

WHAT'S YOUR PURCHASE PERSONALITY?

Is haute couture your weakness? Can't say no to a sale? Suss out your spending psyche to find out why and how your retail therapy is working for you.

BY MAVIS NGUI

▶ We've been said to be a shopping nation. Our little island is flooded with huge malls, we queue overnight to be the first at new launches, and the Great Singapore Sale is one of our biggest events every year. Yet even though it's been claimed that 70 percent of Singaporeans are shopaholics, we don't all spend the same. Some of us zoom in on the clearance rack, others prefer to splurge on bespoke items. Our shopping behaviour can be indicative of issues and problems brewing under the surface, and according to the Shulman Centre of Addictions and Disorders, there are a total of seven different shopping personalities. Find yours here.

IF YOUR CATCHPHRASE IS ...

"Only the best for the best."

YOU'RE A ...

TROPHY SHOPPER

Limited edition, one-of-a-kind, and bespoke are just some of the phrases a promoter needs to throw out to get you hooked. You can't stand having something that everyone has, and you're willing to fork out the extra buck for exclusivity. From your La Mer moisturiser to your Bang and Olufsen speakers, every subtle item you own needs to be top-notch. You're always shopping for the perfect something — whether it's this season's hottest perspex clutch or statement necklace.

Why You Do It: "The endless search for perfection in material goods suggests a void you're trying to fill," says life coach Loo Mei Yee. "Chances are you lack beauty in your life, and shop to find aesthetically pleasing things to make you happy."

Save Your Plastic: No matter how much you want it to, the world isn't made out of Louis Vuitton suitcases. The high you get from buying highly coveted items can be achieved by seeing beauty in other forms. Loo suggests soaking in a live gig or unorthodox art — that way, you'll get your fill of refined style without blowing your budget.



IF YOUR CATCHPHRASE IS ...

"It's on me."

YOU'RE AN ...

IMAGE SHOPPER

Not to be confused with the trophy shopper, the image shopper buys extremely expensive items that are as luxurious as they are visible. You splurge on things people can't miss: the exclusive spa membership, the Hermès Birkin and the diamond-studded Rolex. You will always spend more on your handbag than your wallet, because everyone sees your bag but hardly anyone pays attention to your wallet. At dinners, you fight for every bill even though the omakase for nine means you'll be living on cup noodles for the rest of the month (when no one's watching, of course).

Why You Do It: "You live with deep-seated insecurities, and you secretly feel inferior to others even if you're really on par," says Loo. "You compensate by spending on things that make you feel superior because wealth impresses you, and you assume it impresses others, too."

Save Your Plastic: Creating an image that isn't authentic isn't going to help matters and may even attract the wrong company. You shouldn't have to impress your friends or care about what strangers think of you. Why are you trying so hard? "Spend more time with genuine friends who appreciate you for who you are rather than what you have," says Loo.



If you head to a store every time things go wrong, you're going to run up debts bigger than your issues in no time.

IF YOUR CATCHPHRASE IS ...

“When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping.”

YOU'RE A ...

COMPULSIVE SHOPPER

Whenever you get into a trying situation, the first thought that pops into your head isn't how you can solve it but how you can get out of there pronto ... and to the nearest mall. Shopping offers a brief respite from your problems and it doesn't even matter what you splash on — it's the high of the buy that thrills you. In desperate times, snacks, a pair of socks or even scented air freshener at the petrol kiosk is enough to make you feel better.

Why You Do It: “When stressed out, compulsive shoppers have a need to be in an environment where they feel safe,” says Loo. “Shopping makes them feel as if they have regained control over the situation and that everything will turn out okay.”

Save Your Plastic: If you head to a store every time things go wrong, you're going to run up debts bigger than your issues in no time. “The next time your mood dips, rather than race to Orchard Road, put your trainers and a power mix on,” suggests Loo. “What you really need is to de-stress. A high-octane workout can give you the same high as a handbag spree and you get toned, not broke.”

When shopping, always have a coffee, credit card, and control.

IF YOUR CATCHPHRASE IS ...

“If it fits, get one in every colour.”

YOU'RE A ...

COLLECTION SHOPPER

Sets thrill you. A dainty teapot may catch your eye, but accompanying teacups and spoons are what seals the deal and makes you spend. Everything from your toiletries to your underwear match. When you find a staple piece you like, you get it in every colour available. The idea of buying an incomplete set repulses you — you'll rather wait for the next shipment than bring it home. Ugh.

Why You Do It: “Not only do you have a strong need to own things, you also have an innate fear of things running out,” says Loo. “Hence the relentless stockpiling and insistence on sets being complete.”

Save Your Plastic: At the start of every year, set a specified limit on the number of sets you can own, else your indulgence will cause you to land more things than you need. “To limit yourself, start an account exclusively to spend on your collections,” says Loo. “Put a small cut of your salary into it every month, and only buy sets with the funds from there.”

IF YOUR CATCHPHRASE IS ...

“If everyone loves it, it must be good.”

YOU'RE A ...

CO-DEPENDENT SHOPPER

While an image shopper spends money to elevate her status, a co-dependent shopper does it to be part of the crowd. You shop to gain love and approval, whether from your peers or significant others. There are two aspects of this personality. First, when people around you buy into a certain brand or product, you join the bandwagon to belong. Second, you often shower your loved ones with gifts to show them how you feel in the hopes that they'll reciprocate.

Why You Do It: “Looking for social acceptance through monetary means is a coping mechanism whenever you get rejected or criticised,” says Loo. “Usually, such people have low

self-esteem and tend to suffer from self-doubt.”

Save Your Plastic: If there's anything cheesy rom-coms can teach us, it's that money can't buy love. If you're looking for acceptance within your peers, look for common topics to connect — there is more to friendship than simply liking the same things. Holding your friend's hair back after she's had one too many Martinis, being there for her in the wake of a bad break up, or even having a girls' night in will build a bond stronger than your matching Fendi baguette purses. “If you want to show your loved ones how much you truly care about them, don't spend money — spend quality time together,” says Loo.

IF YOUR CATCHPHRASE IS ...

“To the clearance rack we go!”

YOU'RE A ...

BARGAIN SHOPPER

You're a hunter on a mission to score the best deals. The Great Singapore Sale is your annual pilgrimage and you have a calendar of all the stores' schedules. Needless to say, you're able to calculate exactly how much discount you get to the nearest cent. Quantity, not quality, matters — you'd rather get 10 crappy outfits than one amazing designer look. Scoring great finds and value for money deals is a matter of pride with you.

Why You Do It: “You find security in volume, and usually you're a pack rat with lots of clutter at home,” says Loo. “You place value in accumulating things you don't really need because it satisfies you. More is more after all.”

Save Your Plastic: The drawbacks of this personality may not be as



dire as the others, because you'll usually spend less. However, it's possible that you might shop even more to compensate for the lower satisfaction you get from discounted goods. At the end of the day, you'll always end up with loads of things you don't want, so if you're really after the thrill of a good deal use it to your benefit, says Loo. Instead of shopping for yourself, make a business out of investing in value finds and reselling them online.

IF YOUR CATCHPHRASE IS ...

“Buy first, think later.”

YOU'RE A ...

BULIMIC SHOPPER

You shop on impulse, buying whatever you want on sight, and you can spend your entire paycheck within a few hours. So you've got a wardrobe full of neon pink leggings and fringe dresses, but soon after purchasing, buyer's remorse hits — you realise that you don't really want that gold spangly catsuit, and you can barely afford to keep it anyway. You're a familiar face at the returns counter, stuck in a rut of spending ... then seeing the light.

Why You Do It: “You're fickle — your goal is to keep all your options open,” says Loo. “The act of buying and returning says volumes about your adversity to commitments. You can't make up your mind, and you hate the idea of being tied down.”

Save Your Plastic: Sure, most clothing stores in Singapore now offer returns on credit ... but not refunds, which means you're still splashing the cash on things you might not necessarily want. “Instead of shopping at conventional stores, organise monthly clothes swaps with your girlfriends,” suggests Loo. “You can get rid of stuff you don't really like, and everyone gets to jazz up their wardrobe at no extra cost!” ■

One in every five Singaporeans bought their last purchase because it was on sale.

SOURCE: HARRIS INTERACTIVE, 2011