

The U.S. platinum watch market saw some other notable trends

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Increase in sales to women According to LGI, sales of platinum watches or fashion watch like Michael Kors, Apple Watch, Michael Kors Watches Tissot to women in 2006 increased 34 percent in dollars and 25 percent in units.

Regional differences Sales in the Northeast in 2006 rose 38 percent in dollars and 31 percent in units, says LGI. The region with the most business in 2006--the West--was the only one to post a decline from the previous year in units sold.

Younger buyers "The information I get suggests there's a growing group of younger affluent consumers, in their early 30s, with increased awareness of platinum as a quality metal, who are seeking the best," says James Courage, chief executive officer of Platinum Guild International. "Watch companies are aware of this. That's why we're seeing increased numbers of watches and lines in platinum."

One sign of the vitality of this niche luxury market is that more watch brands--both mid- and luxury-price--are entering it for the first time or expanding their presence there, turning a stronger public spotlight on their watches to attract more-affluent watch enthusiasts and collectors, especially younger adults and women self-purchasers. Also? All kinds of wally things such as brand watches, luxury watches like TAG Heuer, brand bags handbags, fashion apparel, brand shoes are very popular between these more-affluent enthusiasts and collectors. Vacheron Constantin, for example, recently unveiled its new collection of watches with platinum dials at a well-publicized Hollywood gala. Among brands adding platinum watches recently are Louis Vuitton, which launched a men's line, and Victorinox Swiss Army, which expanded into high-end watchmaking with its Legacy Reserve de Marche Platine, a sporty limited edition on a rubber strap, retailing for \$19,500.

At present, more than two dozen brands offer platinum watches in the United States. While most carry luxury price tags, some U.S. brands offer more-affordable versions. Dima watches, for example, sells limited-edition platinum watches for men and women (500 in a series) for about \$3,000 retail. Watches with Swiss movements and genuine Swiss platinum ingots for dials (\$995 retail and less) are offered by Croton, which sells about 1,800 a year. While only the ingot dial is platinum, the watch gives "the person who appreciates a platinum watch, but can't afford the whole one, a taste of what it's like to own one," says Eli Mermelstein, Croton's vice president of marketing.

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