

Target Women by Lifestyle, Not Gender

Women are the influencers for many purchasing decisions for products and services, so it makes sense that many companies direct their marketing dollars largely on the women's market. But that's where the simplicity ends. The women's marketplace is quite broad, made up of various sub-segments, each with different attitudes and behaviors.

The LOHAS market is one example. LOHAS is the acronym for consumers who "live a life of health and sustainability." Sixty-percent of people within the LOHAS marketplace are women, according to an in-depth study, The Ohio Health and Wellness Report, conducted by The Marketing Insider, my company. According to the study, women make up slightly less - 54 percent - of the LOHAS market in Ohio. The August 2005 study surveyed 1100 participants in the Ohio market. In all, LOHAS consumers are estimated to account for one-third of the U.S. population.

LOHAS consumers are highly educated and driven by balancing their needs to better the environment, society and personal health. The Ohio Health and Wellness Report also indicated LOHAS consumers are challenged to eat right because they have very high dietary standards, yet health is a very high priority to them.

Indeed, eighty-five percent surveyed indicated they care strongly about protecting the environment and will support companies who have similar values and beliefs. To this consumer, the company and the brand are inseparable.

Though consumers within the general population may support some of these beliefs, targeting LOHAS consumers is quite different from targeting the general population. Although LOHAS consumers, especially Ohioans, distrusted television, they are influenced by what they see on TV when it comes to purchasing.

Perhaps, it is a better indication of an under-developed marketplace with under-developed attitudes. According to our research, Ohio's LOHAS consumers total twenty-eight percent of the population, versus twenty-three percent on a national scale (according to the 2005 national survey), yet LOHAS consumers within the Ohio marketplace have attitudes that are less developed than the rest of the nation. Often this is a result of lack of information and education. With Ohio's introduction to companies such as Whole Foods, this should improve. It's no surprise that Whole Foods built one of their largest stores in the Ohio market. This merchant did its research and has been quite successful in a new market, in a short time.

I often wonder, why aren't other consumer-based companies that target consumers jumping on the bandwagon? I've often found it's because companies didn't realize that this consumer segment, predominantly women, exist and that women in this group should be targeted differently from those in the mass market.

Now that we know targeting women as one consumer group can be challenging, what should we do about it? If you're targeting LOHAS consumers or are interested in targeting them, it's important to realize that the Nomadics(tm) group is actually predicted to transition into the LOHAS category. Nomadics are people who may dip into LOHAS-oriented behavior, yet not lead a fully integrated lifestyle. So, if you have a product that is natural and better for the environment, then you must consider the attitudes and purchasing behaviors of both the LOHAS and the Nomadic markets-a combined 65% of the overall population. Even if you are a printer, it behooves you to mention if you're using recycled paper or soy-based inks. Why? Because people in general are getting more concerned about the environment and wanting to do what they can to help protect it. By doing your part and promoting it, you'll have the opportunity to further tap into a growing, predominantly female marketplace that is made up of business people too.

So remember, the next time you decide to market to women that not all women are the same and that they must be targeted differently. Understand their lifestyle and you'll have a better opportunity to capture their dollars.

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About the Author

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