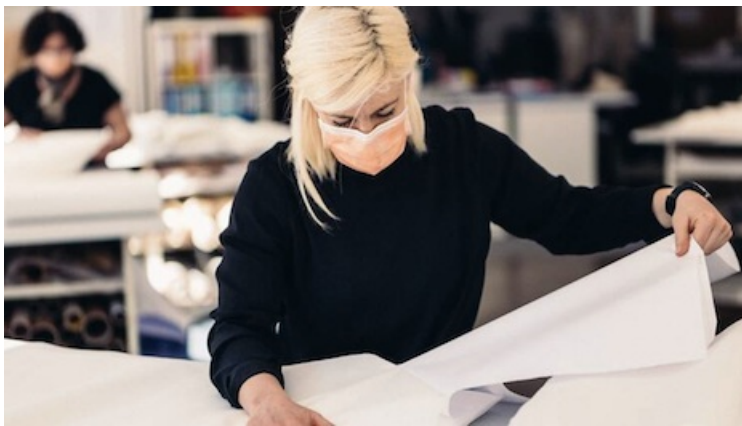


FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

Should luxury brands permanently add hand sanitizers and face masks to their lines?

June 17, 2020



LVMH created masks to help during the crisis. Image credit: LVMH

By DIANNA DILWORTH

As luxury brands scramble to reopen stores and maintain their business in a post-pandemic world, many are looking for new revenue streams to help augment the losses incurred during the lockdown period.

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The hand sanitizers market is projected to grow 11.5 percent every year over the next five years, reaching \$2.762 billion by 2025, according to Infinium Global Research. Should hand sanitizers and face masks be a part of luxury's strategy? After all, the cosmetics and fashion brands have the factories to produce such items. And it depends on who you ask.

"Hand sanitizer is a commodity and it would be beyond offensive for a luxury brand to start selling it," said Thoma Serdari, director of fashion & luxury at **Brand(x)Lux** and professor at NYU Stern, New York.

"On the contrary, hand sanitizer should be offered for free to a brand's customers as they enter their boutiques," she said.

"If the brand is a lifestyle brand and sells products such as soap dispensers or liquid dispensers, then, of course, they could design something that is portable, a dispenser specific to hand sanitizer, and even offer a first dose of sanitizer for free with purchase."



Could a Dior perfume be repackaged in hand sanitizer form? Image credit: Dior

Challenges with sanitizer

If perfume or cosmetics brands do feel that branded hand sanitizer is an option, they must weigh the benefits.

"It is a stretch for luxury brands to get into hand sanitizer," said Allen Adamson, cofounder of **Metaforce** and professor of business at NYU, New York.

"What is important in a hand sanitizer is efficacy, and luxury brands don't have that in their equity," he said. "The core of hand sanitizer is germ-killing efficacy and most luxury brands do not stand for product efficacy, they stand for emotional connection.

"However given the timing, it might be relevant for some fragrance manufacturers to try to get into this area because if you are using a hand sanitizer every day, and the difference may start to matter, the scent and bottle may become more important to consumers."

The big question becomes, is it worth it to sell hand sanitizer if it brings the brand association down?

As luxury items, they would have to be priced higher than drugstore options, and come with better scents in nicer bottles. However, there is only so much a company could charge and the income will not make up for lost revenues caused by the pandemic.

"There is a possibility, perhaps, to make some short-term money, but it won't do the brands good in the long term," Mr. Adamson said.



LVMH made hand sanitizer during the crisis. Image credit: LVMH

A mask you ask?

Masks, on the other hand, are a brand new accessory category that have the potential to grow this year.

"It is a new fashion accessory in a space that has never had a fashion accessory before," Mr. Adamson said. "It goes right over your face, so it is the first thing you see when you meet somebody. It is the most powerful place to have a

fashion accessory. Since you are wearing it every day, there is huge demand as consumers look for something that is different and unique will make them stand out.

"It is a unique opportunity that may last a while, and it is a global play," he said. "One of the issues is many consumers don't like the way masks look and feel. They know they should wear them but don't like wearing a face mask aesthetically. But to have something cooler or more fashion forward, it allows them to feel less awkward. It is a new frontier."

From a design point of view, fashion companies should design patterns and textures that work with their brands. They should avoid just slapping a logo on a plain mask.

"If a brand has a specific aesthetic and manages to apply the same aesthetic, either with specific textiles or construction details, to the face masks, then it would be legitimate to see these face masks as a brand extension at the lower end of the brand's offerings," Ms. Serdari said. "This would be an entry point product, similar to a wallet, for example."

Mask marketing

Luxury brands that do take up mask making should incorporate these accessories in advertising and on the runway as they would a new line of sunglasses.

Influencers, digital platforms and marketing campaigns should include these new items when necessary.

"These items should be promoted with similar strategies used to promote entry-point products and accessories like scarves, sunglasses and belts," Ms. Serdari said. "No aggressive tactics should ever be employed by luxury brands and no pressure to buy should be communicated."

"If luxury brands decide to offer such brand extensions, these should be made with the same degree of attention to detail and high-quality details that would justify this new cluster of products to be marketed under a luxury brand's name," she said.

"These should never appear as commodities. The strategy could include a limited number of masks in circulation to avoid overly exposing the brand's image. These would be a nice add-on to the brand's offerings, but certainly not a product line to market extensively for profit."

1 thought on "Should luxury brands permanently add hand sanitizers and face masks to their lines?"

1. **Kyle** says:

June 17, 2020 at 9:31 am

I agree, luxury brands should treat their customers well!