

"TRANSUMERS"

Introduction

Back in 2003, when we first spoke of TRANSUMERS and TRANSUMERISM (crediting global design and business consultancy Fitch for coining the term), the focus for this trend was solely on consumers in transition, i.e. travelers, and the many novel and innovative shopping opportunities at airports, train stations and hotels catering to this crowd. And while that part of TRANSUMERISM is still evolving (see some of the new examples from various airports further down in this briefing), it's time to expand the TRANSUMERS trend/theme to non-travel, as consumers are slowly but certainly mirroring travel behavior in daily life. After all, in our Experience Economy, the temporary, the transient, is increasingly being valued if not worshipped on a daily basis.

We discussed the relationship between experience and status in our [UBER PREMIUM](#) briefing; for now consider the following data on luxury consumption (luxury is an ever-reliable indicator of what next generations will consider basic necessities, thus often revealing the Next Big Thing): "Luxury consumers are spending more, in many cases lots more, on life-changing experiences, while their need for luxury goods is waning. Spending on luxury experiences in the US, including travel, dining, entertainment, spas and beauty services and home services, nearly doubled, from an average of USD 11,632 in 2004 to USD 22,746 in 2005: a 95.5 percent increase" (source: Pam Danzinger, Unity Marketing).



With experiences starting to trump goods, many fixed items run the risk of becoming synonymous with boredom, with hassle, with quickly-out-of-date, with maintenance, with taking up too large a part of budgets, if not lives. Which brings us to a new definition of TRANSUMERS:

TRANSUMERS are consumers driven by experiences instead of the 'fixed', by entertainment, by discovery, by fighting boredom, who increasingly live a transient lifestyle, freeing themselves from the hassles of permanent ownership and possessions. The fixed is replaced by an obsession with the here and now, an ever-shorter satisfaction span, and a lust to collect as many experiences and stories as possible. Hey, the past is, well, over, and the future is uncertain, so all that remains is the present, living for the 'now'.*

Now, before we start to sound too much like 'real' trend watchers (you know, the 'green is the new black' types ;-), here's a random round-up of TRANSUMER examples that illustrate the many angles to the TRANSUMERS trend, to get you started and help you dream up a few new TRANSUMER services of your own.

* We recommend you read Gilles Lipovetsky's [Hypermodern Times](#) for a deeply insightful take on consumers' pervasive obsession with the here-and-now.

1. TRANSUMERS and pleasure / freedom



To most consumers, travel equates to temporary freedom. Detachment, fractional ownership or no ownership at all, trying out new things, escaping commitment and obligations, dropping formality, endless new experiences. No wonder travel is now one of the biggest industries on this planet. No wonder too, that some of the pleasures associated with travel are finding their way into daily life, now that tens of millions of consumers have become skilled travelers. Case in point: TRANSUMERS adopting a 'leasing life-style', making use of new rental options that go beyond Avis or timeshares (now a USD 10 billion industry worldwide, by the way). What's to like, for TRANSUMERS? A mix of:

- Avoiding hassle: the more stuff you permanently own, the more you have to worry about: repairs, going out of style, theft and so on.
- The latest and greatest: with ever shorter product development cycles, leasing ensures consumers can always enjoy the latest and the greatest.
- Multiple experiences: TRANSUMERS with a limited budget can now, instead of owning one single expensive object, rent, enjoy, then dispose of many different objects, maximizing the number of experiences.
- Climbing the ladder ([MASSCLUSIVITY](#) and [UBER PREMIUM](#)): status-conscious consumers resort to luxury fractional ownership because it's the only way for them to be able to flaunt (both established and new) status symbols.

Examples

Fashion

Fashion brands have nailed TRANSUMERISM like no one else. From the very transient (and affordable) collections at Zara and H&M, to innovative lease concepts that play to the temporary nature of the business, and to TRANSUMERS' desires.



At [Bag Borrow or Steal](#), the designer handbag rental firm, TRANSUMERS pay a monthly fee, pick and order handbags online and borrow them for as long as they like. Also check out [Be A Fashionista](#), [From Bags to Riches](#) and [Shoulder Candy](#).



Jewelry is the new rental handbag: Bag Borrow or Steal now offers [jewelry](#), too, competing with ventures like [Borrowed Bling](#) and [RK Jewellery Hire](#).

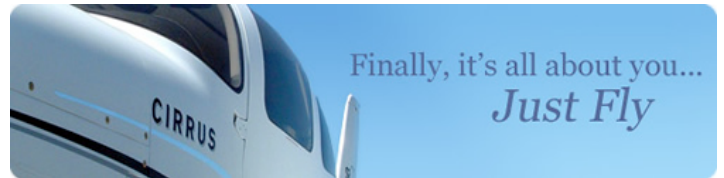


And yes, you can rent that dress to go with your handbag: from [One Night Stand](#) and [Estella's Wardrobe](#) to [Salon Muare](#), this is all part of a lots-of-room-to-grow TRANSUMER infrastructure. More?



Cars

Exclusive car sharing clubs are popping up faster than you can trade in your old jalopy. Why spend all your money on a Bentley when you can experience a Ferrari, Lamborghini and Maybach, too? Check out [Classic Car Club](#), [P1 Club](#), [LuxShare Auto Club](#), [Club Sportiva](#), [Van Horssen Group](#), [ecurie 25](#), [Oversteer Spain](#) and [Ascari](#).



Planes

For UBER PREMIUM TRANSUMERS interested in fractional ownership of very light jets and other toys, there's more than [Net-Jets](#) these days: check out [Airshare Elite](#), [Club One Air](#), [Jet-Alliance](#), [OurPLANE](#), [JetMatch](#) and [JetSet](#).

One-stop fractional ownership shopping

Combining fractional ownership of cars, yachts, apartments and happenings into a neat package, Australian [Limited Edition](#), a luxury lifestyle club, offers its members access to a fleet of high performance cars and water craft, a portfolio of holiday homes and a range of events and experiences. In their own words: "Limited Edition members avoid the anxieties traditionally associated with ownership of a high performance vehicle or luxury boats such as depreciation, insurance, maintenance, taxes and storage". One to bring to Europe, South-East Asia or North America?

Next for the leasing lifestyle: the auction culture

The above concepts result in a lot of goods becoming second hand. Which brings us to eBay and the many other auction and classifieds sites now matching supply and demand for used goods. In fact, what started out as a 'global garage sale' is now responsible for making used goods a widely accepted alternative to buying new, while it has empowered well-off or just obsessed-with-the new TRANSUMERS to constantly sell products bought for temporary pleasure on to the



next person (and then buy something else). So, besides the leasing model, the auction or even barter model will increasingly be used to acquire temporary ownership of luxury goods.

More on this in Daniel Nissanoff's [FUTURE SHOP](#), which explains how eBay and similar sites are quickly growing into mainstream shopping venues, providing unprecedented levels of liquidity for everyday goods, which in turn is moving society from an 'accumulation nation' of hoarders into one where possessions can constantly be replaced with newer, better items.



2. TRANSUMERS and surprise



In an age of abundance, with a reduced need for constant securing of the basics, and goods so plentiful that the status derived from them is sometimes close to nil, the only thing that remains is consumption of the thrill, the experience, the new.

We spoke before of the Experience Economy, but perhaps a better name for it would be the Surprise Economy: not only do TRANSUMERS want freedom, they also want to be surprised, moving from one ephemeral experience to another, constantly trading in the fading for the blossoming.



Pop-up everything

Our poster child of TRANSUMERISM and surprise, [POP-UP RETAIL](#), has become so widespread, that the concept itself has become a 'fixed' part of branding strategies. (Three years ago, we said: "If new products can come and go, why can't the stores that display them do the same?") Here are some of the latest spottings:

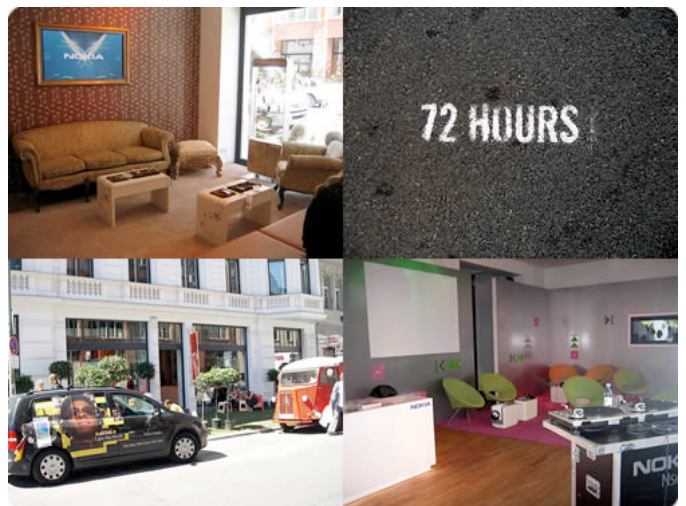
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[Venue VBOX](#) in Singapore is a portable store in a shipping container, which can be set up temporarily. Any place, any time. The VBOX enables a brand or company to follow an event they wish to align their brand with, or pop up where consumers least expect it. Tag along with a photography exhibition or set up shop temporarily at a large sporting event. Brands can even showcase items that consumers may not otherwise be able to purchase: just fill the VBOX with one-offs or special editions and you'll pull in consumers with the prospect of purchasing something unique. The VBOX comes self-contained and equipped with an iMac and iPod HiFi. To date the VBOX has housed collections by some of the fashion world's most prestigious names: Raf Simons (Prada Group) and limited PUMA designer co-labs by Alexander McQueen, Christy Turlington, Mihara Yasuhiro as well as CDs, magazines, books and Motorola phones.

In the same vein, Japanese clothing retailer **Uniqlo** recently transformed two bedroom-sized [cargo containers](#) into stores, toting them through New York City to introduce New Yorkers to the brand. Clothes were stacked in a wall of cubbyholes across from a set of slim windows. The containers were designed by urban design agency [Lot-ek](#).

Comme des Garçons just opened a new 'Play Box' shop outside their regular store in Aoyama, Japan. The Play Box will only be open for one month and will sell special items (source: Hype-Beast).

And keep an eye out for the new Nike pop-up store, opening its temporary doors in SoHo (476 Broome Street), New York on 11 November 2006. Promoting the Nike Air Zoom LeBron IV, requisite limited editions will be on sale for only one week.



This summer, in Berlin, **Nokia** opened a 72-hour store, well, lounge, coinciding with the Love Parade. And so on. Pop-up [restaurants](#), pop-up concerts, pop-up bars and pop-up [galleries](#) are a dime a dozen now, too. It's no longer a matter of understanding their appeal, but a matter of introducing your own, preferably in novel ways.

3. TRANSUMERS and BEING SPACES



So what happens when TRANSUMERS literally *are* in transit? For one, the proliferation of BEING SPACES and BRAND SPACES (*“commercial living-room-like settings in the public space, where catering and entertainment aren't just the main attraction, but are there to facilitate out-of-home, out-of-office activities like watching a movie, reading a book, meeting friends and colleagues, and so on”*) is making it easier than ever to leave domestic or office hassles behind. This phenomenon has been building for a while, of course: back in 1990, sociologist Ray Oldenburg coined 'The Third Place', describing dependable places of refuge, where one can escape the demands of family and bosses, and thus temporarily forget about one's sorrows and shortcomings. To see loads of examples of how BEING SPACES and BRAND SPACES accommodate TRANSUMERS in novel ways, please check out an earlier [briefing](#) on the topic.

And no, we can't do a briefing on TRANSUMERS without looking at the latest developments at airports (but it could as easily have been hotel lobbies, or cruise ships, or train stations), which have become both giant BEING SPACES and shrines to TRANSUMER-style surprise and commerce:



Australia's [Gourmet Traveler](#) magazine now operates stores at Australian airports. The magazine's partnership with **HDS Retail Asia Pacific** provides a shopfront for the 280,000 plus readership, and like the magazine, these stores showcase the best of Australian wine and produce, together with a range of Gourmet Traveler books and magazines. Food products include extra virgin olive oils

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from Australia, artisan mustards, jams, sauces and aged cheeses. There are currently four stores: two stores each at Qantas Domestic Terminals at Melbourne Airport and Perth Airport. Turning a TRANSUMER magazine into a retail outlet: smart move!

Health and beauty and TRANSUMERS is a winner, too: all major airports now have some kind of spa facility, which means it's time for branded chains to invade this TRANSUMER space:



[Rejuve](#), a well-being club, has opened in Heathrow's Terminal 1 and has plans to open in other airports. One-day membership includes use of an exercise room and showers and a selection of juices and salads. Massages and other treatments start at GBP 26 for 15 minutes (source: New York Times). In the US, [XpresSpa](#) claims to be the only premium class, large scale, nationally structured spa, exclusively operating at airports. XpresSpas are located at JFK, SFO, PHL and PIT airports. While in France, the **Men's Lounge** at Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport bills itself as the 'first airport beauty parlor for men'. Last but not least, the [Absolute Spa](#) at Vancouver International Airport is tucked at the end of the International Terminal. This 24-hour gym gives guests full access and concierge service for CDN 15 a day.



Tech is a grateful source for TRANSUMER-style innovation as well. Launched this summer at Schiphol Airport, [Fuel for Travel](#) lets TRANSUMERS download travel guides, music, audio books, tv shows and movies to their MP3 players and other digital devices. Located in Schiphol's Departure Lounges 1 and 2, the Fuel for Travel hubs feature listening and viewing stations for travellers to browse digital content. Once they've found what they want, they can dock their device, pay by credit or debit card, and download the material. Pricing is similar to that of online music and video

downloads. A wide range of devices is supported, including MP3 and MP4 players, phones and PDAs.



More from Schiphol: their latest TRANSUMER concoction is [Schiphol Weddings](#), a just-launched wedding service enabling couples to 'say yes and go'. Wedding planners are available, and ceremonies at the airport (where escape can be fast and anonymous) are conducted by a registrar from the Municipality of Haarlemmermeer.

On to...

3. TRANSUMERS and the ECO-ECOSYSTEM



Yet another important angle on TRANSUMERS: moving from the fixed to the ephemeral *might* just have some positive side effects for the environment. More services and less goods, more re-use by buying and selling second hand goods, more shared ownership... (Needless to say, if temporary becomes just another word for 'disposable', the outlook for the environment isn't as rosy.)

For an eco-friendly example of TRANSUMERISM, look no further than car sharing—not the luxury kind, as described earlier on, but the clubs that help people get rid of their cars altogether. Research shows that every carshare vehicle on the road replaces seven to eight owned vehicles, due to people selling their cars or deciding against buying a second or third vehicle (source: Sydney Morning Herald). There are now more than 2,000 carshare [organizations and initiatives](#) in 600 cities worldwide. From [Zipcar](#) and [Streetcar](#) to [Greenwheels](#) and [Car City Club](#). Chicago-based [I-GO Car Sharing](#) deserves special mention, as their entire fleet consists of hybrid vehicles.

The eco-leasing lifestyle doesn't stop at car sharing: check out the following eco-TRANSUMER services, that also tie in with the aforementioned auction culture:



UK-based [Cahooting](#) is a free service for people who wish to find or advertise items for rent. The company's mission is to help make the world become a more fun and sustainable place, by reducing unnecessary production and pollution. Users simply browse the item categories and locations and inquire about rental price and availability. Sports equipment, clothing, housing, cars, storage: anything and everything can be offered or found for rent. There are no restrictions as to who can advertise items for rent, be it an existing rental company or an individual.



[Freecycle](#) is a grassroots and entirely non-profit movement of people who give (and get) stuff for free in their own towns. The number of Freecycle communities around the world currently stands at more than 3,500, with more than 2.7 million Freecycle members. And then there are numerous bartering and [swapping](#) sites, recycling stores, [drop-off stores](#)... More on this in our upcoming look at the ECO-ECOSYSTEM trend.

Counter-trend



Trends are never 'or', they're always 'and'. Not every consumer will be a TRANSUMER, and not every TRANSUMER will live a transient lifestyle 24/7. There is always a need for roots, for non-transient relationships, for shelter. People, consumers, still need a base, and still need to be sure the basics are at least at all times available. Owning *does* imply a certain level of security, something that others can't just take away from you. Witness the millions of

consumers enamored with [INSPIERENCES](#) (turning homes into professional-style comfort and entertainment zones), with [LIFE CACHING](#) (dedicatedly collecting, storing and displaying one's entire life; so much for forgetting about the past), and so on. Never hurts to keep this in mind when preparing your TRANSUMER ideation session!

Context, next and opportunities



Next? Well, for one, we haven't even touched upon that most ephemeral of all worlds: the online arena. Where new content can be sampled by the gigabytes, where identities can change in a heartbeat, where casual encounters are arranged for in mere minutes (for example, [Adult Friend Finder](#) has over 20 million members looking for transient connections). To truly cut ties with the fixed, head for virtual worlds. Make sure you check out our [YOU-NIVERSAL BRANDING](#) briefing to find out how to cater to online TRANSUMERS, or ask the guides at [Synthravels](#), the world's first travel agency for virtual worlds, to give you a tour!

(Oh, and just wait for TRANSUMERS to be amongst the first to accept if not desire virtual goods. After all, the more time they spend online, the less need they have for expensive, fixed, hardly ever used physical goods. But we're getting carried away here...)



And how about the hundreds of thousands of professional expats whose lives are transient by default? Keep an eye out (no pun intended) for Tyler Brule's new magazine [Monocle](#), launching early 2007. The mag's mission is "to appeal to successful professionals who travel widely and divide their time between several

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cities." Not a bad place for getting your new TRANSUMER services in front of the right crowd. Or, for the entrepreneurial publishers amongst you: Monocle leaves enough room for other dedicated TRANSUMER magazines or websites.

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Or... baby boomers, whose (near future) daily routines more than any other demographic may mirror the TRANSUMERS trend? From the Associated Press:

Russ and Jean Glines have picked the theme music to herald their transition from living in a 3,000-square foot country club home to full-time roadies in a 400-square foot recreational vehicle. The Glines, 43-year-old mortgage brokers, are among a growing number of Baby Boomers who have pushed the number of RV owners to record levels, including some who hit the road full time while continuing to pursue their careers. Baby Boomers have money, a sense of wanderlust and enough technology to run an office or stay in touch with family while on the road. Thanks to Wi-Fi, satellite Internet hookups, e-mail and cell phones, the Glines will continue to run their California-based mortgage company from their Country Coach Intrigue. "We're looking forward to sitting in the

Keys in Florida with our satellite dish hooked up and working like we were in our office in San Jose and going out for walks on the beach at night", Russ said.

Needless to say, we can go on and on about TRANSUMERS, as manifestations of this trend are everywhere. We'll do a proper 'Part II' in Q2 of 2007, but for now, we'll leave the additional spotting to you. No doubt, while reading the above, many other angles and examples have already surfaced. Sit down with your colleagues (preferably in an inspiring, TRANSUMER-style BEING SPACE), and figure out how you can reduce the hassles of ownership for your customers, which of your current offerings could be turned into rental services, what (offline and online) venues and spots you should have a presence in or at, what part of your branding message should speak to the TRANSUMERS amongst your customers, and so on. Happy spotting!

Special thanks to [Kristina Dryza](#), whose piece on 'temporariness' inspired us to do this update.