

Resurgence in Social Activities

Handbag recovery in 2021 stronger than expected

Sales of women's bags and small personal accessories in the United States have nearly returned to 2019 levels – with revenue down by just 2% from March through August 2021, compared to 2019 before the pandemic, according to Retail Tracking data from The NPD Group. Outperforming the market were hands-free silhouettes, including shoulder and crossbody bags, which are heavily associated with going out on the town and other social activities, whereas more office-oriented options, like totes and satchels, continued to struggle.

"The women's handbag market has rebounded more quickly than expected and regained most of the revenue lost in 2020," said Beth Goldstein, fashion footwear and accessories analyst at NPD. "Consumers are treating themselves as they return to more of their normal pre-pandemic behaviors. They are also willing to trade up because they have more money to spend, after staying at home for months on end."

Retail revenue from shoulder bags grew by 14%, and cross-body bags rose by 7% percent, in the six months ending August 2021, compared to pre-pandemic 2019. Although they represent smaller revenue-generating categories in the overall accessories market, sales of clutches increased by 2% and cosmetic bags were up 48%, while satchels fell 5% and

Women's Bags and Small Personal Accessories Market Performance

US sales revenue % change, March through August 2019-2021 versus prior year



Source: The NPD Group/Retail Tracking Service, U.S. sales revenue



totes were down 1%. Handbag sales revenue bounced back faster than unit sales, largely due to average sales-price increases in 2021.

The handbag market was already declining in 2019 prior to the pandemic, as the retail environment became heavily promotional," Goldstein said. "Some brands had fallen out of favor, and consumers were prioritizing other categories, like athleisure and technology. Fast forward to today and we see fewer promotions, thanks to growing demand coupled with tight

inventory. Rising manufacturer selling prices, caused by materials- and labor-cost increases, rounded out the list of factors contributing to the revenue improvement for the handbags and personal accessories market. ■

Source : NPD

