

The Shady Truth:

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Men twice as likely to buy designer sunglasses than women

When summer comes, cool sunglasses are undeniably one of the hottest accessories to have. However, while almost half (40%) of Brits say that stylish sunglasses make them feel fashionable, opinion is split on how much money should be spent on them.

But it seems that men are more likely to want to stay ahead in the sunglasses fashion stakes as according to latest Mintel research, men are almost twice (20%) as likely as women (11%) to buy into designer sunglasses brands.

Furthermore, men are also likely to be the biggest spenders within the category, as high quality is ranked as important by 42% of them - compared to 28% of women - and 31% say that it is worth paying more to get better quality sunglasses (vs 27% women). And it seems sunglasses are more than just another fashion accessory - as nearly one in five (19%) British men say that having designer sunglasses is a status symbol (compared to 15% women) and having a genuine brand is important to 22% of men (vs 17% of women).

Tamara Sender, Senior Consumer Analyst at Mintel, said:

“Men are more inclined than women to indulge themselves with designer sunglasses, likely because they do not tend to spend as much on other fashion accessories or jewellery. Young women look for fun, trendy sunglasses which don’t cost a fortune as they are likely to be viewed as a short-term purchase that can both be changed regularly, and form part of a wardrobe of different styles to create different fashion looks, while men show a greater affinity for luxury brands.”

On average, the majority (54%) of consumers are only willing to spend £30 or less on a pair of sunglasses, but men are more drawn to the premium end of the market, with nearly one in ten (9%) of them ready to spend up to £100 for a pair of sunglasses - as opposed to 5% of women. In contrast, women tend to gravitate towards value end of the price spectrum, with four in ten (40%) only willing to spend under £15 on a pair of sunglasses, compared to less than three in ten (27%) of men.

Moreover, when purchasing a new pair of sunglasses, men’s interest is not limited to appearance. Indeed, the purchasing of sunglasses to wear for sport is highest among men (11%) vs only 4% women. Also other features, such as anti-glare lenses - suitable for driving for example - is valued by 30% of men (vs 25% of women). Meanwhile light-reaction lenses are of interest for around the same number of consumers (13% of men and 12% of women).

“Technology-led innovation has been particularly strong in the sports brands category, which is driven by features such as anti-glare, shatterproof, 100% UV filters and flexible frames, all of which add value, even before style and fashion have been taken into consideration. Sunglasses boasting the latest advancements in sunglasses technology that aid performance are likely to stimulate sales among sports enthusiasts. Sports frames are most likely to benefit from the Olympic Games boost as people look to emulate the competing athletes and medal winners.” Tamara adds.

Overall, the value of the sunglasses market has tumbled over the last five years, declining by 24%, from £152 million in 2006 to £115 million in 2011. This negative growth has been fuelled by a drop in average selling price of sunglasses, as consumers rein in their discretionary spend in the current economic climate. However, Mintel estimates that the market has grown by 3% in 2011 and that it will start to recover in 2012 to reach £140 million in 2016, almost returning to values seen in the pre-recessionary climes of 2007.

And looking to the future, increasing consumer interest in health related issues may translate into business opportunities for the industry. Mintel’s research reveals that over six in ten (62%) consumers, rising to two-thirds of under-25s (65%), are motivated to purchase new sunglasses before going on a holiday. However, while the majority is concerned about the health benefits of wearing sunglasses (53%), this falls to only four in ten (41%) among the under-25s.

“There is scope for sunglasses as with sunscreen to be pitched as a health essential for everyday life rather than just holiday must-have, with more information about the damage that the sun can have on people’s eyes in the long term and the impact of wearing sunglasses with inadequate UV protection.” Tamara concludes.

Source: Mintel Oxygen Reports

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