

don't be a WATER HAZARD



TIP #2: WASHING

Wash it in a car wash. Not in your driveway.
Take our quiz for a chance to win prizes. ▶

Archives | Contact Us | Columbian Publishing Company | e-Edition | Mobile | Place an Ad | RSS | Subscribe

Login/Register

columbian.com
SERVING CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Life

News | Sports | Business | Multimedia | Life | Opinion | Obituaries | Community | Marketplace | Jobs | Motors | Real Estate

Google Custom Search

SEARCH

Life



Rented possessions finding favor 'Transumers' value pleasure over treasure

Monday, July 13 | 12:08 p.m.

ASSOCIATED PRESS, THE COLUMBIAN



In this June 8, 2009 photo, Cassandra Smith shows off some of her purses that she bought in her pre-rental days, now she spends \$800 a month renting designer handbags and leases a luxury condo in downtown Miami. The medical device saleswoman has several drawers filled with purses she bought, now, she's not sure what to do with them. "Once I've used a purse for a while, I'm done with it," she says. "I've moved onto another trend." (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)

Cassandra Smith spends \$800 a month renting designer handbags and leases a luxury condo in downtown Miami. Environmentalist Zoe Turrill helped create a bike-sharing program at the University of Denver.

Though they might seem to come from different ends of the consumption spectrum, they have something in common: They're not buying things.

The rise of renting or borrowing services catering to everyone from fashionistas to environmentalists has even spawned a marketing buzzword: the "transumer."

It's a lifestyle that's "less about treasure and more about pleasure," according to Reinier Evers of Trendwatching, an Amsterdam-based market research firm that coined the term.

It almost seems anti-American to rent, rather than buy; a look at the popular reality TV show "Clean House" is a testament to Americans' love of accumulating stuff. But Evers says that in this global recession, people are

warming to the idea of renting, and not buying, certain goods — because of cost, ease or space considerations.

"On the one hand, you have consumers who want to collect as many experiences and part-time possessions as possible," Evers said. "And then there are transumers who value non-ownership for environmental reasons: to only use something when you really need it, which involves everything from renting to passing something on to the next person."

From rented Chanel sunglasses to fractional ownership of a jet to movies from Netflix, the pickings are good for transumers.

"It's kind of a sister-cousin concept to materialism, which is attachment to possessions. Transumerism, coming from the term transient, it's more 'I don't want to be attached to the possession,' more 'I'm attached to the experiences,'" said Alexandra Aguirre Rodriguez, assistant marketing professor at Florida International University.

The auto-sharing service Zipcar is capitalizing on this shift in consumer mind-set. Zipcar has more than 300,000 members worldwide sharing 6,500 vehicles. Zipcar Portland, which services Southwest Washington, saw a 42-percent increase in members from June 2008 to June 2009. In that same time period, the fleet size increased by almost 20 percent.

But it's not just cars being shared. In recent years, many more companies are renting things at all levels: Wear Today, Gone Tomorrow rents designer clothes (A \$495 Vera Wang rents for \$49 a week, plus a \$10 cleaning charge), Rentobtle leases the latest in cell phones and Irent2u rents almost anything (think ladders and power tools) in a Craigslist-like setting.

There's even a Web site devoted to high-end transumerism. UK-based FractionalLife.com is a portal for those seeking to share Ferraris, art, holiday homes and even racehorses.

"Luxury is perhaps not what you own, but what you do," says Piers Brown, founder of Fractional Life.

Brown says during this downturn, people are reluctant to shoulder the costs of buying and maintaining expensive things — which may be why property and jets are among the most popular items on his Web site.

FIU's Rodriguez says she expects the trend to continue once the economy recovers.

"I don't think this is a trend that will go away, simply because it is about collecting the experiences and the stories," she said.

There's also the "eco-transumer," like Turrill.

The 22-year-old worked with another student to raise \$50,000 to start their "bike library." Come fall, some 600 bikes will be placed at 40 kiosks around the city so people can rent the two-wheelers by the hour or day.

AUCTION NOW!

DANCE LESSONS WATCHES HEATING/COOLING

HURRY! bidding ends July 21

Portland transportation officials are considering resurrecting and improving upon a bike-sharing program that tried and failed in the '90s. The original program was free, and collapsed because of theft, vandalism and poor bike quality. The revamped plan calls for a fee-based platform similar to how Zipcar works. The city will hold two events in August to look at bicycle-sharing systems from various vendors and get public feedback.

Currently the only U.S. bike-sharing program is in Washington, D.C., and has 100 bikes. One in Paris has 21,000 bicycles and 150,000 subscribers a year.

Sharing bikes, like cars, lightens traffic congestion, not to mention the burden of ownership.

"Why does an individual have to hold the responsibility for all the maintenance when a community could hold that responsibility?" Turrill said.

In Miami, Smith, 29, is more concerned about fashion. Her latest rentals from Avelle (formerly Bag, Borrow or Steal) include a cherry red patent leather clutch by Louis Vuitton.

The medical device saleswoman has several drawers filled with purses she bought in her pre-rental days. Now, she's not sure what to do with them.

"Once I've used a purse for a while, I'm done with it," she says. "I've moved onto another trend."

Columbian staff writer Mary Ann Albright contributed to this story.

[Site Map](#) | [Corrections](#)
[Blogs](#) | [Archives](#)

[Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#)
[Help/Feedback](#) | [Reprint Requests](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

[Merchandise](#) | [Motors](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#)

[Show 3 Comment\(s\)](#)

You must [register](#) before you can post a comment.

Copyright 2009 columbian.com. All rights reserved. Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our user agreement.