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Consumers: A Perspective of Lifestyle

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# On the Everyday Life Information Behavior of LOHAS Consumers: A Perspective of Lifestyle

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## Abstract

*With the aim of finding a correlation between lifestyle and information behavior, the everyday information behaviors of LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability) consumers were investigated in this study. Fifteen participants were invited to accomplish the LOHAS lifestyle scale to determine their identities as LOHAS consumers. Thereafter, semi-structural in-depth interviews were conducted. This study also analyzed the manifestations of the lifestyles of LOHAS consumers, as well as the factors influencing their lifestyles and their everyday life information behaviors. It was found that there are two kinds of possible dialectical relationships between lifestyle and information behavior: ambivalent and parallel relationships. In addition, it was found that the concept of lifestyle is a worthy research orientation in investigating the information behavior of people in consumption societies, which echoes Maffesoli's empathetic viewpoint on forming a community based on Savolainen's ELIS mode. In practice, emotion is important in the research orientation of information behavior, and there is a great business opportunity in the LOHAS market. The results of this study are helpful both for market investigations and for making marketing strategies in some relevant industries.*

**Keywords:** *Lifestyle; Everyday life information seeking; Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability; Consumption community; Aesthetics of everyday life*

## Introduction

The unprecedented melting of arctic glaciers caused by climate change has awakened the public's concern for global ecological protection. Recently, mass

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media has given much attention to this pressing problem. For instance, *An Inconvenient Truth*, a film produced by former US Vice President Al Gore, has drawn crowds of viewers. Further, international agreements and conferences (e.g., the Copenhagen Global Warming Conference in 2009) continuously urge states to adopt the necessary measures to alleviate the effects of climate change. Today, many people in their ordinary and everyday lives do their share in environmental protection. From the idea of environmental protection and the concept of nature worship, the idea of pursuing individual health—both physical and mental—follows. Hence, the Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS) emerged. LOHAS puts the concept of nature worship into everyday life, not only in pursuing physical and mental health but also in fulfilling man's responsibility towards environmental protection. LOHAS promotes an obviously unique lifestyle.

LOHAS refers to a group that accounts for their own and their families' health while seriously considering the need to protect the environment in making consumption decisions (Ray & Anderson, 1998). LOHAS consumers hold a healthy life attitude by controlling their consumption desires. They pursue a simple yet sustainable lifestyle. Moreover, they expect that they can prolong their life spans through their lifestyles. LOHAS consumers are becoming a significant segment in the market; 30% of the American, Japanese, and European populations can be considered LOHAS consumers (Chang, 2007). With their number, they create hidden potential business opportunities. Ted Ning, editor of the LOHAS Journal, divides the American LOHAS market into SHAPE sectors: Sustainable Economy, which includes alternative energy sources; Healthy Lifestyle, which includes organic food products; Alternative Healthcare, which includes acupuncture and natural therapy; Personal Development, which includes Yoga and Health Spa; and Ecological Lifestyle, which includes green construction and environment-friendly equipment (Chang, 2007).

Lifestyle is the way a person or a group lives (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2008; *The Oxford American Dictionary of Current English*, 1999), and it is reflected by its activities, interests, and opinions (*A Dictionary of Environment and Conservation*, 2007). Lifestyle is also reflected in the group's arrangements and preferences with regard to dressing, talking, and food. It is regarded as the index of individual flavor and life consciousness, which distinguishes one from the others (Corey, 1996; Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1995; Featherstone, 1991; Veal, 1993). Furthermore, it shows the rationality of one's behavioral mode (Chaney, 1996).

Lifestyle also refers to a meaningful world where contemporary people live (Liou, 2006). Lifestyle is an interpretive framework for the construction of social reality, which determines and filters the information and people relevant to us. It

gives meaning to life through interpretation. Our stylish life is also influenced by our viewpoints towards life. Investigating lifestyles facilitates a better understanding of life world. In reality, we often seek relevant information about lifestyles in everyday life.

In Savolainen's (1995) model of everyday life information-seeking, he indicated the idea of lifestyle, such as the concept of "way of life". In this model, Savolainen employed the concept of *habitus* developed by Bourdieu and categorized "everyday life information seeking" as a daily practice. He argued that practice is influenced by *habitus*, which is the dominant system in the social culture of thinking, perception, and evaluation. Under the concept of *habitus*, one integrates his/her experiences into social standards and expectations in evaluating the significance of different options. However, Savolainen replaced the very abstract notion of *habitus* with the concept of "way of life".

While environmental protection is seriously being taken into consideration, the author is also increasingly focusing on the lifestyle and the information behavior of LOHAS consumers. In Taiwan, LOHAS is a new concept. There are some studies about the application of LOHAS concept in green consumption, culture industry, marketing, bicycle design, and business (available from National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan). However, there have been few studies that have understood the relationship between LOHAS lifestyle and information behavior. This study investigates lifestyle and the factors influencing the lifestyle of LOHAS consumers, as well as the features of their information behavior. The features of the information behavior of LOHAS consumers through their concept construction and spiritual practice are the research foci of this study. This study also discusses the applicability of lifestyle as the research orientation of information behavior. Specifically, the following questions are raised:

1. How is LOHAS embodied in everyday life behavior?
2. What kinds of factors shape LOHAS?
3. What are the everyday life information behaviors of LOHAS consumers?
4. What are the features of LOHAS embodied in the information behavior of LOHAS consumers?
5. What is the relationship between LOHAS lifestyle and the information behavior of LOHAS consumers?

## Literature Review

### Implications of lifestyle

Many sociologists have focused on the study of lifestyles. In particular, Bourdieu took lifestyle as the research approach for social inequality since the 1970s. He employed the concept of *distinctive* to recognize one's lifestyle which



is composed of expressive behavior that can be observed or inferred through observation (Sobel, 1983). Therefore, it is used to determine the recognition structure of certain specific groups and to forecast their behavior (Reynolds & William, 1974).

Kelly (1995) pointed out that everyone has his/her own set of recognition structures. These structures are used to understand external objects and to interpret external situations. With these structures, one chooses a way to live, and this chosen way of life represents one's lifestyle. Lifestyle implies the possibility of making many choices. This is the outcome of an individual's active selection rather than one's passive acceptance (Edgar, 1985; Johansson, 1994). If seen from the perspective of recognition, lifestyle is shaped by one's values, which are manifestations of one's character. If viewed from the aspect of emotions, lifestyle is the representation of one's interests, desires, and happiness (Johansson, 1994; Roussou, 2002). Adler (1958) insisted that lifestyles can be derived from interactions with and from the study of one's family.

Bourdieu (1984, p.99) argued that lifestyle is a distinctive sign or difference, as well as a systematic practice and a taste tendency, represented by living conditions as mediated by *habitus*. In his *A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste in Distinction*, he revealed that taste is restricted by social conditions, such as capital. Further, secondary properties (e.g., gender and age) can influence the way people distinguish tastes. Taste is not only a disposition related to an individual's social position, but it also distinguishes social classes (Bourdieu, 1984, p.99).

A specific *habitus* is cultivated through a behavior's social experience (e.g., the son of a farmer becoming a teacher), and this behavior is found in a given structure of homologous space (e.g., food and sport). From this cultivation, a corresponding practice is produced. The embodiment of the above process is one's taste. Therefore, persons with similar living conditions are intimate in their practical styles. They are a metaphor to each other. In other words, conditions of existence are systematically transformed into practices with certain features based on the same mode from one field to another.

A subculture is composed of different classes or peoples with different lifestyles (Hall, 1976, p.203). Through signs, they share information on class, gender, and style. In another words, lifestyle is a kind of conscious or unconscious communication. Conscious communication transfers a thought to express decline or acceptance (i.e., sympathy shown by group members because of their shared signs and meanings). Conscious communication can also be represented as a bricolage, where new meanings are formed through various improvised elements found in the environment (Hebdige, 1979). One's social mobility in a given social space requires capital change and actors' behavior re-conversion strategies (Bourdieu,

1984, pp.157, 160). Bourdieu (1984) advanced the theory of practice, which argues that one's behavior is restricted by his/her living environment, *habitus*, and capital (i.e., economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital).

Lifestyle is a display of symbolic capital. The accumulation of symbolic capital, which creates the meaning of signs, depends on the position of one's taste; moreover, symbolic capital is qualitatively accumulated. In addition, consumers carry symbols through which they reveal their individual tastes and seek the recognition of their consumption symbols by others. Liou (2006) argued that image conveyance and aesthetic experience are two important idiosyncrasies of lifestyle. The former represents a given image through an individual's lifestyle and distinguishes one from the others, while the latter focuses on the importance and design of symbolic values. In our postmodern society, the aesthetic design of commodities is superior to its practical value; it has even become the primary consideration of consumers (Liou, 2006).

In contrast to Bourdieu's viewpoint on lifestyle and social classes, Hradil argued that there is no absolute relationship between lifestyles and social classes. He believed that a lifestyle is an objective product and an individual's subjective selection (Sun, 2004). Accordingly, lifestyles serve the functions of cohesion and exclusion. Lifestyles gather people with similar tastes by constructing group identities. Hence, people living in the same environment still have different lifestyles, and they actually alienate themselves from one other.

Kant (1997) argued that aesthetic judgment is independent of the benefits derived from such judgment. On the contrary, Bourdieu maintained that these judgments conceal the interests of actors, and these interests differentiate one from the others. Further, he maintained that cognition of the social world is also a recognition of the social order. However, the mental structure produced in the cognitive process as part of *habitus* has a corresponding relationship with the social order because the dominator conceals the power relations, capital volume, and the imbalanced capital distribution with a seemingly disinterested action. In the end, the dominator turns the discrepancy into perceivable differences, and the legitimacy of these differences is constructed through various statements and establishments.

Some scholars argue that there is a close relationship between lifestyles and our consumption society (Featherstone, 1991). Demby (1974) maintained that discussions on lifestyles are bound to investigate how people distribute their time, energy, and money to different activities. Sobel (1983) pointed that consumption behavior is the most representative lifestyle index in the US today. In addition, some marketing scholars often use the concept of lifestyles to interpret the behavior of consumers. Further, other scholars maintain that lifestyle is a form of ideological and commercial adaptation. The former is related to dominant groups,

such as mass media, the judiciary, and the police. These groups label and regroup abnormal behaviors. On the other hand, commercial adaptation is related to the symbols of subculture that are weakened or distorted by commercialization or by their transformation into mass products (Hebdige, 1979, p. 94).

### **Lifestyle of LOHAS**

As an attitude towards life that pursues health and sustainability, the term LOHAS originally appeared in *The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People are Changing the World* authored by Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson. The book defined LOHAS as a group that considers the health of their families on one hand and their responsibility to the environment on the other in making consumption decisions (Ray & Anderson, 2000). Originally, this group was called the Cultural Creatives. Out of self-concern for peaceful coexistence, they intend to help people to go from self-healing to healing the global environment. Therefore, LOHAS consumers are those who take interest in self-development products, such as green building, social responsibility, health care, organic products, yoga, and ecotourism (LOHAS.com, 2008).

Everage (2002) argued that the social consciousness of LOHAS consumers, more than their predecessors or their social and economic status, makes them worthier for their fame. He classified LOHAS consumers into two groups: leader and followers. He maintained the belief that leaders are very aggressive. He also considered LOHAS as a booming movement that bridges and changes cultures. It is something that shocks the world. His research found that LOHAS consumers are willing to purchase products that match their identities even at a higher price. This led to the popularity of LOHAS products in the market. Further, LOHAS consumers buy the products and services of industries that pay attention to social responsibility (Nutrition Business Journal, 2005).

### **Everyday life information seeking**

Influenced by Bourdieu's *habitus*, Savolainen (1995) advanced the Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) model. The model includes two parts: way of life and mastery of life. Way of life refers to the order of things that represent every activity occurring in everyday life. It includes not only one's job but also one's housework and interests. Accordingly, there are three factors influencing one's way of life: structure of time allocation, models of consumption of goods and services, and nature of hobbies. Meanwhile, mastery of life refers to keeping things in order. It focuses on the coherence of life. To show mastery, one needs to arrange or deal with meaningful things as they occur. In addition, the social culture where one lives, as well as his/her everyday information behavior, values and attitudes, capital, and present living conditions influence his/her way of life.

The ecological mode of information use of Williamson (1998) directly quoted the concept of lifestyle. He adopted concentric circles for the purpose of representation. The user is represented by the innermost circle, while the outer circles represent various information sources, including the employment of resources, values, lifestyles, physical environments, personal characteristics, and the influence of socio-economic circumstances which influence peoples' purposeful information seeking or incidental information acquisitiveness.

Chatman (1999) in *A Theory of Life in the Round* came up with four central concepts: small world (one of ELIS), social norms, worldview, and social types. Accordingly, a small world is a common worldview shared by members with identical social norms. This small world forms a specific social type where people of the same group are regarded as insiders; otherwise, they are regarded as outsiders. In this world, people have common beliefs and values. Further, they exhibit a collective cognition of their own world and of the world of others in their ordinary life, and they believe that the entire small world is closely related to everyday life (Chatman & Huotari, 2001). The values related to this thesis consist of those under certain social norms, which form a kind of lifestyle.

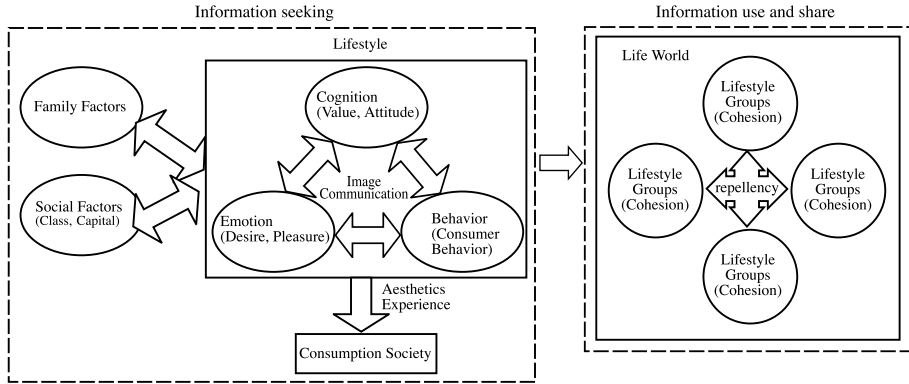
Spink and Cole (2001) extended Savolainen's ELIS model by advancing it to the model of everyday life information seeking in context. This model reflects the influence of social culture on information behavior. It also points out that ELIS is oriented towards maintaining coherence in life. ELIS is unstable, aiming to master life as influenced by people's motives, educational degrees, and various factors found in everyday life.

## Method

Figure 1 shows the research framework of this study. The framework is divided into two parts: the representation of factors influencing lifestyle and lifestyle itself (left) and the formation of lifestyle groups (right). Based on the literature review, we know that we can understand people's lifestyle from three dimensions: cognition (include attitude, value), emotion, and behavior. The factors influencing lifestyle include family and social factors. These factors represent the habitus, capital, and field advanced by Bourdieu. The lifestyle is an importance factor of construction of consumption society. As shown in the framework, the factors influencing lifestyle include family and social factors. These factors represent the habitus, capital, and field advanced by Bourdieu. During the processes of construction of lifestyle, individuals focus on seeking information about lifestyle. On the right of Figure 1 are the correlations between lifestyle and the social network. All individuals sharing the same lifestyle gather, with strong ties, share information with those have the same lifestyle and exclude outsiders. The left part



of Figure 1 shows the construction and display of individual's lifestyle, and the right part of Figure 1 indicates the appearance of lifestyle groups. One is a micro-viewpoint, another one is a macro-viewpoint.



**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**

This study utilized the qualitative research method to understand the individual experiences and meaning construction of the participants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. To verify the participants as LOHAS consumers, they were asked to accomplish the LOHAS Lifestyle Scale. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted. The *Eastern Integrated Consumer Profile* and a LOHAS lifestyle questionnaire found in [www.isurvey.com.tw](http://www.isurvey.com.tw) were quoted together with the definition of LOHAS in the literature. Further, two themes—Love Yourself and Your Family, and Care for the Global Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility—were taken as axes in constructing the lifestyle scale. In assessing the 30-item scale (see appendix), a six-point Likert scale was used. Of the 30 items, 27 were positive and 3 were negative. The positive items were scored as follows: extremely disagree (1), disagree (2), slightly disagree (3), slightly agree (4), agree (5), and extremely agree (6). The three negative items were: *I don't like sweaty sports; it is better to buy a new one rather than to send the old one for repair; and What I should do is to do my best without needing to contribute something to the society.* They were inversely scored as follows: extremely disagree (6), disagree (5), slightly disagree (4), slightly agree (3), agree (2), and extremely agree (1).

The purpose of the scale was to select individuals echoing the LOHAS spirit. The average point of participants is 123 points. So, the participants who scored more than 120 points in the inventory were considered to have the LOHAS spirit. Using a convenience sample, a total of 30 participants were invited to accomplish the scale. Seventeen participants obtained more than 120 points (the average score was 123 points), accounting for 57% of the total number of participants.

The interviews were set according to the concept of theoretical saturation. The information provided by the interviewees was saturated, and data collection ceased when extra analysis no longer contributed to a new category. Based on the saturation theory, finally 15 participants were interviewed. Of those who were finally interviewed and in terms of their highest educational attainment, 7 had master's degrees, 6 had bachelor's degrees, and 2 were high school graduates. With regard to their age distribution, 8 had ages falling within the 31-40 category, 4 within 41-50, and 3 within 51-60. Moreover, two of the interviewees were unemployed, 3 had an annual income of about TWD30,000-50,000, and 10 reported an annual income of about TWD50,000-100,000.

The interviews, which focused on everyday lifestyle and information behavior, were conducted from 9 October 2008 to 15 December 2008. They were conducted for about 40-90 minutes. The interview focused on two themes:

1. Questions related to lifestyle: AIO (activity, interest, opinion) elements in the lifestyle literature were taken as the key issues. We aimed to determine the activities and interests of the interviewees, as well as their opinions on lifestyle, the spirit of LOHAS, and the factors shaping their lifestyles.
2. Questions related to information behavior: The content and sources of their information were investigated. Their information use behavior and their ways of sharing information were also probed.

Interview data were transcribed and analyzed through the analytical method category (i.e., recurrent concepts were found and named). Isotype simulation was carried out to assess data coherence, and ideotype simulation was conducted to evaluate data discrepancy. Diachronical comparisons were made on similar cases, and synchronical comparisons were conducted on differing cases. Additionally, in-depth descriptions were employed to depict each interviewee's lifestyle. Careful observations and data analyses were employed to assess features reflected in the information behavior of the interviewees. In the transcript, the participants' responses during the interviews were marked with quotations, page codes, and line codes.

## Findings

### LOHAS consumers' lifestyle is distinctive

The lifestyle embodied by LOHAS consumers is reflected by their image expressions. These expressions can be observed at recognition level, such as through their values, attitudes, consumption behaviors, and emotions, including their desires and emotional states. LOHAS consumers pursue a life of leisure without haste. They enjoy baths in nature, spend much time with their family, and

prefer spiritual to physical life. They pursue simple and practical matters, and they distinguish needs from desires. As LOHAS consumers, they avoid wasting money on material things. In short, they are fond of simple lifestyles, and they dedicate themselves to self-development.

Emotionally, LOHAS consumers exhibit a tranquil mood. As remarked by O1M, they practice peace of mind; they shun away from impatience. Further, their moods easily settle down (O1M, 6, 219-220). Furthermore, self-development makes them happy. Behaviorally, LOHAS consumers maintain environment-friendly practices. They consider environmental protection in their everyday lives (e.g., they select organic food products and environment-friendly houses and clothes; they choose items for everyday use with environmental certificates or purchase goods at organic stores). These practices imply a kind of social responsibility that promotes sustainability.

### **Religious beliefs and love nature make LOHAS consumers' lifestyle**

Hebdige (1979) argued that lifestyle also represents the idea of rebelling against the mainstream and of snatching profit efficiently in an industrial society, ignoring health and inner satisfaction, as well as spiritual pursuit. It was found that religion and the feelings of the environmental vicissitudes, not only their families, primarily shape the lifestyle of LOHAS consumers.

On religious beliefs, the concepts of simplicity and nature are espoused by LOHAS consumers. Buddhism advocates vegetarianism; even some Buddhist groups operate organic stores that attract those who favor organic food. The environmental factor involves recent issues on climate change. As noted by interviewee 09F, *Today's weather is abnormal... if usage of energy and carbon is not reduced to lower air pollution, disasters will come to us quickly* (09F, 4, 133-135).

### **LOHAS consumers keep opening eyes for information to maintain lifestyle in daily life**

During the stage of an individual's lifestyle formation, he/she is faced with much information needs, his/her information seeking behavior develops, and his/her searching begins. Once a lifestyle is set, individuals with the same lifestyles will naturally gather through a fixed information acquisition channel. At this stage, individuals monitor information to master and apply them or to share them with others.

The role of information in each interviewee's everyday life and its influence on his/her lifestyle, including the type and channel of information and the employment of such information, are discussed in this section. The author maintains that the features of LOHAS embodied in the information behaviors of LOHAS consumers and the difference between their information behavior and that of oth-

ers can be determined by investigating the relationship between the interviewees' lifestyle and their information behavior.

**LOHAS consumers' information behavior analysis based on lifestyle scale**

Topics on information behavior in the LOHAS lifestyle scale employed in this study were: *When buying a commodity, I carefully read the directions on the package; I often exchange information about healthy foods with my relatives; When buying food, I make sure that I check the content and storage duration labels; I trust healthy foods recommended by my friends or by the media; and I care much about reports related to health care and the like.* Total score scale for of these questions ranges from 5-30 points.

It was found from the LOHAS Lifestyle Scale that higher points entailed higher scoring trends. Table 1 shows that interviewees with total inventory scores ranging from 120-130 have an average score of 23.3 on items related to information behavior. Interviewees with total inventory scores ranging from 141-150 have an average score of 28.8.

**Table 1 Total Inventory Scores and Scores on Information Behavior**

| Scale of Inventory Total Score | Average scoring of questions related to information behavior |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 120~130                        | 23.3   |
| 131~140                        | 24.2   |
| 141~150                        | 28.8   |

For example, interviewee 07M obtained the highest score (29 points) from these questions. As a purchaser for a food company, he pays much attention to food information and often shares it to friends and relatives. He said, *“What I first do is to check the date of manufacture, storage life, and ingredients when buying commodities”* (07M, 3, 93-96). On the contrary, participants with lower total scores ignore related information, although they sometimes notice them. For instance, 15F, the interviewee with the lowest score (21 points), said that he only considers the credibility of the store when buying organic products. Accordingly, he does not consider related instructions and information about the product.

Based on the previous descriptions, we observe that a higher LOHAS degree implies a more active information behavior. Conversely, a lower LOHAS degree implies a less active information behavior.

**1. Features of LOHAS information channel**

The channels for obtaining LOHAS-related information include the mass media, networks, books, and human relations (e.g., family, friends, experts, and store owners). These channels have the following features:

(1) LOHAS information acquisition depends on networks. Most of the interviewees think that networks play an indispensable role in obtaining much information because of their convenience and speed. Therefore, this is their optimum choice.

(2) LOHAS consumers believe that the information provided by their families and friends is credible, and networks are mere tools for filtering such information.

(3) LOHAS consumers acquire universal information through the mass media, including TV, newspapers, magazines, broadcasts, and others. However, this is a non-systematic way of self-enrichment.

(4) LOHAS consumers think that the information provided by books is serious and reliable. With frequent readings, most of them trust the content of books.

(5) The consumption decisions of LOHAS consumers are influenced by the marketing of manufacturers or of retail stores. They consult sellers when they are puzzled by the products. For instance, interviewee 01M commented, *“I think that information on the products’ package is insufficient... The owner will give you much more stories about the product, which will move you and trigger your buying desire”* (01M, 11, 388-396).

## **2. The information foci of LOHAS consumers**

### **(1) Health**

For the interviewees, health information is most important. They pay much attention to preserving their health, expecting that prevention is superior to cure. If they or their friends or relatives are ill, they seek information on medical or food therapy for them.

### **(2) Organic food information**

The interviewees focus on the license marks of organic food products, which help them judge whether the products are truly organic or not.

### **(3) Leisure information**

Information related to their hobbies is usually searched, such as tourism, hiking, flower planting, pet raising, and so on.

### **(4) Self-enrichment information**

The interviewees pay much attention to self-enrichment. They take advantage of various channels to acquire new knowledge.

### **(5) Environment protection information**

With strong mass media advocacy, environment protection is a consensus in Taiwan. Thus, the interviewees focus on measures that promote environment protection.

### 3. Information use behavior of LOHAS

The information use behavior of LOHAS consumers can be classified into three categories:

- (1) Memory/Storage: The interviewees store information from websites through *My Favorites*. Some cut clippings to memorize the information they need in their everyday lives.
- (2) Practical application: They solve situational problems.
- (3) Sharing with friends and relatives: Most of the interviewees share information with their friends and relatives through chat rooms and blogs.

### 4. Features of the everyday information behavior of LOHAS consumers

The features of the everyday information behavior of LOHAS consumers are as follows:

- (1) Health-focused, hobby-related, and license mark recognition

One of the features of the LOHAS lifestyle is pursuing physical and mental health. LOHAS consumers always search for health information through various channels. They also keep their eyes open for leisure activities to relieve the pressure and be in a good mood. Thus, they usually seek for information related to their hobbies. Additionally, they focus on license marks to ensure the quality of the products they would buy.

- (2) Select reliable organic stores

The interviewees select reliable organic stores based on recommendations from friends and relatives or based on the religious groups operating such stores.

- (3) Simple concepts conveyed through their educational background and religious beliefs

As influenced by their family or religious canons, the interviewees value simple and low-material needs. According to testee 08F, "*The material desire will gradually reduce during the course of reading Buddhism Classics*" (08F, 5, 157)

- (4) Self-enrichment by actively acquiring new knowledge

The interviewees focus much on their own study, such as information on LOHAS studies, courses, lectures, or reading groups.

- (5) Focus on environmental protection due to mass media

Concern for environmental protection comes not only from their understanding of environmental deterioration but also from media reports.

Based on the above descriptions, the interviewees' information need is related to the information channels. Health preservation is linked with information related to their hobbies. The interviewees use networks to filter the information they seek due to their convenience and speed. If professional information is re-

quired, such as information on health and organic stores, they consult their friends or relatives. As to common sense knowledge, information from their friends and relatives is easily accepted. On serious and systematic knowledge, books satisfy their needs. In making consumption decisions, the interviewees consider the license marks. Media reports facilitate their concept of environment protection, which they further put into practice.

### **The relationship between lifestyle and information behavior**

The lifestyle of LOHAS consumers is mainly reflected on the information they get and their use of such information (e.g., their concern for health and leisure information, as well as for self-development and environmental protection). Additionally, they are pleased to share relevant LOHAS information with others. The LOHAS altruistic spirit benefits others through information sharing with relatives and friends who are seldom approached by ordinary people. Hence, the researchers think that information sharing is the key factor behind the LOHAS spirit.

LOHAS consumers prefer sincere desires. For instance, they are keen to know the stories behind the product when making a consumption decision because they feel that touching stories make them feel pure-hearted, which strengthens their buying decision. In other words, it is crucial for their sensibility to be touched. At the same time, they are prudent consumers because of their simple character. They exhibit few impulse purchases, and they focus on the practicality and relevant labels of products. As gastronomes, they always keep their eyes open for information relevant to cooking ingredients and skills. They take serious care of their family. They attempt to make a comfortable, neat, and safe home environment, which shows their rational information behavior.

The results inspire us that we need to change the traditional viewpoint of dualism into dialectic viewpoint when discussing the relationships between lifestyle and information behavior. Two dialectical relationships can be drawn.

#### **1. Benefit mutually**

The interviewees reflect that what molds their lifestyle are the influences from their family (i.e., introductions by their family and relatives) and social factors (i.e., their individual life experiences, religious beliefs, and social context), which exert subtle influences on the formation of their lifestyle. Seeking information on one's lifestyle is a developing process, which influences one's interpretation of life. Once one's lifestyle comes into being, he/she will consciously or unconsciously focus on information relevant to lifestyle. This may not be intentional, but it increases one's opportunity to gather information. The researchers argue that lifestyle and information behavior mutually assist each other. Under

most of circumstances, they supplement each other. Proper information promotes the formation of one's lifestyle, which needs continuous information to be enhanced or preserved.

## **2. Parallel relationship**

Sometimes, information is irrelevant to one's lifestyle. For example, most of the interviewees' attitudes towards environmental protection are positive. Some interviewees think that environment protection hampers economic development. Some believe that if environmental protection is implemented, the right to survive of most people will be adversely influenced. This indicates that the attitude of the interviewees might have been influenced by the mainstream information on the development of economic. Under this condition, information behavior exerts little influence on one's lifestyle. In other words, it is irrelevant.

## **Discussions**

This section discusses the lifestyle of LOHAS consumers and their information behaviors according to the factors influencing their formation. From these discussions, we can see differences from previous literature.

### **Lifestyle**

The research results conclude that the LOHAS lifestyle includes the pursuit of physical and mental health, preference for organic products, the longing for a simple and slow-paced life, ideas on self-development, and fulfillment of social responsibilities. They are eager for a simple and leisurely lifestyle to keep them calm and largely to allow them to fulfill their responsibilities as a citizen.

From Bourdieu's viewpoint, lifestyle is affected by one's personal mode of existence, *habitus*, and capital. In this research object, LOHAS is a group with high educational and income levels. Only two of the interviewees were economically supported by their families instead of their personal income. This phenomenon shows the influence of capital on lifestyle. Based on Liou's viewpoint (2006), there are two important characteristics of lifestyle: image conveyance and aesthetic experience. As for LOHAS lifestyles in this research, the former is relevant to health, while the latter is relevant to the simple, elegant, and peaceful lifestyle of LOHAS consumers.

However, the researchers found that some interviewees pursuing the LOHAS lifestyle are dominated by mainstream thoughts. This may have resulted from their failure to practice their desired LOHAS lifestyle. This is considered a tough situation in constructing group lifestyles. Further, this is not in accord with Johansson's (1994) standpoint that lifestyle is the result of positive choices instead of passive acceptance. Additionally, the concept of group lifestyle proposed



by researchers in previous literature shows that lifestyle plays the role of cohesion and repellency to gather people with similar tastes in life together by setting up a status identity for the group (Liu Weigong, 2006). However, in this research, the concept of group lifestyle is ambiguous because the interactive objects of most interviewees were family members, co-workers, and friends rather than lifestyle group members. Family and social factors shape one's identity and behavior, thereby molding unique individual lifestyles. In a consumption society, lifestyle promotes alternative consumption features and business opportunities. Further, the effect of cohesion and repellency was also not obvious.

### **Information behavior**

Under the ELIS model, Savolainen (1995, pp. 262-263) proposed that lifestyle consists of daily activities and value systems. These activities and value systems easily reflect the factors that largely influence one's judgment process and social culture because life taste (e.g., consumption and dressing) is the surface layer of lifestyles. Along with the arrival of the consumption society, the lifestyle reflected by consumption behavior is also regarded as an approach to investigate information behavior because the image and value of symbols in the lifestyle are more impressive than the lifestyle itself.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's class concept was used by Savolainen (1995) to choose the objects of his empirical study as a teacher and as a worker. However, the appropriateness of classifying people by class is doubted by some scholars. Maffesoli (1996) thought that groups in the society are formed by sympathy and interaction. He even proposed that the concept of tribe should be substituted by community. Accordingly, lifestyle is employed to investigate the information behavior of some group members to avoid the criticism aroused by class divisions and to show the phenomenon of people gathering due to emotions.

In the ELIS model, Savolainen (1995) pointed out that life and lifestyle are affected by capital, worldview, and situation. These three influenced the lifestyle of the interviewees in this research. The interviewees with LOHAS tendencies were open-minded and optimistic individuals who could positively deal with problems.

The research results are in response to the three common channels of information seeking or information communication in Williamson's ecological model of information use: personal networks (families or friends), wide interpersonal networks (religious groups), and mass media. However, the effects of institutional sources were seldom mentioned by the interviewees; thus, the results are not the same as those of Williamson's research.

Spink and Cole (2001) proposed the concept of information environment to classify information seeking into work and daily life. They believed that social

microcultures principally influence information behavior. The result of this research is in accordance with this concept because the search for information by the interviewees is designed for them to control and to maintain coherence in their lives. However, the researchers believe that information seeking in daily life is interacted by various social microcultures rather than by a single social microculture. Describing the effect of various social microcultures will be reserved for future studies.

A lifestyle group refers to the “small world” proposed by Chatman (1999). However, the interview statistics show that family members and friends are the primary members of the style group of the LOHAS consumers. Their family and friends are those who accept people with the LOHAS spirit. The concept of insiders and outsiders was not distinct in this research.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

This research explored the characteristics of the lifestyles of LOHAS consumers through their information behaviors. Further, it explored the relationship between lifestyle and information behavior. Theoretically, this research attempted to discuss the information behaviors of LOHAS consumers through the give-up concept of “lifestyle” found in Savolainen’s (1995) ELIS model, which is considered a proper approach in investigating the information behavior of people in consumption societies. Responses to Maffesoli’s viewpoints on group cohesion by sympathy and interaction were also studied in this paper. While Williamson (1998) directly brought the concept of lifestyle into his research model with less attention to lifestyle itself, lifestyle’s cohesion and repellency effects that correspond with Chatman’s “small world” concept. In contrast to Savolainen’s ELIS model, this research did not explore the habitus’s influence on lifestyle because studying habitus requires long-term investigation on the life experiences of the interviewees. It’s a limitation of this research. The results were limited by the use of in-depth interviews.

Practically, there is a huge business opportunity in the LOHAS market. Further investigation on the lifestyle and daily information behavior of LOHAS consumers will provide reference for market research and analysis, as well as for designing operational and marketing strategies. This research, as an original investigation on the relevant topics of LOHAS, will be helpful to future studies and will encourage more people to put the LOHAS spirit into practice. From the viewpoint of information service, LOHAS consumers play an important role in propagating the LOHAS spirit. Hence, it will be easier for information service organizations to improve their service content and quality if the information behavior of LOHAS consumers is adequately, clearly, and deeply explored.

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## Attachment: The LOHAS Lifestyle Scale

|  | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| <b>Cognition</b>   |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 1. I think I am healthy.   |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 2. I think I am less energetic than before.  |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 3. I am willing to spend more money on natural food, such as (no pesticide) organic vegetables and fruits.   |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 4. I make sure that my every meal promotes balanced nutrition.   |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 5. I consider the additive components of food and its shelf life.  |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 6. I believe in healthy food products introduced by friends and media.                                       |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 7. There is no need to contribute too much to the society. I only do things for myself (even in the future). |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 8. I focus on relevant reports on the practicality of medical care.  |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 9. I will fulfill my personal responsibilities for the sake of environmental sustainability.                 |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| <b>Behavior</b>  |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 10. I usually exercise to keep in shape and to be healthy.   |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 11. I pay much attention to good food for health and aesthetic reasons than for their flavor.                |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 12. I have a normal life schedule and reasonable eating habits.  |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 13. I avoid food with high fat, high cholesterol, high glucose, and high salt content.                       |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 14. I read the instruction on the package carefully when choosing products.                                  |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 15. I always exchange information on healthy food with my relatives and friends.                             |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 16. I always remind myself and my family members to stay healthy.  |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 17. I carefully segregate garbage and recycle reusable materials.  |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 18. I have served in a hospital or a civic organization as a volunteer.                                      |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 19. I focus on improving my heart and my soul.   |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 20. I undergo annual physical examination regularly.   |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 21. I carry my own shopping bags when shopping.  |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |
| 22. I would rather ride a bicycle or a public vehicle to reduce air pollution.                               |                   |          |                   |                |       |                |

**Emotion**

23. I always feel depressed and lacking in personal space.
  24. I am passionate in the events occurring in my neighborhood and in my residential area (also in the public affairs of my class, school, and my residential area)
  25. I am afraid that excessive exploitation will use up the natural resources on earth.
  26. I am unhealthy.
  27. I do not prefer hi-dropoietic sports.
  28. I doubt that I am critically ill when I feel uncomfortable.
  29. I prefer to buy a new product than to repair the old one.
  30. I prefer eco-friendly products even if they come with higher prices.
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# 從生活風格觀點探討 樂活消費者日常生活資訊行為

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摘要

本研究由生活風格的觀點，探討樂活消費者的日常生活資訊行為，試圖發掘生活風格與資訊行為間的關係。本研究採用質性研究法，先邀請研究對象填寫「樂活族生活型態量表」，以確定其為樂活族，再進行半結構式深度訪談。受訪者計有15位，研究主要分析其生活風格展現、影響生活風格的因素，和為展現生活風格出現的日常生活資訊行為。研究發現，生活風格與資訊行為可能的兩種辯證關係：相互交糅的關係和平行並列的關係。此外，研究也發現，在消費社會裏，生活風格概念是個適合探討資訊行為的研究取向，也呼應社會學家Maffesoli的觀點，即因為共感共應而凝聚的團體是現今社會的特色。此發現也指出，以情感概念為資訊行為研究取向的重要性。在實務方面，消費社會的樂活市場具有龐大商機，本研究結果可供市場調查或分析之用，亦有助於相關產業擬定經營及行銷策略。

**關鍵詞：**生活風格，日常生活資訊行為，樂活，消費社會，生活美學

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