

# The Crouching Tiger LOHAS hits the shores of Asia

*“LOHAS” is quickly becoming one of the hottest trends within companies and among consumers around the world. Originally founded in America in 2000, the Asia Pacific arm of LOHAS was established in Singapore in 2009 reflecting a rapidly growing market trend.*

**F**or newcomers to the LOHAS space, “LOHAS” is an umbrella acronym that stands for Lifestyles Of Health And Sustainability. It refers to a wide range of industries, corporate activities and products/services that are designed to be environmentally conscious, sustainable,

socially responsible, and/or healthier—both for people and the planet. The LOHAS consumer is the leading-edge portion of the population that is attracted by their belief systems and values and who make their purchase decisions with these criteria in mind. LOHAS consumers are also used as predictors of upcoming

trends, as they are early adopters of many attitudinal and behavioral dynamics.

The boom in Asia began via Japan, a country renowned for many health foods, alternative methods of medication, and technologies that satisfy the needs of LOHAS consumers. In the year 2005, there were at least five LOHAS fashion events in the nation’s major department stores in Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka. Fashion magazines such as Elle and Vogue Japan have featured LOHAS prominently. National newspapers and television programs have followed suit, analyzing the trend and growth in popularity, and Japanese publications such as Economist and Toyo-Keizai have printed articles focused on LOHAS business practices.

The ripple effect sees LOHAS becoming increasingly popular in other Asian countries. With the strong influence from pop culture of Japan and Korea as well as the North America LOHAS has hit Taiwan’s shores in a big way. Magazines, department store ads and even store brands are using LOHAS as their main branding and marketing campaign. There are even department stores and restaurants called LOHAS and sell LOHAS branded products with definitions of ‘Cultural Creatives’ translated into Chinese.



Considered one of the ‘Four Tigers’ of East Asia and labeled so for being one of the nations that has maintained a high economic growth rates from the 1960’s to present day, Taiwan is a country that is one of the top economic powers in the region. The other ‘Tigers’ are South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore. The rise of Taiwan’s economy and emphasis on education has developed a fast growing middle class that is recently been questioning the path that the country has taken to get to where it is.

## Changes for a brighter future

Unbridled economic growth usually comes with a price to the environment and health of people. A recent study from the Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI), produced by Yale and Columbia Universities listed Taiwan 143 of 144 countries surveyed and only ranking higher than North Korea. Many of Taiwan’s environmental issues are linked to its dense population of 23 million over 14,000 square miles. This averages out to approximately 1600 people per square mile making it one of the most densely populated countries on earth.

The positive thing about this is that there is no other way to go other

than up and in spite of all the environmental difficulties LOHAS is gaining traction in Taiwan. The public is putting pressure on business and government to implement change in current business and policy standards. The government is working to improve its environmental issues by enforcing stringent recycling and energy efficiency rules for businesses and the public.

The demand for organic foods and new ways of approaching life in a simple and holistic way is on the rise. Health and well-being is a very important component of Chinese culture. The country has a long-standing tradition of Buddhism and vegetarian cuisine is readily available. But many Taiwanese relate vegan and vegetarian diets to the Buddhist religion. Organic food advocates want to promote organics as an alternative way to eat healthy without the religious connotations.

Organics currently is a very small portion of the total agrarian output. Of that percentage 50% is imported. Granted this is small but there is huge potential for growth. Yoga is on the rise also in Taiwan at an average growth of 10% per year and there is an increase in male yoga students compared to years past. Yoga studios are popular and more and more are

appearing around the busy subway stations.

Green buildings are being taught on University campuses. Environmental awareness is being taught in elementary schools and rice companies are promoting organic rice farming. Hotels are promoting themselves as green by promoting their low energy consumption and organic food menus. It is clear that Taiwan nationals want to live healthier lifestyles and educate is population about the benefits of LOHAS.

Many Taiwanese are interested in developing relations with companies familiar with LOHAS and are very eager to learn more about sustainable business practices partly out of necessity but mostly from sincerity. “We are looking for partners” Says Tom Xiao, editor and chief of Organic Lifestyle Magazine, “We want the world to know about the opportunities in Taiwan and educate Taiwanese how to live better lives. LOHAS brings a traditional concept to a modern audience. Our ancestors lived simply and in harmony with nature. It is part of Chinese philosophy. LOHAS provides the opportunity to show this to the younger generations in a trendy and fashionable way.”

The literal translation of LOHAS into Chinese means ‘happy life’ and it appears that Taiwan Chinese want to live a traditional lifestyle with a modern twist.

*LOHAS was founded in America in 2000. At that time the market was estimated to be US\$228 B. Since then the market has evolved, recalibrated and new market size has been released in 2006 and is estimated at US\$209 B. This market size reduction is not due to a shrinking of the LOHAS market but rather a more specific classification of products and services catering to consumers and not business to business transactions.*

*To discover more about LOHAS Asia Pacific, please visit <http://www.lohas-asia.org> or contact Adam Horler, President, Asia-Pacific LOHAS Pte. Ltd. at [adam@lohas-asia.org](mailto:adam@lohas-asia.org)*