

Here come the boys: the rise of men's jewellery

Source: Tom Jenkins. www.jewellerynetasia.com

The men's jewellery market is on the ascent and is set to become a key investment area for brands and retailers that want to boost sales and drive profits this year and next. In the mature European market male consumers are finally finding their feet and catching up with their female counterparts. Gone are the days when all they wore were wedding bands and the odd chain. The rise of male grooming and the metrosexual man, with celebrities such as footballer David Beckham leading the pack, has led to more and more men experimenting with the way they dress and more vitally, the jewellery that they buy.



This development has opened up a previously narrow market and European jewellery brands and retailers have been quick to pounce on the men's market, which is still small but steadily growing and ripe for investment. Market research company Mintel's September 2010 report *Watches and Jewellery Retailing UK* found that 20% of its surveyed male respondents said that they like receiving jewellery as a gift, while 12% went even further to say that they had purchased all of their own jewellery. Clearly, demand for men's jewellery is on the rise.

British jewellery designer David Webdale's extravagant designs even include cocktail rings for men

The brand's that are successfully targeting this market have recognised that men shop in a very different way to women and have tailored their offering accordingly, in an attempt to appeal to male tastes and boost sales. Women base their buying decisions on the aesthetic and are much more likely to impulse buy, while men spend less on average, heavily consider purchases, research online before even enter a jewellery store and need lots of reassurance during the sales process. Similar to female shoppers who usually choose jewellery to enhance their femininity, men are normally looking for pieces that will enhance their masculinity. In order to successfully target the men's market, brands need to build collections around the iconic imagery that speaks to the male psyche.



Links of London is appealing to men's love of sport with its London 2012 collection, which includes this Union Jack Ruthenium Plated Dog Tag



Links of London is seeking to widen its male customer base with its new collections. Pictured -Black and Pewter Sweetie Woven



Stephen Webster is appealing to men's desires to be rock stars with its London Calling range, which features this Gargoyle Ring



Webster's Jewels Verne collection also features animal motifs, such as these Hammer Head Shark Cufflinks

British jewellery designer Stephen Webster has done just that and the men's market accounts for 20% of his business. The reason he has targeted this emerging market so successfully is because he has developed a series of collections designed to make his male customers feel like rock stars, including his London Calling range and more recently the Alchemy in the UK collection, which feature designs such as Union Jacks, ram's head motifs and stud details, in materials that include mixed metals and even bone. Jewellery designer Shaun Leane offers his male customers a slightly more classic aesthetic, but his Serpent collection still features coiled cobras in enamel, each with different meanings and each designed to appeal to a different man.

There's no doubt that the charm bead and bracelets trend has dominated the women's market for the past five years but I think this is now evolving and moving on to composable friendship bracelets and bracelets made from different materials such as leather cords or silk ribbon. This is also a growing trend in the men's market and jewellery brand Links of London has just unveiled its latest men's collection which features a number of silver and cord bracelets, while jewellery brand Just J's men's range of silk ribbon bracelets are available with a selection of different charms, each again with a different meaning and appealing to a different male customer.