyles Of Health And Sustainability) is a multi-billion dollar market segment, has been around for about ten years, and was estimated to be worth around \$209 billion in 2005. LOHAS consumers focus on health concerns and energy use, but also social justice, product performance and style.

The LOHAS market parallels the mainstream but in an alternative way. The categories within the market include:

- Personal health: natural/organic foods, supplements, personal care, alternative medicine, yoga, health/fitness and media
- Eco-Tourism: eco-travel and adventure travel
- Alternative Energy: green pricing programs, renewable energy-certificates and carbon offsets
- Alternative Vehicles: hybrid vehicles, biodiesel, car sharing (programs)
- Green Building: ENERGY STAR products and homes, other green-certified homes, materials and solar panels
- Natural Lifestyles: home furnishings/supplies, natural pet products, cleaners, apparel and philanthropy



An additional \$215 billion are spent in Socially Responsible Investing: privately managed accounts and SRI screened mutual funds.

Ultimately though, what makes LOHAS consumers unique is that LOHAS is a lifestyle market. It developed out of the Baby Boomers, the Green Movement and Cultural Creatives. They may not be the wealthiest market segment but they are less price sensitive if they perceive the health related or sustainable value in the product. LOHAS consumers tend to be early adopters and brand loyal but only if the product or service performs well, is credible or authentic. They are great for viral marketing because they like to talk about a product that they like and believe in. And although they are less price sensitive they are very demanding that the product perform as well or better than its conventional counterpart. Consumers in this market will look for additional information regarding a product to make sure its claims are valid and authentic.

## Reaching the LOHAS market

Coming back to all the talk that's been going on about green and sustainable issues, it's more than likely that LOHAS consumers have been driving a lot of the buzz. As I mentioned before, they are great for viral marketing because they will champion a product or service. But that product or service must be of good quality AND be good for the environment, and fair and just in its production. To just say that a product or service is "earth-friendly" is not enough it's important to explain why and use specifics in the message.

LOHAS consumers understand the nuances of sustainability. For instance the LOHAS segment will understand what an endorsement like the ENERGY STAR label means. But not all consumers will, so it helps to explain why a product is green i.e. it saves energy, etc. By adopting the language and positioning LOHAS consumers understand, you can reach both that audience and educate consumers who are now discovering green products.

It's important to remember that LOHAS consumers look for authenticity in the marketing of a product or service. If you have a non-green product you want to sell to LOHAS or other green segments it's better to sell it on its own terms and not as anything green. To maintain any credibility with this audience it's important not to use generic terms like "earth-friendly," "good for the environment," or even "sustainable." Keep it real, accentuate the positive and don't try to sell something green that isn't. You'll help your client, maintain your credibility and maybe benefit the world.

JP Collins is the owner of Pylon Studios a creative studio that provides creative marketing services, consulting and design.

Pylon Studios is officially recognized by the city of San Francisco as a green business and works primarily with green building companies and other clients in the LOHAS market. As an agency, Pylon Studios was started at the beginning of 2001. [www.pylonstudios.com](http://www.pylonstudios.com)

Much of the information in this article came from research presented by Gwen Rodgers of the Natural Marketing Institute at the West Coast Green conference in San Francisco, September 2006. <http://www.nmisolutions.com/index.html>

