

Concierge services blossom for the very rich

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As wealth levels have increased so have an army of intermediary types who free up more time for the rich and often provide a welcome layer of insulation when spending their cash.

The super-wealthy often remain insulated and removed from the many instances where their money is used to make purchases by an army of intermediaries that have grown apace with the expansion of wealth.

These personal service providers can include art advisors, professional shoppers, stylists, event planners, travel agents, gemologists and so on.

Presumably time takes on an added-value beyond most peoples' comprehension once one astronomical wealth has been attained. Any way to free up more precious time is worth paying for.

Research by Russ Alan Prince in his recent book on marketing luxury, "The Sky's the Limit" found that less than 34 per cent of ultra wealthy people open their own mail and fewer than 19 per cent pay their own bills. They are frankly too busy globetrotting, located at any number of residencies around the place.

If wealthy people can hire someone to do it for them they will, resulting in an army of surrogates and service providers covering every eventuality from dog walking to relocation specialists.

The market of independent intermediaries has grown apace with the expansion of wealth.

The highest proportion of intermediaries in use was within the fine art arena, according to Russ Alan Prince.

Some 63 per cent of wealthy individuals interested in buying art relied on an intermediary to advise them.

The intermediary can help the wealthy individual with extra leg work and also provide a layer of anonymity between buyer and gallery.

The ancillary benefit of having a third party to insulate a buyer from a market suits wealthy people, who might be subject to some degree of harassment from enthusiastic marketers.

When it comes to larger purchases such as houses, yachts or luxury cars private jets, these are often handled through a corporate structure in which the wealthy have interest or control outright.

This has the added benefit to the wealthy individual, that public databases of credit card transactions and other payment activity may not include significant pieces of information and may not accurately identify the buyer, to the frustration of data-orientated marketer.

Third party authorities, be that a horologist or an early American furniture specialist, can hire out their services on the side of the wealthy person making the purchase or be employees of a luxury brand or distribution company whose goal it is to educate and make a sale.

Russ Alan Prince's book refers to people who act as intermediaries variously as, door openers, influencers, educators and validators, and it is not hard to think of more names that might fit them.