

CHRIE FutureFund™ Introduces Lingyan (Lia) Zhang



Marketing for a Better World. For me, this is more than a slogan. It is the question that guides my research: How can marketing and communication help people, organizations, and society make better decisions? More specifically, I study how marketing and communication can advance sustainability and consumer well-being.

I am currently a PhD candidate at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. My research sits at the intersection of service marketing, consumer behavior, and sustainability communication in the tourism and hospitality industry. My path to this research was shaped by my academic background and industry experience.

Before beginning my PhD, I received my bachelor's degree in hospitality management and my master's degree in marketing analytics. I also worked in consulting, corporate branding, and revenue analytics for service businesses. I was trained in these roles where good service has traditionally meant giving consumers more: more convenience, more choice, more attention. Sustainability, however, often seems to speak the opposite language: use less, consume less, waste less. I became interested in how sustainability communication can be designed to create value for stakeholders.

My first research stream examines how sustainability communication can motivate pro-environmental behavior. I study how psychological processes, such as beliefs and mindsets, can make sustainable choices feel personally meaningful and valuable. I also examine the broader benefits of sustainability communication, including its spillover into consumer health awareness and choices.

My second stream examines sustainability from the perspective of firms and public policy. Environmental regulations often establish what firms must do, but firms still can decide how they comply. I examine how these compliance strategies translate policies into marketplace experiences and shape both consumer responses and business outcomes.



My emerging research examines artificial intelligence in sustainability communication and organizational decision-making. I study how AI-generated environmental recommendations influence consumer compliance and the governance questions that arise as AI systems become involved in organizational decisions.

Methodologically, I primarily use experiments to identify causal effects and psychological mechanisms. I also work with large-scale behavioral data, natural experimental designs, and computational analysis of unstructured data. I integrate psychological theory and data-driven insights to inform sustainability and governance decisions.

Beyond research, I see teaching as another way to contribute to marketing for a better world. Teaching shapes the lens through which future business leaders see problems and the decisions they will make. Looking ahead, I hope to equip students with theory, analytics, and evidence to navigate contemporary challenges such as sustainability and emerging technology.

What I took away from ICHRIE was not a sense of arrival, but a clearer sense of how much further the work could go. As I prepare for the next stage of my academic career, I am excited to explore faculty opportunities where I can continue developing this research agenda and contribute to hospitality and tourism education. I also look forward to building new collaborations across the ICHRIE community.