

FACE MASKS: THE FASTEST GROWING SECTOR IN PERSONAL CARE

The mask segment is recognised as the fastest area of growth in cosmetics, and masks have become a global beauty essential, according to Karolina Krupińska, Senior Development Chemist, Aston Chemicals Ltd

Many factors have influenced the rise of masks' popularity. Using masks is simpler, faster and cheaper than visiting the spa, and they provide an immediate effect – a single application for 20–30 minutes can visibly invigorate the skin, treat problems and “restore the glow”. There is a wide variety of mask formats for treating different body areas and addressing the specific needs of each area. Social media has had a significant effect on the global popularity of masks, as consumers can share their experiences and the effects of masks on their appearance. The influential Asian market (especially Korea) keeps consumers interested by regularly introducing new, innovative facial treatments.

Claims and consumer demands vary by country, but hydrating, anti-pollution, and skin-protection claims are universally popular, and natural ingredients are generally more attractive to consumers. The gastronomia trend is still relevant, and consumers are curious about the skincare benefits offered by fermented food and probiotics.

Mask categories are constantly evolving and currently the most established formats are sheet, clay, peel-off, overnight and gel masks. There are also cross-categories such as rinse-off and leave-on masks, and more novel products such as glitter and chrome masks that introduce an element of fun into the skincare routine. Primers designed to maximise the performance of masks are another recent innovation.

SHEET MASKS

The sheet mask is an iconic Korean product that has gained global popularity in recent years. Sheet masks are usually made of pre-cut fabrics soaked with serums, although “dry sheet masks” are now available, which also fit the “waterless beauty” trend. Sheet masks are compact, convenient and easy to use, and often include a high content of hydrating actives to give instant, visible effects. They are ideal for customers with unique skincare needs as the market offers a wide variety of products, targeting specific body areas: lips, neck, chest, feet, hands, elbows, etc. There is also a growing market for sheet face masks in the male grooming sector as their convenience and clean application appeals to male consumers.

CLAY, MUD AND MINERAL MASKS

Clay masks are particularly associated with spa treatments and pampering. Traditional products are applied to the face in a thick layer, left for the prescribed amount of time and then rinsed off. In terms of composition, they usually consist of an aqueous phase thickened with minerals. Clay, mineral or mud masks are names used interchangeably on the market; there are, however, some major differences between clay and mud. Clay masks usually contain just one type of mineral of a certain particle size, and are recommended for oily skin. Mud masks are generally more hydrating and “mud” is a more loosely defined term, which can

include multiple types of minerals and soils.

While formulating clay masks it is important to remember that they should have easy pick-up and good spreadability, be comfortable on the skin, should not flake off as they dry, and should be easy to rinse off. Formulations will have different textures depending on the minerals used and their particle sizes. The most commonly used clays are Kaolin, Bentonite, Diatomaceous Earth, Perlite, Talc and Mica.

Minerals are also components of many self-heating masks, with Zeolite aluminosilicate mineral powders being the most common. Zeolites release heat when in contact with water, as the transition from the anhydrous to the hydrated form results in an exothermic reaction. This warming effect is comforting and relaxing, and the heat also stimulates microcirculation, and can help to open the pores.

PEEL-OFF MASKS

Peel-off masks are associated with exfoliation and purifying. They are applied as an even layer to the face and removed in a single peelable film. Peel-off products are usually based on PVA (Polyvinyl Alcohol), which is a strongly adhesive material but can be too powerful and irritating for sensitive skin. As an alternative to traditional peel-off masks, some formulations contain more gentle ingredients or follow new concepts such as 2-part peel off masks, clay peel-off masks, or sprayable masks.

OVERNIGHT MASKS

Also known as sleeping packs, overnight masks are usually thick creams that are too heavy for day wear. This category of mask creates an opportunity to formulate more interesting textures and higher efficacy products. Many overnight treatments are focused on strong regeneration of mature skin (healing, repairing, intensive moisturising). This format can also work well for anti-acne treatments, as they allow more time for the formulation to reduce redness, inflammation, and calm the skin so that it looks healthier in the morning.

GEL & JELLY MASKS

Gel and jelly masks are Korean-inspired treatments that promote a healthy skin glow and bright complexion. They focus on hydration and are rich in ingredients such as Hyaluronic acid, Niacinamide, plant extracts and PCA salts. Their ultra-light and watery texture tends to provide a cooling effect, making them popular for under-eye products.

Aston Chemicals' new Face Masks kit uses innovative raw materials to meet the current trends described above:

- Remineralising Sea Mud Mask – A mixed mineral mask containing Perlite, Kaolin and Diatomaceous Earth, with the addition of a water-soluble Argan oil GaleArgan WS (Argan Oil)





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Polyglyceryl-6 Esters) for a pleasant after-sensation and improved rinse-off. An active seaweed extract Invincity (Aqua, Ascophyllum Nodosum Extract) fights pollution-induced ageing via inhibition of the AhR (Aryl-hydrocarbon Receptor) pathway, and a naturally derived polysaccharide Glycolift (Biosaccharide Gum-4, Aqua, Alpha-Glucan Oligosaccharide, Propanediol, Algin) decreases the adhesion of carbon particles to the skin.

- Tea Break Brightening Peel-Off Mask – A 2-step peel-off mask based on an anionic polysaccharide with a branched structure Glycopatch 1.5P (Biosaccharide Gum-4, Aqua), activated by matrix activators Calcidone and Nalidone (Calcium and Sodium PCA salts) incorporated into a ‘milk’ spray, creating a peelable film. The gel base contains a natural, gently exfoliating and brightening active Lime Pearl AF (Glycerin, Aqua, Microcitrus Australasica Fruit Extract), which is effective over a broad pH range and suitable for sensitive skin, unlike common AHA exfoliants.
- Charcoal Drop Spot Mask – A sleeping mask for oily, acne-prone skin. This is a W/Si emulsion with an innovative emulsifying system Waterdropsil-D (Dimethicone, Dimethicone/Vinyl Dimethicone

Crosspolymer, PEG-10 Dimethicone) that provides a “water drop” effect upon application to give the consumer both visual and textural signals that the product is working. Binchotan White Charcoal Powder absorbs impurities and Sunsil OLEO (Silica, Cetyl Alcohol), a natural powder with lipophilic surface and interior, controls squalane levels.

- Morning Revival Eye Gel-Mask – A rejuvenating mask that smooths the delicate skin around the eyes. An emulsifying silicone gel and fluid create an emulsion with a high aqueous phase and a light texture (KSG-210 & KF-6017 Dimethicone/PEG-10/15 Crosspolymer, Dimethicone & PEG-10 Dimethicone). BioGenic Caffeine-210 is a complex (Caffeine, Maltodextrin, Xanthan Gum, Hydroxyethylcellulose, Phenoxethanol) that solubilises Caffeine in water without recrystallization, whilst also enhancing microcirculation and reducing signs of fatigue.

These examples demonstrate the relative ease with which a wide range of masks with different textures, application methods and benefits can be formulated to meet consumers’ continuing interest in masks for the face and other parts of the body.

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