

Are face masks the new fashion accessory?

Dealing with the coronavirus pandemic means we have had to change and adapt to numerous new ways of life, in turn creating a 'new normal' way of living. One of these adaptations is wearing a protective face mask, something that is becoming mandatory in different ways across the UK.

But for something that is now essential, these coverings shouldn't have to be plain and boring as long as they are safe and effective. Face masks are the new fashion accessory, reinventing our safety measures and they are bringing an element of fun to this period of uncertainty.

Many companies are taking advantage of these new rules, majority of which include popular brands such as ASOS. This leading name are selling a wide range of masks and offer designs by other labels too, as expected from the well-known online brand. When considering masks as the new fashion accessory, it is interesting that they have included plain coloured ones that you could match with any outfit, or more adventurous galaxy or leopard print to act as a statement piece if you wanted or coordinate with other pieces.

Some brands are embracing the face mask as the new accessory in an alternative way by releasing masks that specifically match to an outfit. Personally, I have seen this done by Apricot, who are selling dresses that come with a matching mask. I personally think that this is an interesting idea as a way to combine fashion and the safety of masks, allowing people the freedom to style outfits alongside their masks and become creative in a different way with fashion. I think that it will also encourage people to wear their mask more, as it is essentially a part of their whole outfit. Also, they state that they are donating all the profits to the NHS, so the buyer has an added incentive to purchase.

It's also important to mention what masks are not appropriate and how brands may be doing this wrong. In recent circulation, Pretty Little Thing had received backlash as they were shown to be selling mesh face masks which clearly do nothing to protect as a face covering. However, upon my own browsing I couldn't find it on their website so it must have been removed with their mistake recognised.

It's worth considering how this may have been listed as an entirely separate accessory not designed for this purpose, but during this period its irresponsible to advertise a mask that doesn't provide any protection as it has potential to encourage the wrong behaviour.

In situations like this, it's understood that the mask is purely a fashion accessory. However, we need to embrace this idea as well as ensuring we are being safe with a design.

Celebrities have also taken it upon themselves to design and sell their own masks as part of the ever changing new society we live in. Some of these include The Weeknd, Kim Kardashian and Ed Westwick. A personal favourite of mine was the latter, when Westwick shared an image of the well-known Gossip Girl 'xoxo' prompting many to believe there was about to be a reunion of

sorts. Instead, he released his own brand of face masks. Although somewhat anti-climatic, this type of merchandise allows fans to feel more connected to an actor or artist, whilst also being safe.

With face masks and coverings becoming mandatory across all parts of the UK, it's worthwhile investing one that you like. We're learning to live in a new way of life, so we're discovering the new norms, one of which are embracing face masks as a new fashion accessory.

By Darci Black