Precious Metal Jewellery

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British jewellery market still sparkles in tougher times
Cheap sovereign rings and bargain-basement gold chains could well have had their day, as latest research from MINTEL shows that Brits are now splashing the cash when it comes to their jewellery. In fact, the market for precious metal jewellery was worth some Â£2.5 billion last year, up 7% on 2003 figures, with innovative designs proving to be the key trend helping to drive the market. And although many Brits may well be tightening their purse strings, a further 4% growth is expected for 2008 alone.

"These days British shoppers are becoming more discerning about the jewellery that they buy and are now prepared to pay more for a really good quality piece that stands out from the crowd," comments Katrin Magnussen, senior fashion analyst at MINTEL. "This combined with the fact that up-market jewellery is often bought for sentimental reasons means that the market is likely to hold its own in these more challenging times."

But all that glitters isn't gold - in fact it is platinum jewellery that is the real shining star. Even though it is still the smallest market, sales of this high end jewellery grew by an impressive 36% between 2003 and 2007 to reach Â£75 million. What is more, there is a real trend towards more original and distinctive pieces, with one in three (33%) adults saying that they look for something unusual, while just 12% go for a classic or traditional design.

"There is a strong trend towards bold, individual pieces to express personal style and even bespoke pieces of jewellery are becoming more popular. Colour is now also an important characteristic of todayâ€™s market, as people choose dramatic blacks and browns as well as bright hues, less familiar gemstones and sometimes even enamel," comments Katrin Magnussen.

Looking to the future, Mintel predicts an 8% increase in sales in the next five years, with the market set to hit Â£2.8 billion by 2013.

Gold diggers?
Long gone are the days of women having to hunt down wealthy men to get their hands on a nice trinket or two, as over one in five (22%) British ladies say that they are happy to treat themselves to precious metal jewellery. But men are also getting in on the action, as sales of men's jewellery soared 12% between 2003 and 2007 to reach Â£275 million last year (11% of the total market).

What mine is yours from?
One of the key concerns for the market is the debate surrounding ethical gold mining, so-called â€˜dirtyâ€™ gold and 'blood' diamonds. Being able to trace gold, silver or diamond jewellery, right down to the mine, could be the way to ensure that precious metals have the ultimate feel-good factor.

"The UK jewellery trade itself should continue its efforts to address the ethical issues of producing precious jewellery. It also needs to act now to reassure consumers that their gold and gemstones come from ethical sources, as this will invariably become an increasingly important concern for those buying statement jewellery, " explains Katrin Magnussen.
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