

Share *Options*

The internet era is enabling a fundamental change in how society operates: the culture of 'me' is being replaced by a culture of 'we'. Rachel Botsman and Lauren Anderson investigate the forces of 'collaborative consumption'

For decades, we have believed that individual wealth was something to be accumulated and protected, and our personal value was measured by how much more we had than those around us. In our relentless pursuit for more, we have fundamentally ended up with less.

But a powerful change is happening; one that recognizes the value of experiences and human relationships over anonymous transactions and the endless acquisition of more stuff. A culture of 'me' is being replaced with a culture of 'we' as we enter the start of a big shift away from the 20th century fuelled by hyper-consumption towards the 21st century, an age of 'collaborative consumption'.

New technologies – from smart phones to GPS to social networks – are enabling the sharing and exchange of all kinds of assets in ways and on a scale never possible before. From car sharing (WhipCar) to social lending (Zopa) to peer-to-peer travel (Crashpadder), collaborative consumption is not a niche trend but a new culture and economy rapidly disrupting sectors and starting to reinvent not just what we consume but how we consume.

Below are some hot start-ups and ideas of how you can incorporate collaborative consumption into your own life across its three different systems – product service systems, redistribution markets, and collaborative lifestyles.

Product Service Systems

Product services systems are based on the idea of paying for the benefit of using a product without needing to own the product outright. If you have used Streetcar or are a member or LoveFilm you have experienced the benefits of access over ownership.

WhipCar

Two out of five UK households own cars that get driven less than 5,000 miles per year, while costing the owner roughly £5,500 a year to run. It makes sense to put the expensive 'idling capacity' of underused vehicles to work and make a bit of extra money in the process. WhipCar is a peer-to-peer,

car-sharing platform enabling people to rent out their cars to their neighbours. It's a win-win for renters and owners by providing people with convenient 'pay-as-you-use' access to cars near to where they live or work, and providing owners the opportunity to earn between £45-50 per booking. As Vinay Gupta, co-founder of WhipCar, commented, "Whipcar helps people make better use of the cars already on the road." Launched in 2010, WhipCar already provides members access to over 1,000 cars across the UK, from London to the Orkney Isles.
www.whipcar.com

Barclays Cycle Hire

As the fastest growing form of public transportation worldwide, bicycle sharing allows commuters to pick up a bike at Point A and leave it at Point B when they are done. Barclays Cycle Hire, launched in July 2010, offers 5,000 bikes available for sharing at more than 315 docking stations across the city. The system provides an efficient alternative to unnecessary short-distance car trips with up to 20 per cent of bicycle-sharing trips taken directly replacing car travel. Along with getting cars off the road, bike sharing members taking a 15-minute ride to and from work every day can burn up to 5kg of fat in a year.
<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/cycling/14808.aspx>

Ecomodo

When 80 per cent of the stuff we own is used less than once a month, it makes sense to start looking for alternatives to buying new all the time. Peer-to-peer rental platform Ecomodo provides a way for people to gain access to the things they need just for the time they need them – by borrowing or renting them from their neighbours, friends and work colleagues. Whilst an obvious way to save money and reduce the amount of clutter around the home, Ecomodo co-founder Meriel Lenfestey believes that the benefits of this exchange are far deeper. "The simple act of lending an item brings great personal, social and environmental rewards. Not only has the borrower been able to equip



ILLUSTRATIONS: DAVID HUMPHRIES



themselves at very low cost, but two members of the community have connected, felt the satisfaction of demonstrating trust, and collectively reduced their environmental impact.”
www.ecomodo.com

Collaborative Lifestyles

Collaborative lifestyles are ideas based on people with similar interests coming together to share and exchange less tangible assets such as time, space, skills, and money.

Zopa

Peer-to-peer, or social, lending, is making waves in the personal financial sector, with tens of thousands of people choosing to avoid the costs and complexities of traditional banks, and instead borrow or lend directly from their peers. Zopa, the leading social lending company in the UK, has processed over £125m in loans to date, with borrowers paying interest rates on average 20 per cent lower than at a traditional bank, and lenders enjoying rates of returns between 8-15 per cent. If lending money to total strangers sounds like a risky idea, just consider the default rates. The Zopa default rate is less than 0.7 per cent compared to 9.5 per cent on credit cards. Zopa's CEO Giles Andrews attributes this to the transparency and trust fostered by borrowing from real people over faceless institutions. “Zopa members tell us that borrowing from Zopa feels more like being invested in than being sold a product,” he says.
uk.zopa.com

Landshare

There is a growing resurgence in the UK of people wanting to grow their own food. The problem is that many people lack the space, time or skills to do so. In the UK there are more than 100,000 people on the waiting list for allotments. This is where Landshare comes in. It matches Mr Jones with spare back garden space with Mrs Smith, a wannabe grower. Since Landshare

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launched in 2008, almost 60,000 people have signed-up. “Landshare is about empowering people to find a solution to allotment waiting lists and enabling them to grow fresh fruit and veg,” says Jane Lucy, producer of Channel 4's Landshare. The scheme also means that members reconnect with their neighbours, creating a community connection over a shared interest.
www.landshare.net

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Crashpadder

Instead of booking a hotel next time you travel, why not book a 'home' away from home through a site like Crashpadder? With 'crashpads' available in over 1,500 cities around the world, the peer-to-peer accommodation platform allows people to rent out their spare rooms, apartments or whole houses online to travellers for 70-80 per cent less than the average chain hotel. But while cost may be the initial attractor, Crashpadder founder Stephen Rapoport emphasises that it's the unique experiences that brings people back:

Redistribution Markets

Redistribution markets redistribute used or pre-owned goods from where they are not needed to somewhere or someone where they are. eBay was the grandfather of this idea but now there are thousands of marketplaces launching where people are selling, swapping or gifting everything from books to clothes to baby goods. With the growth of network technologies that enable efficient matching between what one person needs and what one person or people have, we can almost instantly overcome the 'coincidence of wants' trading problem that prevented these ideas scaling in the past.

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Swishing involves swapping events for fashion-conscious consumers concerned about the expense of a fashion habit and the environmental effects of 'fast fashion' production. Lucy O'Shea, founder of Swishing, says, "Save money, save the planet, have a party!" At Swishing events, guests bring quality items they no longer love or have use for to add to the Swishing Rail, and get to take home a fabulous new item in exchange.
<http://swishing.com/>



"The ability to experience a new city like a local, getting the inside scoop on where to eat, where to shop and where to sightsee is invaluable. It's not something you can get from a hotel."
www.crashpadder.com

Somewhereto

Other than schools, parks and shopping malls, options for 18- to 25-year-olds looking for a space to hang out or work on something they love are limited. Yet all around us spaces lay unused or underused – sporting venues on non-game days, unused meeting rooms in offices, performance spaces etc. Somewhereto aims to match young people with underutilized spaces within their community to pursue their passions. Jonathan Simmons, managing director of PublicZone, an agency that helped to create somewhereto explained how "it is an example of a new type of youth service, one that provides tools and facilitates young people and their communities to make changes."
www.somewhereto.com

Netcyclr

Our houses have got bigger, family sizes have got smaller and yet we need to rent more space to fit in all our stuff. There is approximately 26 million square feet of storage in the UK, averaging 0.44 square foot per head of population, full of things that people don't use or even remember they own. Netcyclr enables users to easily exchange unwanted items for things they really want. The system works using a unique matching technology that creates 'trade rings' involving multiple people and multiple products.
www.netcyclr.co.uk

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Swishing

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Lourish

For Dave Bowers, it was a surplus of cucumbers that inspired him to found Lourish, a site that connects the people who are producing their own food with local people who want to share what they produce. Lourish's online redistribution process aims to reduce 'food miles' and avoid unnecessary waste of surplus crops. "The Lourish ethos is: 'I have more than I need; want to share?'" says Bowers. Members exchange more than just their excess vegetables, instead meeting up to share advice and ideas. Lourish is a great example of how we are using the internet to get off the internet, turning virtual communities into face-to-face interactions.
<http://lourish.com/>

For more information, please visit
www.collaborativeconsumption.com
What's Mine Is Yours: How Collaborative Consumption Is Changing The Way We Live (Collins, £12.99) by Rachel Botsman and Roo Rogers is out now