

RESEARCH

39pc increase in luxury watch searches prompts optimism for Chinese luxury market: report

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By TRICIA CARR

China-based searches for high-end watch brands increased 39.3 percent during the first half of 2012 compared to the year-ago period, proving that interest in luxury remains strong, according to a new report by Digital Luxury Group.

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The World Luxury Index China: Watches examined watchmakers in five high-end categories and found a 73 percent increase in searches for brands in the prestige category which includes Breitling, Hublot, Omega, Panerai, Rolex and TAG Heuer. Also, the top 10 most-searched for luxury watch brands such as Omega, Rolex, Longines, Cartier and Chanel represent approximately 80 percent of searches for luxury watches.

“Contrary to reported economic slowdowns and issues related to government gifting, the interest for luxury watches still remains strong and continues to grow,” said Tamar Koifman, head of marketing at the [Digital Luxury Group](#), Geneva, Switzerland.

The [World Luxury Index China: Watches](#) is based on more than 100 million unbiased searches on the top search engines in China. It included examination of 65 watch brands, more than 1,500 watch models and 14 search intentions.

The report was published in partnership with [Europa Star](#) and [Luxury Society](#).

Telling time

All watch categories examined in the report saw an increase in the number of searches during the first half of 2012 compared to the same time period last year including the 73 percent increase in searches for brands in the prestige category.

The Couture category that includes Christian Dior, Chanel, Hermès and Louis Vuitton saw an increase of 12.9 percent in searches from the year-ago period.

Watchmakers A. Lange & Söhne, Audemars Piguet, Blancpain, Breguet, Frank Muller, Girard-Perregaux, IWC, Jaquet Droz, Jaeger-LeCoultre, Patek Philippe, Richard Mille, Roger Dubuis, Ulysse Nardin, Vacheron Constantin and Zenith make up the Haute Horlogerie category. This group saw a 26.7 percent increase in searches.

High Range watch brands are Baume & Mercier, Ebel, Frédérique Constant, Longines, Maurice Lacroix, Montblanc, Rado, Raymond Weil and Tudor. This category saw a 4.8 increase in searches.

Bulgari, Cartier, Chopard, Harry Winston, Piaget and Van Cleef & Arpels are in the Women and Jewelry category that saw a 56.5 percent increase in searches in the first half of 2012 compared to the year-ago period.



Cartier Ballon Bleu timepiece

The study also examined the most-searched for watch models.

The top five include Omega's De Ville and Constellation, Cartier's Ballon Bleu, Chanel's J12 and Longines' Master. These same models also came out on top in last year's Index.



Omega De Ville Hour Vision timepiece

This year, these five models made up more than 50 percent of luxury watch model searches.

The powerful get more power

The results of World Luxury Index China: Watches also uncovered that the most-popular watches in terms of search are dominating the market by far.

Digital Luxury Group found that storied watchmakers often fare better in search results since, as an emerging market, there is less awareness for smaller brands in China.

Therefore, 80 percent of searches for luxury watches were for the top ten most-searched for luxury watch brands that are Omega, Rolex, Longines, Cartier, Rado, Patek Philippe, Vacheron Constantin, IWC, Audemars Piguet and Chanel.

Additionally, the top 3 fastest-growing brands in terms of Internet searches are Rolex, Omega and Cartier.



Omega's Constellation Brushed Chronometer

Rolex, for instance, saw an 88.4 percent increase in searches during the first half of 2012 compared to the year-ago period.

The top 3 fastest-growing brands in terms of search also represent the biggest market share in China, according to Digital Luxury Group.

Moreover, it seems that Chinese consumers are becoming more educated on luxury watches.

For the first time, style-related search terms such as “men’s classic watch” surpassed the number of price-related searches such as “cost of Rolex.”

“This is the cause of several factors, from a more educated and sophisticated consumer who is now deciphering between a brand’s different models, to gift purchase-related searches which tend to skew more generic,” Ms. Koifman said.

Final Take

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