



PLAY TIME

The new trend in luxury buying is 'self-actualisation', or buying enhanced life experiences Photographs: Beth Evans

ADULT TREEHOUSE

The pleasure of being ensconced in a treehouse, high up and inaccessible to the world, is not confined to children. Now, adults can have their own treehouse, 'with showers, or a small wood-burning stove, or even electric heaters,' says Dan Garner, tree surgeon-turned-house-builder and owner of Top Notch Treehouses. 'The power can be run by armoured cable from the house – or, if the location is inaccessible such as in the middle of a wood – a stand-alone generator or wind-power can be used.'

The growth of the 'treehouse-you-can-sleep-in' market – surely the ultimate adult toy – is symptomatic of a world-wide trend, according to Pam Danziger, President of Unity Marketing, a specialist in luxury goods market research: 'With all their physical

needs satisfied, 'butterfly' consumers are turning from the pursuit of materialism to enhanced life experiences,' she says. 'To satisfy this craving, they need to achieve self-actualisation. Luxury marketers need to find a way to tap into the potential of self-actualisation, with a focus on selling a feeling or an experience.'

Luxury experimental marketing is certainly hot globally right now. In America, for example, designer Chris Madden has joined JC Penney as they turn their business towards luxury for the masses. The luxury home furnishings market has remained remarkably steady in a time of global unease. In 2002, its value was £223.9bn, up 4.1 per cent from £214.97bn in 2001. And the adult treehouse provides the perfect example of the home and garden product as a life transforming purchase.

As Dan Garner puts it: 'People have a greater degree of imagination these days. They are travelling more, and they need more room to explore.' The people who buy his treehouses 'tend to want them for a purpose; for a place to eat or to use as a study.' Cost ranges from £6,000 for a simple child's treehouse, to £40,000 for the deluxe version with cooking and bathing facilities.

If you have the money, even the lack of a tree presents no problem, as the house can be supported on giant wooden stilts. www.topnotchtreehouses.co.uk; www.unitymarketingonline.com

WORDS: PENNY DASH PICTURE: POSED BY MODELS



THIS ADULT TREEHOUSE WILL LAST FOR THE LIFE OF THE TREE. IT CAN BE USED AS A STUDY, AS A GUEST LODGE, OR SOMEWHERE TO MEDITATE

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DECADENT BED LINEN

The leading arbiter of US luxury taste, *The Robb Report*, advises its readership that if a man spends over £1000 on a suit, he should spend the same amount on set of sheets that will guarantee more pleasurable nights.

The luxury market seems to agree that gourmet-sex-through-sheet-purchase is a viable consumer dream, with brands like Vera Wang, Kate Spade and Gucci jumping on the luxury linen bandwagon by producing exclusive, own-brand sets in the last year.

Swiss-based Unity Marketing reports that, in 2001, the global linens market has shown buoyant growth to £24.2bn, with the luxury end estimated to be worth between £4.4 and £5bn and achieving above-average growth.

Amongst luxury customers, annual spend on linens amounts to £295 or so, with the most recent purchase costing over £118. This finding implies that the typical luxury consumer shops two-and-a-half times per annum for linens. While incidence purchase is higher among the younger consumers, the more mature consumer spends more annually. For example, those under 35 spent on average around £177 on luxury linens, while those from 35-49 averaged £236. Those aged 50-69 clearly decided that their seniority demanded a treat; they spent, on average, almost £300.

'Luxury linen shoppers are equally split between making an impulse purchase or waiting for a long time before buying,' says Pam Danziger, President of Unity Marketing. 'They don't feel the need to do significant product research, as they do with furniture appliances or electronics.' And they tend to shop alone, looking for 'unique designs through which they can express their creativity, combining mix-and-match pillowcases, duvets, dust ruffles and comforters. Luxurious touch and feel is often the deciding factor.'

LUXURY LINENS REPRESENT AN
EXTREMELY AFFORDABLE ENHANCED
LIFE EXPERIENCE BUY