New Zealand Consumer Lifestyles

Leah Watkins, Rob Aitken, Kirsten Robertson, John Williams and Maree Thyne[1]
University of Otago

Abstract
This article reports on the results of a consumer lifestyles segmentation study of the adult New Zealand population, which is part of an ongoing research programme conducted by consumer behaviour researchers at the University of Otago since 1979. Six lifestyle segments were identified: the 'Educated Liberals', 'Financial Strugglers', 'Contemporary New Zealanders', 'Uncertain Young', 'Traditional Family Values', and, the 'Disengaged'. These segments are based on responses to nearly 200 questions about consumer attitudes, opinions and behaviours from 1,640 respondents. The discussion of the segments provides a number of new and useful insights into the contemporary world of the New Zealand consumer.

Keywords: New Zealand, consumer lifestyles, psychographics, segmentation

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[1] Associate Professor Leah Watkins' area of academic interest lies in Marketing and Society, including research on culture, values, lifestyles, ethical business/consumption, and consumer socialisation.

Professor Rob Aitken's academic and research interests include marketing ethics, advertising, branding, consumer behaviour, service-dominant logic, corporate social responsibility, communications and the media.

Associate Professor Kirsten Roberston's research interests include consumer behaviour and public policy, in particular in relation to food, alcohol, cannabis and violence.

Professor Maree Thyne's research interests include tourist and travel behaviour, particularly in relation to tourist motivations, tourist and resident engagement, cruise tourism and sustainable consumption behaviour.

Dr John Williams' research interests include Macromarketing, Marketing Theory, Marketing Ethics and research design and quantitative data analysis.

Introduction

The current New Zealand (NZ) Consumer Lifestyles segmentation study is the seventh major study of this type carried out periodically since 1979 in the Department of Marketing at the University of Otago. These studies are intended to provide current and detailed snapshots of the unique behaviours, attitudes and spending patterns of consumers. In addition to covering important core topics like household disposable income, savings and credit, the survey also contains questions on more specific consumer-related topics such as eating and drinking habits, decision making factors, product preferences, and descriptions of how consumers spend their leisure and recreation time. Understanding the lifestyles of NZ consumers has important implications to inform policy development and industry – based practice, and to identify and understand changing social and cultural norms.

Lifestyle relates to how people live, how they spend their money, and how they allocate their time among different types of activities (Kaynak and Kara 2001, Barry and Weinstein 2009). Consumer lifestyle is thus a pattern of observable and expressive consumption behaviours related to subjective characteristics such as personality traits and related motives, norms and values, individual opinions and attitudes (Anderson and Golden 1984, Van Acker 2015). The literature suggests that, during a period of cultural transition, lifestyles will proliferate more rapidly than cultural systems of value. Therefore, widespread and enduring lifestyles may successfully be studied for clues as to the direction and nature of emerging cultural trends (Zablocki and Kanter 1976).

The current study is based on responses to approximately 350 questions in relation to consumer attitudes, opinions and behaviours collected from a representative sample of NZ consumers in the latter part of 2020. The study identifies six lifestyle segments which are defined according to their psychographic, attitudinal and behavioural characteristics and named for explanatory purposes as: 'Educated Liberals', 'Financial Strugglers', 'Contemporary New Zealanders', 'Uncertain Young', 'Traditional Family Values', and, the 'Disengaged'. These lifestyle segments are discussed in detail below, and the most significant differences between them and the 2015 segments, as well as possible explanations for the changes, are also discussed. While the characteristics and composition of the majority of these segments remain fairly similar to those identified in the 2015 study (Watkins et al., 2015), changes to the largest segment, the 'Educated Liberals' (formally the 'Progressives'), suggest that a number of shifts have occurred. These shifts, most notably those related to greater protection of the environment, increased expectations of pro-social business behaviour and wider concern with the welfare of the more vulnerable members of society, may reflect more empathetic, collective and community-minded responses to the pandemic and its consequences for both individuals and society at large.

Methods

Overview

Data was collected from 1640 individuals in late 2020 using an on-line questionnaire covering a range of psychographic, consumption and lifestyle questions. Gathering responses was contracted to a commercial Australasian market research company with instructions that respondents should be over the age of 18 years and demographically representative of the NZ population in terms of age, sex, education, ethnicity and income.

The research design is based on previous studies carried out by the Department of Marketing in 1979, 1989, 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2015. The essential methods for the Lifestyles research programme are based on the work of Plummer (1974) who provided the lifestyle dimensions listed in Table 1 below. Over 350 individual questions were used to collect information across these dimensions. Over the seven iterations of the NZ Lifestyles research programme, new questions have been added and some of the questions have been updated to represent changing norms, technologies and behaviours. For example, changing norms regarding the social role of business, technological shifts incorporating social media and increased online shopping as well as other items from previous waves were incorporated directly in the current survey.

Table 1: Dimensions of the Lifestyles research programme

Activities	**Interests**	**Opinions**	**Demographics**
Work	Family	Themselves	Age
Hobbies	Home	Social issues	Education
Social events	Job	Politics	Income
Vacation	Community	Business	Occupation
Entertainment	Recreation	Economics	Family size
Club membership	Fashion	Education	Dwelling
Community	Food	Products	Geography
Shopping	Media	Future	City size
Sports	Achievements	Culture	Stage in life cycle

Creating and Profiling the Segments

The segments were developed using *k*-means clustering. In common with most other clustering algorithms, *k*-means requires numerical inputs so the clusters are formed predominately using the data collected on attitudes, opinions and values parts of the questionnaire. Almost 200 (191) questions were used as the base variables and several cluster solutions were derived with different numbers of groups ranging from five through to eight. These were checked for stability by repeating the clustering using different starting points. Separation between the groups was assessed by using discriminant analysis, which estimates the probability that each sample unit has of being assigned to each group.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the Kruskal-Wallis *H* test and cross-tabulations with the $\chi 2$ test were used to examine these relationships depending on the measurement level of the individual questions. As with all clustering, the final decision is an informed judgement as to which solution offers the best face validity based on all the diagnostics obtained during the analysis.

Descriptions of the segments were developed by comparing the average values of the base variables across clusters, using ANOVA with Tukey's HSD test. The most discriminating variables were determined in two ways: by the largest effect size (quantified by $\omega 2$) and also by the number of pairwise comparisons that were statistically significant at the 5% level from Tukey's HSD (which compensates for α-inflation).

In addition to profiling on the base variables, additional descriptor variables were compared across segments. Although these variables were not used to create the segments (because they are not scaled metrically e.g. gender and ethnicity) nonetheless some of them do differ appreciably across segments, and thus are helpful in developing a richer description of the nature of the people who have been assigned to that segment.

Sample Description

The sample closely reflects the NZ census for gender, age, education, income and ethnicity, although it must be noted that, compared to census data, the sample is generally more highly educated and both Pākehā and Māori are slightly over-represented relative to other ethnic groups. The sample is 51% female, 49% male, ranging in age from 18 to 90 with a median age of 45. 66% identify as Pākehā, 11% Māori and 23% other ethnicities. Annual household income ranged from zero to over $150,000 (top category), with the median being $50,000. 9% had not completed secondary school, 25% were school leavers, 18% had a trade or technical qualification, 12% a professional qualification and 37% a university degree.

Results

Segment Profiles

Each of the final six lifestyle segments identified are discussed below.

<u>Segment One: Educated Liberals</u>

This segment is the largest segment representing just over one-third of the NZ population. Those in the segment are typically in their early fifties, university educated and have the highest income levels of all the segments. In addition to being the segment that most strongly believes that NZ is a good place to live, they also report high levels of contentment with the Government and with their own quality of life. They believe that NZ is a land of opportunity and that you do not need to go overseas to get ahead in life.

They are comfortable with contemporary moral standards in NZ. Their values are characterised by an emphasis on universalism, benevolence and self-direction and they place a strong emphasis on the importance of justice, equality, integrity, the community and environmental protection. They are also the segment most proud of, and confident in, their own competence and capabilities and the one most likely to share their labour and expertise with others.

Although materially well-off, and the least concerned with economic uncertainties, they are not driven by materialistic status and try to live sustainably, avoiding excess packaging and making conscious efforts to support local businesses. While they are not very price oriented, they do value quality and are the least likely segment to make consumption decisions based on price. In keeping with their concern with quality, they are the segment least likely to eat fast food and consume fizzy drinks and the most likely to prepare food from scratch including regularly eating fresh fruit and vegetables.

Their belief in the importance of community and their concern with integrity is reflected in their strong beliefs surrounding business. For example, they firmly believe that companies have a social responsibility to their customers and should not just be concerned with delivering a profit to their shareholders. They like to give back to the community through volunteer and charity work, as well as donating to charities and believe that they positively contribute to the lives of others.

They are outgoing and enjoy socializing, keeping active, especially outdoors, and occasionally go to sports events, give dinner parties, visit galleries, museums and the library. Appreciating the arts, they like to go to the theatre, ballet, and concerts on average once a year and are the segment most likely to use their leisure time to read books. They like to stay up to date with the world's situation through online news, watch free to air television, read newspapers and enjoy listening to/watching content online. They buy or sell online once a month.

This segment is most similar to the Progressives identified in the 2015 Consumer Lifestyles Study.

<u>Segment Two: Financial Strugglers</u>

The segment, Financial Strugglers, comprises 16% of respondents, they are likely to be in their early forties, and be on the lowest levels of income, with many temporarily unemployed. They report the lowest levels of life satisfaction, including satisfaction with their standard of living, personal relationships and sense of achievement. It is the segment most concerned with its level of financial vulnerability and believes that it is worse off financially than it was a year ago. For them, price is the major decision making factor when making consumption decisions.

In addition to concerns with their own levels of financial security, Financial Strugglers are concerned more widely that the gap between rich and poor is growing and would like to see more government intervention in the economy. In particular, they would like to see more government spending on social welfare and education and, while they believe that spending on health services in New Zealand is generally too high, they are dissatisfied with the particular condition of their own personal health. They generally take part in few active, sporting or social leisure activities and report attending sports, community or arts events or hosting dinner parties once a year. Their media use comprises reading, listening to music, streaming video, mostly Youtube, and watching free to air television. They read the news online, report not being influenced by social media, celebrity endorsements or traditional marketing and engage in buying or selling online once a month.

Financial Strugglers value social and financial equality and display socially - orientated and liberal attitudes. For example, they believe that people should be free to live their own lives as they wish, regardless of their sexual orientation, that advertising to children should be restricted, that it is not appropriate for commercial companies to market their products in schools and that business is more interested in making profits than serving customers. They would like to be able to consume more sustainably, and while they cannot always afford the most sustainable options, they believe that there should be a standardized labelling system for environmentally friendly products to help people make informed consumption choices.

Segment Three: Contemporary New Zealanders

Contemporary New Zealanders are likely to be in their mid to late thirties and are the smallest segment of the sample, comprising just 5% of the adult NZ population. They are the most ethnically diverse of the segments, are likely to have a university education, be working full time and enjoy relatively high incomes. Agreeing that they are better off financially than they were a year ago, they report high levels of satisfaction in life, are purposeful, feel optimistic about their future financial security and their health and see themselves as socially engaged. They are not against incurring debt in exchange for convenience and they attach some degree of success, admiration, and quality of life with owning possessions. Valuing self-direction, they have strong political and environmental opinions, strongly value equality and compassion and feel that the government should take stronger measures to protect NZ's environment and bolster its economy. Firm believers in workers' rights and trade unions, they would like to see greater governmental action to reduce income inequality and would like to see more attention paid to reducing levels of obesity in NZ.

They recognize the importance of traditional values such as compassion, equality and benevolence. They are the segment most aware of the UNSDGs, and the most active in their sustainable consumption behaviours. For example, they are more likely to grow their own food, buy from local producers and avoid excessive packaging. In general, they are careful with resources, are prepared to 'make do' and avoid products that they regard as becoming obsolete. They are generally supportive of business and see few issues that they believe need to be rectified. While agreeing that the major responsibility of business is to its shareholders, they are very conscious of supporting those companies that have a strong record of protecting the environment.

Contemporary New Zealanders are the most positive segment in their response to advertising and marketing, including social media posts, traditional marketing, and search engine suggestions. They also regularly include friends and family recommendations in their purchase decisions and are the segment most likely to undertake home renovations. They put energy into their communities, share their skills and expertise, undertake volunteer work and regularly give to charity. They like to socialise, entertain once a month, keep busy through exercise and enjoy outside activities. They are the most likely segment to eat convenience and fast foods and are also the one that most enjoys fizzy drinks. Surprisingly, they are also the most likely segment to compare labels to select nutritious food.

They are high consumers of all media, including free to air, pay and streaming TV, listening to podcasts, streaming music, reading magazines and consuming news online and in newspapers. They occasionally game online and buy or sell online once a week. They are regular visitors to libraries, have an interest in the arts and like to go to the theatre, concerts, and the ballet once a month.

This is a new segment to emerge in the 2020 study not seen in previous waves.

<u>Segment Four: Uncertain Young</u>

The ‘Uncertain Young’ comprise one tenth of the adult population, are in their late twenties and include the highest proportion of students. They are largely apathetic toward social, economic, and environmental issues. The Uncertain Young are relatively content with their personal lives, but they are not confident that they are living the ‘good life’ or that NZ is a very good place to live. They are somewhat materialistic, do not use price as the most important factor in consumption decisions and agree that their working status is important to them. They are very physically and socially active and enjoy playing team and individual sports, engaging in outdoor activities and are frequent visitors to cafes and restaurants, events, concerts, movies and the gym. They enjoy entertaining more frequently than other segments and even though they lead very active lives, the Uncertain Young do not try to stay healthy through the food choices they make – for example, they are the least likely to eat vegetables or prepare food from scratch.

They are high consumers of all media and one of the most likely segments to listen to podcasts and radio and engage in online gaming. They are less likely to respond to marketing through traditional methods such as newspapers, billboards, and television adverts, and buy or sell online regularly. They are active in their community, undertake volunteer work and give to charity once a month. They spend money on DIY and home renovations.

<u>Segment Five: Traditional Family Values</u>

Those in the Traditional Family Values segment make up approximately one-quarter of the NZ population, are likely to be Pākehā, in their late fifties to early sixties, the least likely to be working full-time and the most likely to be widowed or separated. The segment is characterised by its authoritarian and hierarchical view of society and its belief that moral standards are declining. For example, they believe that children lack basic standards of obedience and respect, and that there is not enough discipline in schools. They also believe that children are not being well prepared for life and hold the view that there are too many irrelevant subjects being taught in schools. As traditionalists, they value the institution of marriage and they do not think that it is important for women to have a career outside of the family home.

It is the segment most politically right-leaning, most dissatisfied with the Government and the one that would most like to see more spending on law and order and national security. They do not believe in the necessity of strong trade unions, would not provide more support to single parents and do not regard social and financial inequality as an issue. They are the least concerned with environmental protection issues and would not support greater government spending or intervention in these areas.

In terms of consumer lifestyle, the consumption behaviour of this segment is characterised by discipline, an avoidance of impulsive purchase decisions and the absence of hedonistic, frivolous or luxury purchases. They do not believe that the things they own say a lot about how they are doing in their lives or could be seen to impress people, nor do they admire people who own expensive cars, clothes and homes. They are concerned to live within their means, are concomitantly averse to incurring debt and confident with the management of their personal financial circumstances.

Traditional Family Values do not go out of their way to consume sustainably, they do not intentionally buy from environmentally friendly companies and do not trust environmentally friendly labelling. Additionally, they disagree that the intensity of dairy farming in New Zealand is a problem and acknowledge that they are not committed to living sustainable lifestyles.

This segment does not feel that it needs to seek excitement, is not particularly active, however its members regularly contribute to charity and community appeals, engage in buying or selling online, visit the library and occasionally have guests to stay. They watch free to air television, are regular magazine readers and read news online. They report not being influenced by celebrity endorsements, social media posts, traditional marketing or information on business websites in regard to marketing but, instead, respond best to the recommendations of friends and family.

Overall, this segment aligns exactly with the Traditional Family Values identified in the 2015 Lifestyles Study, and members continue to be satisfied with their lives, believe that their lives have meaning and purpose and that they are respected by others.

<u>Segment Six: Disengaged</u>

The 'Disengaged' make up 9% of the sample, comprising consumers most likely to be in their late thirties, single and temporarily unemployed. They are the segment most likely to express discontentment with life in general, the least likely to feel that they are leading purposeful and meaningful lives and the one that believes it is not competent in, or capable with, the activities that are important to them. They are consistently neutral on social, environmental and political issues but are concerned about their own wellbeing and that of those closest to them.

While dissatisfied with their own lives, they are relatively content with how life is in NZ and do not feel there is much change needed to improve the country. They value individuality rather than conformity, do not regard socialising or community connections as important and put little effort into their relationships with others - feeling that their social relationships do not provide a great deal of support.

In terms of consumption, they are not materialistic, rarely use search engine suggestions or independent consumer reviews to make their consumption choices, and do not respond very well to celebrity endorsements. They do not compare labels to select the most nutritious foods, and they are the segment least likely to eat fruit or to prepare food from fresh ingredient.

Generally low users of media, they watch free-to air TV and NZ on demand and read the news online once a week. They are not physically active, and are unlikely to visit theatres, galleries and museums, or attend concerts/events.

Changes to the Segments Since 2015

Before we discuss the changes to the segments below, the following is a short summary of the segmentation clusters from the 2015 Consumer Lifestyles Report:

Progressives (20%): Well educated, largely female, strongly community oriented, concerned with social and environmental issues.

Disengaged (15%): Middle aged, limited social and political engagement, low satisfaction with life, a willingness to take on debt.

Young Pleasure Seekers (13%): Youngest group, most concerned with the self. Strong focus on material possessions, high digital media users.

New Greens (8%): Socially and environmentally conscious consumers. Value community and tradition, high overall sense of personal wellbeing.

Success Driven Extroverts (11%): Younger, well-educated and media savvy. Brand conscious and early adopters of technology.

Quiet Lifers (16%): Lowest levels of education. Limited social engagement and a low sense of personal wellbeing.

Traditional Family Values (17%): Older, high income, family and socially oriented with traditional/conservative values. Satisfied with life in general.

Several of the 2020 segments are still clearly recognisable in the seven segments identified in 2015, but with some significant changes. For example, while the Educated Liberals are comparable to the Progressives of the 2015 Consumer Lifestyles Report, they have increased from 20% to 33% of the sample. This segment is characterised by its liberal values, concern for the environment, and concern for others. One explanation for this significant growth is the result of greater awareness and the increasing normalisation of sustainability and environmental concerns across the wider population.

Another significant segment to have increased in size with relatively similar characteristics to the last wave is the Traditional Family Values (up from 17% to 25%). As the Educated Liberals and the Traditional Family Values segments comprise the oldest consumers, this growth may partly be a reflection of NZ's ageing population (Statistics NZ 2020).

In contrast, the Disengaged segment, while remaining similar in many characteristics to 2015, have decreased in size from 15% to 9% (in spite of there being fewer segments in the current study). This may reflect a greater satisfaction with current Government spending priorities, changing social policy and, just generally, a feeling of relief in response to the relatively successful management of the effects of the pandemic.

Young Pleasure Seekers and Success Driven Extroverts no longer exist as separate segments and this is explained by the significant drop in attitudes to materialism across the total sample. The new segment, Uncertain Young, is reflective of these earlier segments, but without the focus on the acquisition of possessions. Similar to the earlier segment, they make the most of experiences and, generally, are not strongly politically or socially motivated.

Another segment to have disappeared since 2015, is the New Greens who may no longer be identifiable as a separate group as their views have become more normative. Their opinions, representing many progressive, egalitarian and humanitarian attitudes, and reflected in their moral attitudes towards justice and their concerns with fairness and equality, are shared by the Educated Liberals and the Contemporary New Zealanders.

The 2015 segment, Quiet Lifers, has been reclassified as Financial Strugglers given their concerns with economic uncertainties most likely as a consequence of COVID.

Finally, one new segment has emerged in this wave, Contemporary New Zealanders. This segment is characterised by its ethnic diversity, its embracing of Māori and other ethnic and cultural values, and strong respect for tradition. They are active consumers of goods, experiences and media, with a wider concern for a better world.

Wider Changes Across New Zealand

On average, NZers report a higher satisfaction with life as a whole (73%) compared to 66% in 2015. However, the financial uncertainty created by COVID is evident with 61% of respondents more worried about the economy than they were a year ago. Only 38% agreed they felt secure about their personal income and only 25% agreed that their family was better off financially than it was a year ago.

Overall, consumers in the study report higher levels of life satisfaction and more positive attitudes towards government policies and spending than in 2015. In total, 67% of respondents agreed they were satisfied with the Government. While significant numbers of people still believe that government spending on health (64%), education (55%), and protecting the environment (56%) is too low, there was greater satisfaction with government spending on Police, social welfare, and the military. Only a minority of respondents in the current study agreed with the statement that, "the less the government interferes with the economy the better" (22%), however, 54% believe the Government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels.

In contrast to the 2015 Consumer Lifestyles Report, opinions in the present study show a more liberal perspective (37% of respondents consider themselves liberal versus 13% who regarded themselves as holding authoritarian views), and this aligned with a move away from an emphasis on traditional values. This is also consistent with a move towards the political left (30% consider themselves politically left, while 19% report right), and less agreement with conservative statements in general, such as, 'the young have too many privileges', 'moral standards are declining', and, 'there is not enough discipline in schools'. More liberal opinions are also indicative of a trend towards endorsing more independent consumption decisions and are evident in an increase in support for business generally and the belief that advertising generally is a good thing.

Continuing the trends reported in 2015, consumers believe that they are paying too much for goods (43% are not satisfied with the prices they pay for products and services in NZ) and that these are too often of variable quality. Price remains a key consumption decision factor for 80% of people and 45% say the lowest priced products are usually their first choice. Moves towards more frugal living have also increased, as have efforts to reduce personal credit card debt with significantly more consumers agreeing that it is important to live within one's means (72%). Consumers' comfortability with online shopping has increased (to 66%) since 2015.

There is increased awareness of, and concern with, social and environmental issues and this trend is reflected in a shift towards more sustainable consumption behaviours with 50% reporting that they are committed to a sustainable lifestyle. Overall, satisfaction with business rose to 60%, however, there are increased expectations that business should take more social responsibility (more people in this wave - 42% - agreed that businesses are avoiding their social responsibility), and this can be seen alongside a declining emphasis on the acquisition and importance of material possessions, with attitudes to the majority of the materialism statements such as, "the things I own say a lot about me" and, "I admire people who own expensive goods" declining significantly.

The idea that consumers are increasingly using their consumption choices as a proxy for their ideological beliefs is demonstrated by the increase in patronage for companies that are perceived as pro-active in their commitment to the environment, with more people reporting they, 'only buy from companies that have a strong record of protecting the environment' (22%). While there is a slight increase in the trust that consumers have in current sustainability labelling practices since 2015, this is still low at 37% and is evident in

67% of consumers' supporting standardised systems of product labelling to enable them to make more informed product choices (up to 67%). Over half of consumers (56%) say it is important for them to buy products and services from local NZ owned and operated businesses.

There are significant changes to the media consumption behaviours of NZers. Given the expansion and integration of digital media and communications, it is not surprising that consumers are spending more time online than ever before and increasingly relying on digital sources for their news and entertainment. They also continue to spend more of their consumption dollars buying and selling online, with 45% of people buying or selling online at least once a month. The most important sources of information for consumer decision making are friends and family (52%), followed by web searching (e.g. Google) (42%), and, information on company web pages (32%).

Holidays away from home are regarded as very important to the majority of respondents (58%). When asked what motivates their decisions to holiday in NZ, the motivations ranked as most important were: to mentally relax (79%); to get refreshed (76%); to relax physically (73%); and to get away from the routine of everyday life (72%).

<u>Food and Alcohol</u>

The majority of consumers think that obesity is a serious problem in NZ (71%). However, only half of the sample was concerned about their own weight. The number of people who said their family usually eats together was just over 50%. Consuming convenience food (e.g., Chinese, Indian, pizza, burgers) remains quite high, with 43% of the sample reporting that, on average, they consume convenience food at least once a week and 26% reporting eating at a Café at least once a week.

The increasing trend for consuming meals through pre-boxed food suppliers was also evident with 16% stating that, on average, they eat a meal from a pre-boxed supplier (e.g., My Food Bag; Hello Fresh) one or more times a week. There was also a strong trend for making food from fresh ingredients rather than pre-prepared food with approximately 84% reporting that they do this at least once a week.

Approximately 30% of the sample reported consuming alcohol two or more times a week with a majority thinking they drank responsibly. However, this has declined since 2015 alongside the increase in the number of consumers (27%) who reported that they sometimes think they should drink less.

Discussion

The present study provides an insightful snapshot of how consumers in NZ have reacted to the effects of the COVID pandemic on their attitudes and behaviours. Despite on–going concerns with its effects, both at home and abroad, the research shows that levels of satisfaction with life in general have increased. This is also reflected in the increase in support for Government policies, particularly those concerned with social welfare, equality and domestic security. It could be argued that this overall increase in satisfaction with the quality of life in general, and government priorities in particular, is a consequence of the way that consumers have perceived and appreciated the efforts to minimise the effects of the pandemic on society and its attempts to address concerns with issues such as income inequality. While longitudinal research suggests that the major political parties in NZ have maintained their broadly left-right ideological divergence (Gibbons 2011), in times of crises those differences may be exaggerated in favour of policies which are perceived to be more socially inclusive. The identification of income inequality as an important issue potentially represents a shift in consumer attitudes both in relation to more macro socio-political attitudes and, more pragmatically, a recognition of and concern for, those suffering disproportionally at the bottom of the financial pyramid. While these higher levels of satisfaction and support may be reflective of present circumstances, their long term persistence is likely to be dependent on the ways in which a number of other priorities are addressed. For example, consumers were concerned that spending on health and education were too low.

Continuing a trend identified in the 2015 Lifestyle Study, increasing numbers of consumers would also like to see greater investment in, and protection of, the environment. This overall concern with protection of the environment is consistent with increasing global trends that recognise the impact of consumption on the depletion of resources and the sustainability of the planet (Jackson, 2004, 2005; Fujii 2006; Pepper, Jackson and Uzzell 2009; White, Habib and Hardisty, 2019; Severo, De Guimarães and Dellarmelin 2021).

It may also be reflective of a more integrated and holistic understanding of the need to consume more sustainably which underpins the United Nations SDGs (United Nations 2000) - a greater awareness of which is shown in the present study. Indeed, such is the wider concern with issues of sustainability shared by NZ consumers, that it is no longer useful as a characterisation of individual lifestyle segments. For example, in the 2015 study, the Educated Liberals were identified not just by their more socially – inclusive attitudes towards society, but also by their strong support and advocacy for environmental protection and the concomitant need to consume more sustainably both at individual and societal levels. As positive attitudes towards sustainability have become increasingly normalised, they increasingly feature as characteristics across wider segments of society. This trend is closely mirrored by similar changes overseas (Vergragt, Dendler, De Jong and Matus 2016; Wang, Ghadimi, Lim and Tseng 2019).

While not directly related to issues of sustainability and protection of the environment, results of the study also identify increased concerns with the efficacy and commitment of business to contribute to the social good (Landrum 2018; Visser and Kymal 2015). Acknowledging overall that business was performing well, results show that there is increased concern with the behaviour of business in relation to its social obligations. That is, respondents felt that business needed to look beyond a focus on economic growth and consider the consequences of its achievement on both social and natural capital (Spiller, 2000; Scherer and Palazzo 2011; Harrison and Wicks 2013).

One of the most important ways in which other priorities are addressed, and upon which present higher levels of life satisfaction are sustained, are those which concern levels of income and financial security. A majority of consumers feel that their financial position has been compromised and is less secure than it was a year ago. Despite indications that for some segments personal savings had increased and personal debt reduced, confidence in the overall performance of the economy was low. While in some respects this may seem at odds with levels of life satisfaction, it may well be more reflective of the halo effect resulting from an appreciation of the measures that the Government has taken to mitigate the effects of the pandemic (Yoosefi Lebni, Moradi, Salahshoor, Chaboksavar, Irandoost and Ziapour 2021). However, the implications of financial insecurity for people's sense of wellbeing and, particularly, its effects on their mental health (Rasdi, Zaremohzzabieh and Ahrari 2021, Patel and Rietveld 2020) presents a significant challenge to current levels of health funding in NZ.

In contrast to the 2015 Report, but in line with increasingly positive attitudes towards, and greater awareness of, issues relating to social inclusion and cultural, ethnic and sexual diversity, results of the present study reflect a shift to a more tolerant society. In addition to a move away from specific concerns with challenges to authority, lack of discipline in schools and a youth culture that is overly-privileged, there is no longer a strong sense of moral decline or the need to reinforce traditional values. This move towards a more liberal approach to society is also evident in the high percentage of consumers who identify with the political left, including those captured by the new segment identified in the study, Contemporary New Zealanders, who are further characterised by their commitment to their communities and their optimism for the future. This segment, who also demonstrate strong political and environmental opinions, could be seen to represent a new wave of NZ consumers. Although presently the smallest segment, it is one that has benefitted from a University education, is the most ethnically diverse, the one most aware of the UNSDGs and most likely to consume sustainably. With attitudes and opinions informed by critical engagement with contemporary issues and complemented by personal experience, the values that motivate behaviour for this segment are likely to be enduring. This is particularly true should existing social norms change to reflect growing and more mainstream concerns with our relationship to, and responsibility for, the environment and the recognition that consuming more sustainably may become more of an imperative and less of a choice.

While it is difficult to determine the extent to which the findings in the present study have been influenced by long-term trends versus those directly related to Covid, the acceleration of trends identified in 2015 in relation to greater protection of the environment, increased responsibilities of business, more liberal attitudes and more sustainable consumption behaviours, for example, suggest that they represent longer-term, more enduring changes. The ongoing challenges faced by New Zealanders in response to the consequences of the pandemic and the ways in which they have dealt with its constraints, suggest that a re-assessment of consumption spending and priorities will continue.

Conclusion

This study provides a detailed analysis of the psychographic patterns, attitudes and behaviours which characterise the 2020 NZ lifestyle segments. While the composition and characteristics of the majority of these segments remain fairly similar to those identified in the 2015 study, changes to the segments mirror shifts seen across the sample. The topics comprising the largest changes measured since 2015, are that NZ consumers are more positive in their outlook, more committed to sustainable consumption, and have higher expectations of business taking greater social responsibility for their actions than 5 years ago. Underlying the major changes identified above appears to be a greater concern for the environment and sustainability, and more liberal attitudes to business and society since. While arguably, consumers have been sheltered from the most serious consequences of COVID, the increased emphasis on more sustainable consumption behaviour, more mindful spending, financial uncertainty and more importance placed on local business can be seen to be consequences of it.

Finally, it is important to recognise that as with all attempts to classify disparate social groups according to their psychographic, attitudinal and behavioural characteristics, there is a tendency to over simplify and under represent. However, given the systematic and detailed analysis undertaken we believe that the study provides a number of new and useful insights into the contemporary world of the New Zealand consumer.

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