

JEWELRY

## Storytelling is valuable tool for jewelers highlighting sustainability practices

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*More than ever, consumers want to know the stories and ethics behind their diamonds. Image courtesy of Tiffany & Co.*

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In an age of dynamic innovation and intuitive technology, consumers are constantly shifting to expect more from brands, especially transparency as to how its products are made.

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During a session at Initiatives in Art and Culture's Annual Gold & Diamond Conference, panelists discussed how jewelry has always faced questions of transparency, with consumers contemplating both the ethical and technical components of diamonds. More luxury jewelers are showcasing transparency and traceability practices, in an effort to build and maintain consumer trust and respect for the brand.

"In today's world, consumers absolutely are asking more and more questions about every product," said Cathryn Ramirez, executive director of alumni development and continuing education at **GIA**, California.

"You care when you are buying an expensive piece of jewelry, there's something that you're going to wear and have meaning," she said. "There is a symbolic relationship between this diamond and maybe what it means in your relationship.

"Consumers are asking me, and we tend to tell a retailer when we're working with them, that there's a great story behind these diamond mining countries and to tell the story to the extent the consumer is interested."

### A studded story

U.S. jeweler Tiffany & Co. has emerged as a leader in transparency, frequently releasing statements and videos explaining their traceability and sourcing practices. In 2020, the brand became the first global luxury jeweler to disclose the country where its newly sourced, individually registered diamonds of .18 carats or larger are crafted.

For Tiffany & Co., traceability is not just important, but fundamental to the brand.

"We've been investing in sustainability and specifically the vertical integration of our supply chain for nearly 20 years now," said Anisa Costa, chief sustainability officer at **Tiffany & Co.**, New York. "What we are trying to do is just to continue to drive forward new levels of transparency with our clients.

Many Tiffany diamonds are acquired as rough stones, mined in countries including Australia, Botswana, Canada, Namibia, Russia and South Africa. The LVMH-owned brand notes that it encourages high standards in the mining industry to protect human rights and natural resources.

The jeweler also notes that its practices benefit countries' economies, as Tiffany & Co. reported providing \$59 million in economic benefits to Botswana's economy in 2019.

"By procuring diamonds as rough and then crafting many of them in our own workshops, we not only have this incredibly high degree of traceability but the communities where these diamonds are crafted are treated responsibly and the Tiffany diamonds are making a positive impact," Ms. Costa said.

Several jewelers are also actively working to develop or collaborate with technology companies to identify diamond provenance, the specific point of origin of a product.

Other panelists discussed their disparate roles in the jewelry sector and how they are working to exhibit transparency and give consumers the answers they seek.

#### *A story about love, a Tiffany diamond and New York City*

For instance, Canadian diamond company [Lucara Diamond](#) ethically sources its natural and untreated gemstones from the Karowe Diamond Mine in Botswana.

Cognizant of consumers' increased sourcing inquiries, Lucara has partnered with Sarine Group. The technology manufacturer produces tools and technology for the evaluation, planning, processing and finishing of diamonds and gems.

The two companies are now working to extend provenance traceability to Lucara's diamonds.

"Sustainability is foundational to everything that we do," said Eira Thomas, CEO of Lucara, Vancouver. "We have been publishing an annual sustainability report for more than a decade now.

"[What is] important is a very transparent process, which does allow confirmation of provenance," she said. "So we are working with Sarine Group to be able to provide that assurance to our customers, another really important initiative that Lucara has been working on in our sustainability journey."

#### Consumer care and curiosity

Jewelers are continuing to recognize the complexity behind consumers' purchasing journeys. Consumers have ethical, technical questions and they are continuously gravitating towards campaigns with answers as well as emotional pulls.

Last month, traceability pioneer Tiffany & Co. released the "Journey of a Tiffany Diamond" series, spotlighting consumers and employees of the jeweler from around the world, while highlighting its ethics and traceability practices. Although illustrating the different lives of those connected to Tiffany diamonds, each short film is an emotional and intimate look into the thoughtfulness behind each piece ([see story](#)).

Last year, diamond company De Beers Group introduced a new project hoping to educate consumers about responsible sourcing and sustainability within the industry. "Reset" consists of collaborations between De Beers Group and emerging jewelry designers to spotlight the positive impact of the natural diamond industry ([see story](#)).

With consumers continuing to seek transparency, innovative marketing and storytelling will be essential for jewelers looking to educate clients.

"I think consumers really want to know that they're supporting responsible companies that care about the environment, they care about their social commitments and that are well-governed companies," Lucara's Ms. Thomas said. "All of these pieces weave together to really tell a great story about why consumers should want to consume natural diamonds, and what they're giving back and contributing in turn to these local economies."