

On our radar for 2007

OK, so we've finally succumbed to list mania. Last month, we discussed [GENERATION C\(ASH\)](#) as one of the many emerging consumer trends to watch this year, but to honor your requests for a more elaborative overview of what's going to be 'hot', here's a quick list of five big trends/themes that are on our radar for 2007*. They deal with status, transparency and consumer power, the online revolution, more adventurous consumption, and a shift from consumption to participation. Enough to keep you busy!

1. STATUS LIFESTYLES



Here's something trend watchers, CMOs and other business professionals should be able to agree on: in the end, when dealing with (and selling to) people, everything always comes back to status. In a traditional consumer society, he or she who consumes the most, the best, the coolest, the most expensive, the scarcest, or the most popular goods, will typically also 'gain' the most status.

However, expect 2007 to be the year in which many brands realize (if not grudgingly accept) that the 'old', mass-era status symbols, from the Audi Q7 to the De Beers Radiance collection, are no longer every consumers' wet dream. After all, as mature consumer societies are increasingly dominated by (physical) abundance, by saturation, by experiences, by virtual worlds, by individualism, by participation, by feelings of guilt and concern about the side-effects of unbridled consumption, status is to be had in many more ways than leading a somewhat dated lifestyle centered on hoarding as many branded, luxury goods as possible.

So in 2007, keep an eye out for:

TRANSIENT LIFESTYLES

Attractive to 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.

We dubbed these consumers [TRANSUMERS](#) in our November 2006 briefing, and there will be many more of them in 2007. The implications? An obsession with the here and now, an ever-shorter

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satisfaction span, and a lust to collect as many experiences and stories as possible, is undermining the perceived value (and thus status) of fixed goods and services.

PARTICIPATIVE LIFESTYLES

Especially for younger consumers, **participation** is the new consumption. For these creatives, status comes from finding an appreciative audience (in much the same way as brands operate). No wonder that it's becoming increasingly important to hone one's creative skills. Status symbols, make way for **STATUS SKILLS**? Please re-read our [October 2006 briefing](#) on this topic, which contains plenty of examples of brands already serving this new market. Oh, and here's a recent spotting that further illustrates the concept: Nespresso's [AAA Campus](#). What's going to be *your* participation strategy for 2007?

CONNECTING LIFESTYLES

In a post-material world, all that's left to covet is.... other people? From networking sites to buddy lists to meetup.org to a boom in members-only clubs, social status 2.0 is all about who you connect to and who wants to connect to you, tribal-style.

CONNECTING LIFESTYLES is actually a subset of **ONLINE LIFESTYLES**, which encompasses everything from status gained from the number of views for one's photos on Flickr, the real estate one owns in Second Life, to the good looks (and outfit) of one's avatar. For hands-on ideas, check out our [YOUNIVERSAL BRANDING](#) briefing, or, if you own a copy of our [2007 Trend Report](#), re-read the section on UBER OTHERS.

ECO-LIFESTYLES

With the environment finally on the agenda of most powers that be, and millions of consumers now actively trying to greenify their lives, status from leading an eco-responsible lifestyle is both more readily available, and increasing in value. A substantial subset of consumers is already bestowing recognition and praise on Prius drivers while scorning SUV owners, and this will only accelerate as design-minded and branding-savvy eco-firms push to the forefront in 2007 (for examples, check out Springwise's [top 10 eco & sustainability ideas](#)). Make it green, make it chic, make it effortless, make it visible, and don't hesitate to point out your competitor's polluting alternatives ;-)

ADD YOUR OWN STATUS LIFESTYLE(S)!

One thing you can't go wrong with in 2007 is to ask yourself how your current and new products and experiences will satisfy a plethora of very diverse status seekers. In fact, once you get rid of the habit of only believing in traditional status symbols, there is no end to the number of STATUS LIFESTYLES you'll be able to identify. An exercise like that will in many cases end up with the Big Question of what these days exactly constitutes value and meaning, and to whom, but we'll save that for another briefing ;-)

2. TRANSPARENCY TYRANNY



Remember the promises of flawless matching of supply and demand, and limitless consumer power, when the web burst onto the scene a dozen years ago? While the last few years didn't disappoint (consumers are already enjoying near-full transparency of prices and, in categories like travel and music, near-full transparency of opinions as well), 2007 could be the year in which TRANSPARENCY TYRANNY really starts scaring the shit out of non-performing brands.

Why? For one, 1+ billion consumers [are now online](#), and the majority of them have been online for years. They're skilled bargain seekers and 'best of the best' hunters, they're avid online networkers and they're opinionated reviewers and advisors (tripadvisor.com now boasts 5,000,000+ travel reviews). Now, for 2007, add the following:



● As camera and video phones are becoming both ubiquitous and more powerful, reviews of anything and everything will go

multimedia. The impact? Well, a picture says more than a thousand words, and a video says more than a thousand pictures ;-) EVERYTHING brands do or don't do will end up on youtube.com, or on an undoubtedly soon to be launched youtube-clone dedicated to product reviews.

● More on those camera-phones: as they're bound to eventually go online on a global scale (for early learnings, Japan and South Korea are the place to be, see also WEB N+1 below), consumer reviews will increasingly become real time and on the spot, i.e. expect ever shorter gaps between a consumer experience (good or bad) and the rest of the world knowing about it. Oh, and those web-enabled phones will also come in handy for in-store price comparisons; check [amazon.co.jp](#) a bit of inspiration.

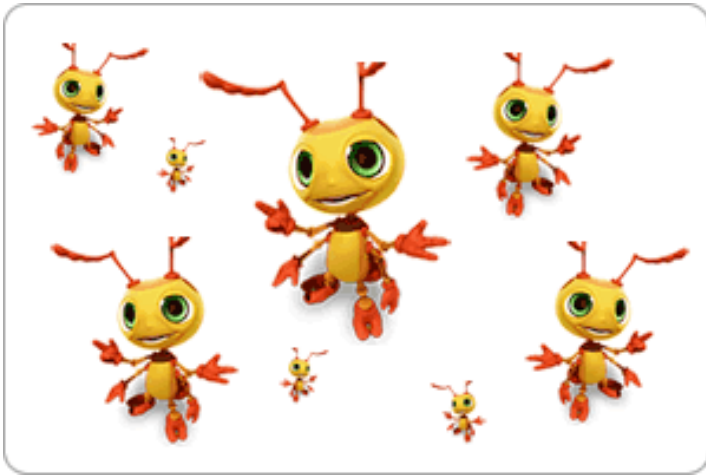
| Rating | Date | Reviewer | Review Title | Review Text |
|---------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 5 stars | Dec 17, 2006 | silverbackstoth77 | "Great Stay" | Eventually booked this hotel through another website other than hilton, and saved myself a few hundred pounds. Being a hilton gold card member, I was expecting an upgrade to a higher floor but on checkin... |
| 5 stars | Dec 17, 2006 | cello700 | "Way Downtown But Great Nonetheless!" | A wonderful hotel with comfortable beds and wide screen TV. It's right opposite Ground Zero so those who lost folks may want to find somewhere else to stay. Right near Chambers Street subway stop. All... |
| 5 stars | Dec 17, 2006 | airedale_travellers | "Loved the Hilton" | Stayed in the Hilton for 2 nights in December. On check in we were given a room on the 44th Floor with a view over the WTC site and on to the river. The rooms were clean and spacious and the staff... |

● Real-time TRANSPARENCY TYRANNY is on the rise for another reason as well: as more people are contributing, the sheer mass of reviews will lead to **daily** and who knows, **hourly reviews** on any topic imaginable. (The image above shows three Tripadvisor members reviewing the Hilton Millenium in 24 hours, whereas a few years ago, one review per month was deemed frequent.) Pleasant side-effect: mass postings will also unmask, outnumber and neutralize any fake reviews posted by desperate brands trying to piggy back on the powers of transparency.

● However, the missing link in the above is profiles: the onslaught of recommendations needs some transparency of its own. After all, what good is a recommendation if it's from someone leading a different STATUS LIFESTYLE than your own? Expect a host of new **TWINSUMER** ventures to monetize **collaborative filtering and profile matching** in 2007, most likely by partnering with sites that are already centered around profiles, like MySpace and Bebo.com. Collaborative filtering and profile matching ranges from social shopping (check out [Crowdstorm](#), [ThisNext](#) and [Stylehive](#) on [Springwise](#)) to the [Last.fm](#)s and [Yoonos](#) of this world.

3. WEB N+1

- Once this **PROFILE MANIA** reaches its zenith, and even more purchase decisions will be influenced by fellow, likeminded consumers, expect star contributors/reviewers to demand a piece of the action. Re-read our [GENERATION C\(ASH\)](#) briefing for a taste of things to come. Smart 'participants' *will* want to get paid in 2007.
- What else? As everything that becomes mass always paves the way for niche, expect more **niche price comparison sites** like [Red Roller](#), which compares shipping prices for small businesses.
- Oh, and transparency is not just consumer-driven: count on your own **employees** and colleagues to add to the fun too. Here's to **employee-generated videos** [stirring things up](#) in 2007.



- And how about the long overdue rebirth of **group buying**? Back in 1999, Letsbuyit.com was too early, and spent too much money, but the potential of uniting like-minded buyers and demanding bulk discounts from retailers or manufacturers is still staggering.

What will make things easier this time around is that a) everybody is now online, and b) social software has taken care of the aggregation challenge. All this now needs is a **CROWD CLOUT** entrepreneur that will add a group-buying feature to existing networking sites. More on CROWD CLOUT and transparency of demand, including lots of start-ups in this field, in our March 2007 briefing.



To stick with the online revolution: if you feel the online world is evolving so fast that it's hard to tell your web 0.2 from your web 2.0— tough luck! 2007 will see a broad debate on what constitutes web 3.0, web 4.0 and who knows, even web 5.0. So while the web 2.0's user-generated avalanche will continue, we're going to hear and obsess (again) about the [Mobile Web](#), the [Internet of Things](#), [INFOLUST](#), [Exploding TV](#), [the Metaverse](#) and so on.

So instead of logging off, grab the online bull by the horns and educate yourself about as many WEB N+1s as you can. Quick tip: start by (re)reading everything by [Kevin Kelly](#), who has been correct in predicting the Next Big Online Thing over and over again. When it comes to the shift from offline to online, the predications are out there, we haven't seen anything yet, and you have no excuse not to know about it.

* *Web N+1 was cleverly coined by [Steven Pemberton](#).*



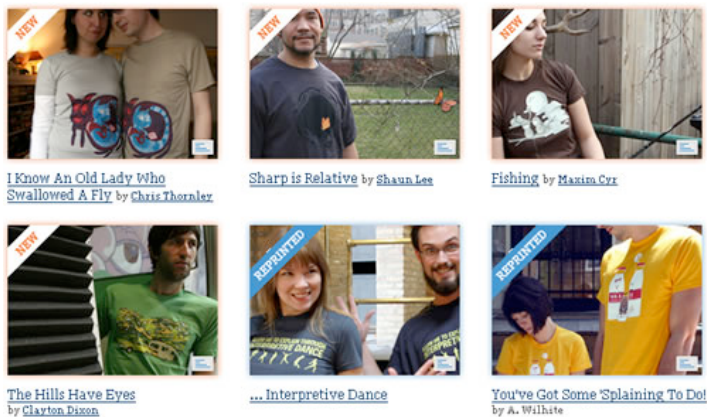
4. TRYSUMERS



Hate the name, love the trend. TRYSUMERS incorporates transient, experienced consumers who are becoming more daring in how they consume, due to a myriad of (sometimes) unrelated societal and technological changes. Here's our beta-definition:

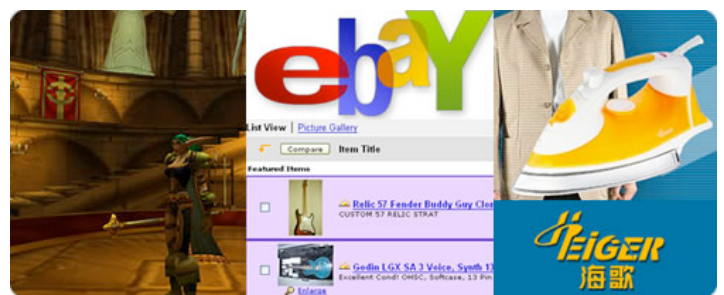
TRYSUMERS: "Freed from the shackles of convention and scarcity, immune to most advertising, and enjoying full access to information, reviews, and navigation, experienced consumers are trying out new appliances, new services, new flavors, new authors, new destinations, new artists, new relationships, new *anything* with post mass-market gusto."

To get you going, here are some observations on what's encouraging a growing number of consumers to morph into TRYSUMERS:



Living in a world of **abundance** means there's actually loads to try out, and it doesn't hurt that millions of members of **GENERATION C(ONTENT)** are adding to the pile of unique, original niche content and products. Niche of course being the new mass, as consumer societies are now about standing out, not conformity, which in turn means an encouragement to explore one's often broader-than-assumed taste.

- As saturated, experienced consumers can draw on plenty of past experiences, and knowing many more will follow, it's easier to **cope with possible disappointment** stemming from trying out the unknown. For example, if one's weekend trip is spoilt by bad weather, knowing that another seven trips will follow just this year will make it more digestible.
- Not only are more consumers making more money than ever before, lots of products and experiences essential to a TRY-SUMER lifestyle and infrastructure have actually become **cheap as hell**. Asia Air, EasyJet and Virgin Air: need we say more?
- Navigation is the new laissez faire ;-). It's less risky to try out new destinations, paths, routes, or neighborhoods when equipped with a Garmin or TomTom. Sales of personal navigation devices (PNDs) in Europe and the US have doubled to 10 million units between 2005 and 2006, and with the online world and GPS slowly converging, anywhere/anytime navigation will eventually be a given for adventurous TRYSUMERS. You figure out the ramifications for the world of leisure, but may we humbly suggest that off the beaten path will never be the same?
- In the same vein, aforementioned TRANSPARENCY TYR-ANNY is another engine behind the rise of TRYSUMERS. Reviews on anything, anytime remove the risk of buying a lemon, and will entice TRYSUMERS to explore the **Long Tail** with confidence like there is no tomorrow. (Ha, and you thought the Long Tail had disappeared into 2006's chronicles.)
- Since advertising is as trusted as a certain president with two more years to go, trying out and sampling is the new advertising. An entire TRYVERTISING infrastructure, from 30 second samples on iTunes to firms specializing in relevant product placement is now in place, enabling consumers to try before they buy. Find loads of examples in our **TRYVERTISING** briefing, in which we stated that "introducing yourself and your products by letting people experience and try them out first, is a very civilized and effective way to show some respect." Amen.



The list of observations goes on:

- Quality is hygiene these days: even TV sets or irons from obscure brands found at WalMart work flawlessly. Another incentive to try out the unknown.

- An entire generation is growing up as gamers, and games are nothing but invitations to be daring, and try, try, try until you find a solution and succeed.

- Building on the disappointment theme: as we pointed out in our [TRANSUMERISM](#) briefing, a global C2C infrastructure is now in place, from eBay to classifieds, enabling (or even encouraging) TRYSUMERS to quickly dispose of what's no longer needed.

From Daniel Nissanoff, author of [FutureShop](#): "An interesting phenomenon that somebody shared with me was that, as eBay began to grow, people began to buy musical instruments, especially guitars, much more frequently, because they weren't as worried about taking up the wrong instrument or buying the wrong instrument and getting stuck with it. The auction culture is beginning to empower the consumer to reach because they can afford better items since they're not paying the whole ticket for them. They know there's going to be residual value at the end of the day and they're willing to take more chances because they know there's an exit if they made a mistake." (Source: Daniel Nissanoff [interviewed](#) by Tom Peters.)

- More to try out, err... follow next month, in our dedicated February 2007 TRYSUMER briefing!

5. THE GLOBAL BRAIN



We've spoken about THE GLOBAL BRAIN before: all of the world's intelligence and experience, fully networked, incorporating not only the usual suspects like gurus, professors and scientists, but the experiences and skills of hundreds of millions of smart consumers as well. With the 'shortage of talent' that every brand on every continent seems to fear in 2007, tapping into THE GLOBAL BRAIN seems a, well, no-brainer. This year, expect many corporations, small and big, to aggressively court the 1% of most creative and experienced individuals roaming the globe.

For inspiration and tips on how to co-create with consumers, re-read our [CUSTOMER-MADE](#) and [GENERATION C\(ASH\)](#) briefings. We'll be keeping a close eye on these trends, publishing updates and new related trends like HOBBYNOMICS and CROWD CLOUT in the next few months. Oh, and as a self-proclaimed 'trend firm obsessed with [INNOVATION OVERLOAD](#)', it's time to really practice what we preach: next month will see the launch of our entirely revamped [spotters network](#), including an elaborate and generous reward system. Hey - if we can do it, so can you! Let's get cracking!

Need even more input and inspiration?
[trendwatching.com's 2008 Trend Report](#)
covers 12 themes, 24 trends
& over 200 examples.

(Download now to start using it within minutes.)



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Opportunities



Sure, there's much, much more in 2007 that's worthy of your attention. But for now, take any of the five trends above, sit down with your colleagues or team, and figure out how they may impact your business, your brand, your job:

- **Vision**—Do they have the potential to influence or shape your company's vision?
- **New business concepts**—Can they point you to new business concepts, or entirely new ventures?
- **New products, services, experiences**—Can they inspire you to add 'something' new for a certain customer segment?
- **Marketing, advertising, PR**—Will they help you to speak the language of those consumers that are already 'living' a trend?

As always, we're counting on the entrepreneurs amongst you to turn some of these predictions into self-fulfilling prophecies ;-)