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**The Talk**

“ It was a special night for me and the best way to say goodbye to the club **Vladimir Smicer** ex-Liverpool footballer **P30**



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SATURDAY 21	SUNDAY 22	MONDAY 23	TUESDAY 24	WEDNESDAY 25
PARTLY CLOUDY HEAT INDEX: 01 SUNRISE: 0649 SUNSET: 1816	PARTLY CLOUDY HEAT INDEX: 02 SUNRISE: 0648 SUNSET: 1817	PARTLY CLOUDY HEAT INDEX: 02 SUNRISE: 0647 SUNSET: 1818	SUNNY & WARM HEAT INDEX: 02 SUNRISE: 0646 SUNSET: 1818	SUNNY & WARM HEAT INDEX: 02 SUNRISE: 0646 SUNSET: 1819
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# 24/7

# THE BUSINESS OF Life

## Borrow a bit of luxury

Men may never understand a woman's obsession with bags. But the success of one business concept might give them a reason to cheer, say its promoters



Many husbands thank us and tell us we've saved them fortunes

Sarah Eccleston, Mapochette.com

**DUBAI David Tusing**  
If you can't buy it, rent it. As business philosophies go, this one, promoted by two businesswomen in Dubai, is proving to be quite a hit amongst their target audience. And thanks to the current economic scenario, it's catching on fast. Barely nine months into the business, British partners Danielle Wilson and Sarah Eccleston are saying their luxury bag-rental website, Mapochette.com, has grown so much that fans outside the UAE are now requesting a similar services. "We went from an average 100 unique hits a day six months ago to about 2,500," says Wilson. "We now have more than 10,000 active women on our database - that's more than 100 per cent growth. Deliveries average about four to eight a day."



Although not an entirely original concept, Eccleston says the model has caught the fancy of UAE-based women of all ages and backgrounds, "who want to keep stylish but who are not willing to shell out a fortune". "It's the perfect opportunity for them to own for a day, or a few days, something they might never buy themselves," she adds. Popularised by US-based Bagborroworsteal.com, which gained popularity after being featured in the movie *Sex and the City*, the concept is rather simple [see box]: Customers log on to the website, browse through categories and choose their favourite bag. They then pay rental and delivery costs online and the bag is delivered to their doorstep the next day. Borrowers can specify the length of rental or have the bag exchanged for another one. What's more? If they fancy owning one, they could have it at a lower price. But Mapochette.com, goes



**BAG LADIES** Business is booming for Danielle Wilson (l) and Sarah Eccleston. ASHRAF AL AMIRA

one step further, explains Wilson. "You don't just get the bag delivered to you. It comes in a nicely packed box with pretty ribbons and we've partnered with a number of companies to offer free cosmetics and other accessories," she says. "So you actually get a lot more in return. It's all about creating an idea of luxury, to make you feel pampered and has an added value." The company currently delivers throughout the UAE with designer bag brands including Christian Dior, Jimmy Choo, Manolo Blahnik and Gucci. While the retail price of these luxury items range from Dh3,500 to Dh11,000, renting one would

only cost a fraction of that, says Eccleston. The rental price ranges from Dh159 to Dh500 a day depending on the price of the bag. "We've lately started introducing brands and designs that are not available here," says the marketing executive and mum-of-three who shuttles between Italy and the UK. "And we get new stock every three months. My being based abroad ensures that we have the latest from London, Paris or Milan. We are currently working on partnerships to include more exclusive designers from Europe that do not retail here." The website is already associated with popular locally-based designers and is looking

to further explore that concept, says business partner Wilson. "Fashion designer Aisha Ramadan has created her first handbag exclusively for us, which is available to rent and Zufi Alexander will partner with us for some of our future events," she says. "In turn, we promote them on the website." The pair also organise what they call "brand sampling" events where a group of women with similar interests is given a sneak-peek of new collections by their partnered designers. International designers are also wanting to find out more, says Wilson. "We are in talks right now with a luxury Italian brand to sell their

products exclusively on our website. There are many brands that don't want to set up a store here yet, but want to enter the market. It is the perfect platform for them." Talks are on to auction some exclusive Birkin bags, she adds. A handbag design made famous by French luxury leather goods company Hermes, the price of a Birkin bag usually starts at Dh30,000. Allegedly, the waiting list is over two years. Wilson, who's been a resident of Dubai for 13 years, says the idea for Mapochette.com came about while she was still working as a marketing and PR professional. "There were so many events we had to go to and

each time we wanted to make an impression. Obviously we couldn't afford to buy new bags to suit every outfit. Then we heard about this website in the US and thought of replicating it." By June 2008, Wilson and Eccleston - best friends for 10 years - had a website ready to go live. Ever since, their approach has ensured the website's popularity, says Wilson. "We sometimes go with the driver, interact with customers directly over the phone and get their feedback. We also help out some of our clients who have no clue what to wear to an event - whether it's a wedding, a fashion show or a business event."

- 1** Go online and browse for the handbag you want. You have the option to search by colour, price range or brand. Decide which bag you would like and click "Rent".
- 2** Your chosen handbag will be gift packed and delivered to your door if you book the day before by 12 noon. Your credit card will be charged the cost of the rental fee and a Dh15 delivery charge which includes delivery and pick up.
- 3** Show off your bag with style. Keep it for as long as you wish - a day or three days. You can also change your look as often as you want. Return your Dior and order the new Jimmy Choo.
- 4** A driver will call you on the day your bag is to be returned and collect it from the address to which it was delivered. If you wish to keep the bag for longer, just call a day before your return date to see if it hasn't already been booked by someone else. Then it's yours to keep for longer.

Graphic: L.Chumpitaz