

HEALTH

# For longer lasting happiness, spend up on experiences

Material possessions have their place, but cannot beat the satisfaction of travel and education

Sasha Gonzales  
life@scmp.com

Buying new clothes or gadgets may put a smile on your face, but the joy you get from owning them is superficial and fleeting. For a deep and long-lasting sense of contentment, experts suggest you make experiential purchases instead.

When Amira Morgan spends her hard-earned money, she is more likely to do so on experiences than on material goods. The thirty-something says that while material things have a place in her life, they don't make her happy. Instead, she gets tremendous satisfaction and enjoyment from other things that challenge her, shift her perspective and expose her to new ideas, such as travel.

**“We adapt very quickly to our possessions so they soon lose their appeal”**

TIMOTHY SHARP, PSYCHOLOGIST

“Experiences help form your identity,” says Morgan, who works in marketing and communications. “Experiencing new places and cultures, for instance, is what helps you evolve as a person and influences who and what you become. No material thing can do that.”

In addition to travel, Morgan also spends her money on wellness experiences and education, such as language courses. This is her way of investing in her own personal growth and long-term emotional well-being. Such experiences give her a positive buzz that she describes as “addictive”.

The science seems to back her up. A 2009 San Francisco State University study revealed that people who spent money on experiences rather than on “stuff”, felt happier and believed that their money was better spent. Another study, carried out by

researchers at the University of British Columbia and published in 2015 in *Social Psychology and Personality Science* found that, while the study participants derived more frequent momentary happiness from material goods, the momentary happiness they derived from experiences was more intense.

Even waiting for experiences is thought to make us happy. A 2014 study by Cornell University psychology professor Thomas Gilovich revealed that consumers felt happier just thinking about experiential purchases, compared to not thinking about any purchases at all, whereas a material goods purchase did not improve moods. Hong Kong-based company Chosen Experiences, founded in 2013, offers travel and learning packages that help its clients develop self-awareness and boost their physical and mental performance. Its typical customers are busy urban professionals who want more from life than just amassing material possessions.

The company's programmes include exploring the remote Troll Peninsula in northern Iceland; trying adventurous activities like surfing and canyoning in Bali; and connecting with nature among the Franschhoek Mountains outside Cape Town.

Company co-founder John Stanton says the experiences aim to help participants achieve peak physical and mental well-being through challenging and stimulating adventures to boost learning ability and create “personal evolution”.

Psychologist Timothy Sharp, chief happiness officer at the Happiness Institute in Sydney, Australia, suggests several reasons experiences generate more happiness than material possessions. For one, the joy and memories we get from experiences and encounters tend to last a lifetime, whereas the thrill we get from acquiring possessions is only fleeting.

“We adapt very quickly to our possessions so they soon lose their appeal, but the experiences we have stay with us for longer. In fact, they increase in influence over time by way of positive memories,” he says.



Experts say travel to exotic locations is good for the soul. Photo: Alamy

THE NAKED TRUTH

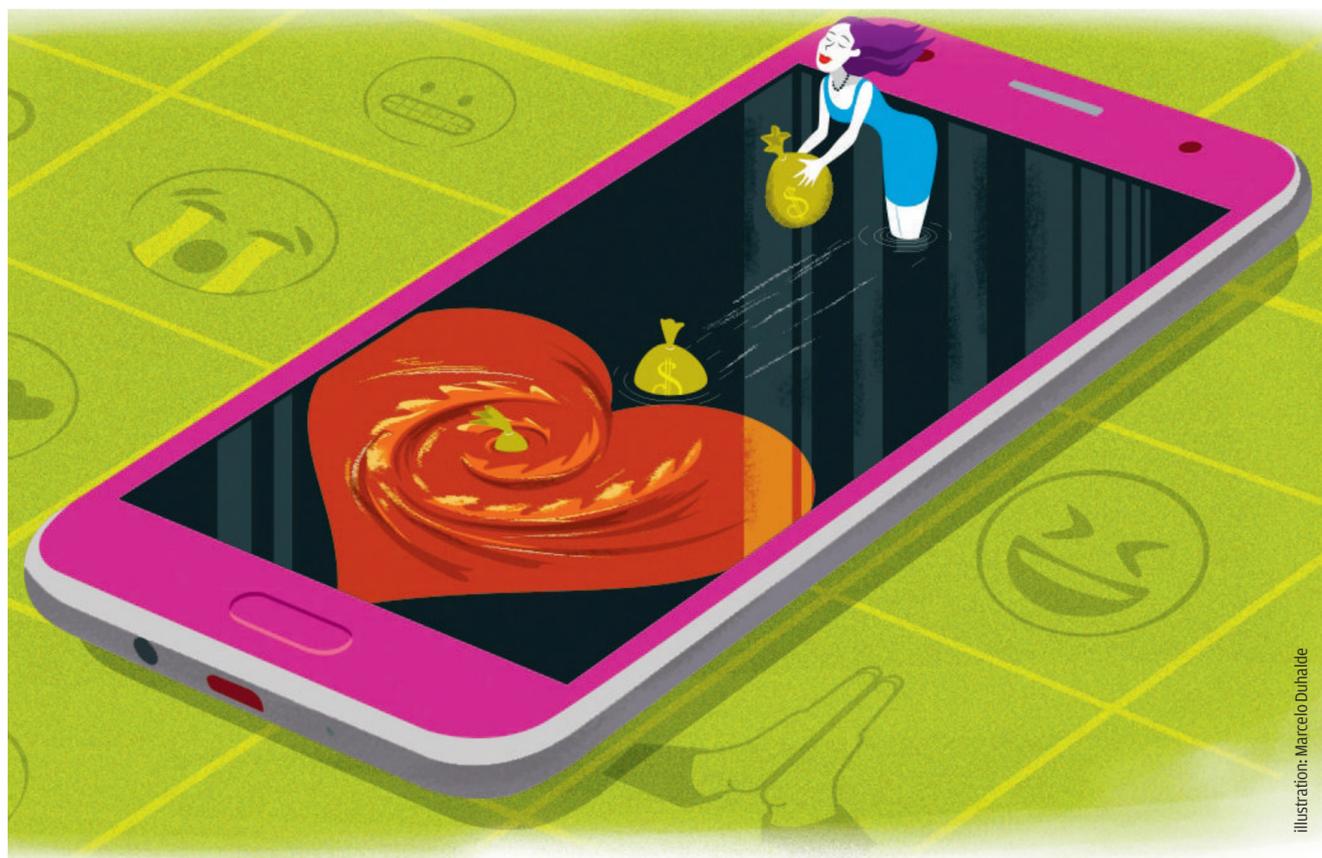


Illustration: Marcelo Duhalde

# LOVE AND OTHER RUSES: HOW TO SNIFF OUT AN ONLINE RAT

As Hong Kong women continue to fall victim to romance traps, experts advise what to beware of

Luisa Tam  
luisa.tam@scmp.com

Who doesn't yearn to be loved? Another Hong Kong woman recently learned the hard way that love can be illusory and extremely costly.

The accounts supervisor, in her 50s, was not only conned out of her life savings but also money borrowed from family, friends and banks amounting to HK\$26.4 million in just 18 months. It was Hong Kong's biggest online love scam in terms of money lost.

Earlier this month it was reported that another woman gave HK\$14 million over eight years to her long-distance lover to maintain what she thought was a committed romantic relationship, even though it existed only online.

Naive? Desperate? Don't be so sure. A few of my female acquaintances were almost duped in similar scams. If not for friends and relatives warning of potential love traps, they would have joined Hong Kong's romance scam statistics.

The latest victim was among 159 people similarly conned in the first four months of this year – 119 of them lost a total of nearly HK\$76 million in the first quarter.

It could happen to many of us because these fraudsters prey on women and men who show any sign of emotional vulnerability.

According to Paul Wong Wai-ching, associate professor in the department of social work and social administration at the University of Hong Kong, romance scam criminals isolate their



Mozaic founders Carol DeCandido and Jacqueline Chia. Photo: Handout

individuals have fewer friends and limited networks to warn them against potential harm or help them check out profiles of new acquaintances. Or maybe these individuals simply like to seek out more harmful relationships,” Wong says.

Someone with few friends they can count on and confide in is a perfect target, says Carol DeCandido, managing partner of Mozaic, a Hong Kong dating agency catering to the over 40s.

Her social networking club has a women-to-men membership ratio of 75-25 per cent.

“Women are more daring and willing to venture out into the dating wilderness and explore different opportunities to find partners, more so than men,” she says.

Online dating does not have to be scary, just be cautious, says Jacqueline Chia, Mozaic's co-founder.

“It's nice to be complimented, especially by someone you like. But beware of those who are overly sweet and exceedingly accommodating because maybe they are trying to be someone they are not and acting to be the ideal person you are looking for,” she says.

Scammers will usually follow a winning formula. First, they create a fake online profile and often pretend to be professionals working in engineering, finance or the military; the latter allows them to justify being overseas, away from their potential victim's country of residence. Some serve up sob stories that their wives have died tragically, leaving them to raise a child alone.

“If you can't meet the person face to face, make sure you video

goods or services that don't materialise. It's depressing to realise that despite the high-level of connectivity in modern society, an increasing number of people still feel isolated and yearn for companionship.

Researchers believe such criminal activities, also known as mass-marketing frauds, are typically conducted by international criminal organisations, which operate through online dating sites and social media.

Most victims are female, middle-aged and well-educated. And besides being typically more impulsive and more trustworthy, one intriguing finding shows that these victims tend to be “less kind”.

Wong says this might be more suitably interpreted as “less socially approachable”.

“Perhaps, the kindness is related to the fact that these

chat with them online,” says Chia. “Fraudsters would always avoid having real contact to expose their faces.

Even when you have managed to pin them down for a Skype chat, they would use the excuse of a weak internet connection and then put a fake photo up to just chat online without any visual. If that happens, it should definitely raise a red flag.”

Recovering from a bad relationship or break-up is already difficult, but being scammed online is devastating and isolating.

“It is difficult for victims to rebuild their social networks after the scam,” says Wong. “This might explain why victims of romance scams are less likely to go out of their way to cheer people up and be nice to others or get excited

Amount, in HK dollars, lost by 119 victims of online romance scams in the first quarter of this year

\$76m

Amount, in HK dollars, lost by 119 victims of online romance scams in the first quarter of this year

by other people's good fortunes. They seem to want to give up even a reasonable level of human interaction as a result.”

Although you want to remain open-minded, a lonely heart should be sensible and shrewd. Even if someone is not after your money, you still need to protect yourself from potential harm, physical and emotional.

Luisa Tam is a senior editor at the Post and a former sex talk-show host at DBC Radio

FASHION

# Stylish alternatives to supersized hats to get you through summer

Divia Harilela  
life@scmp.com

Every summer there's one big hat trend that dominates Instagram feeds. If last year was all about Eugenia Kim's Do Not Disturb straw hat, 2018 will go down as the year of the supersized style. The look was first spotted on the spring-summer catwalks of French brand Jacquemus and has quickly been embraced by bloggers and influencers.

The reality is that an XXL hat is tricky to pull off in real life (or fit into your suitcase for that matter!) Fortunately, there are plenty of stylish alternatives to get you through the hotter months.

“Straw hats are always a must have for the summer, especially classic fedoras in pop colours. We are also seeing a strong trend in softer hats such as baseball, newsboy caps and berets. These styles can easily transition through to cooler months,” says Eugenie Leung, senior buyer for accessories at On Pedder in Central.

Experts suggest you always consider your personal style before choosing your summer hat. For example, if you dress sportily then opt for a visor, while the boater is great for a Mediterranean holiday. The turban or headscarf, loved by brands such as Gucci and Prada, is great for those wanting to make a fashion statement, while details such as colours, fabrications and embellishments can add a unique touch.

Last but not least, where and when you are wearing the hat can also affect your final selection.

“For styling hats in the city, you want to go for clean lines and solid hues as opposed to rustic materials and multicoloured patterns,” says stylist Lucia Tait Tolani, the founder of Pair, a by-invitation-only personal styling service.

“When adding a hat to your favourite beach look, you can go bold and bohemian. Sensi Studios handwoven straw versions featuring ornamental bands are easy to match, while Missoni Mare presents whimsical elements such as cut-outs and rainbow motifs.”

**MAISON MICHEL**  
The Paris-based milliner was founded in the French capital in 1936. Known for its couture creations, it was acquired by Chanel in the 1990s and eventually launched its own in-house label in 2006. Designed by creative director Priscilla Royer, the spring-summer 2018 collection features a wide range of fashionable styles, including bucket hats, houndstooth caps embroidered with badges and straw hats decorated with flowers. Available at On Pedder, New World Tower, Central, tel: 2118 3489

**CLYDE**  
Former fashion buyer Danni Griffiths started out making crocheted wool accessories in 2010 before launching her now bestselling collection of hats, all of which are made by hand at a small millinery factory in New York. The brand's look is polished and sophisticated, with sculptural styles accented with hand finishes, vibrant colours and well-thought-out design details.

This summer look out for straw hats with frayed edges and cotton gauze ties. Available at www.netaporter.com

**ONIA**  
Launched in 2009, Onia is more of a lifestyle brand with a focus on travel, and often collaborates with

boutique manufacturers. Its hat line has rapidly become a favourite with both men and women, thanks to its playful, quirky designs.

Onia's current collection features a range of panama straw hats covered in an assortment of summery prints, including

flamingos, bananas and red chilli peppers. Available at modaoperandi.com

**YESTADT MILLINERY**  
The brand sees hat-making as an art and mixes old-world craftsmanship with modern design. It was founded in 2009 by Molly

Yestadt, a graduate of the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York who has also collaborated with Marc Jacobs, Thom Browne and Phillip Lim. Often referencing vintage silhouettes, Yestadt's designs take their cues from catwalk trends – so expect straw hats with fashion-forward details such as Breton-inspired stripes, pink tassels and raffia fringing. Available at modaoperandi.com

**FILU**  
Californian designer Anne Hamro moved to Italy 25 years ago and has created a hat line inspired by her passion for the handmade. After immersing herself in traditional Italian millinery, she launched Filu Hats in 2013. Each piece is made using materials from where the hat style originated (so the straw for Toyo hats is sourced from Japan, while panamas feature Ecuadorean raffia). She also adds her own twist, with unconventional materials and techniques such as feathers and hand painting. Available at matchesfashion.com



Clockwise: red Breton striped straw hat by Yestadt Millinery; frayed straw hat by Clyde; Rosa panama hat by Onia; black fringed fedora by Yestadt Millinery. Photos: Handouts