

The Rise of Modern Watch Collecting: Why Millennials and Gen Z Are Driving the Market

From vintage gems to modern icons, younger collectors are fueling a global boom in luxury timepieces.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Once seen as the preserve of seasoned enthusiasts, watch collecting is now experiencing a renaissance led by Millennials and Gen Z. These younger generations, often characterized by their digital-first lifestyles, are emerging as the fastest-growing segment of luxury watch collectors worldwide. Their unique tastes, values, and investment strategies are not only reshaping the market but also breathing fresh life into an industry that thrives on both heritage and innovation.



An antique pocket watch symbolizes the timeless appeal of horology—where heritage, craftsmanship, and modern passion intersect in today's booming watch collecting culture.

According to recent industry reports, Millennials (born between 1981–1996) and Gen Z (born between 1997–2012) now account for more than 45% of new luxury watch purchases. Their interest spans everything from vintage Rolex and Omega models to avant-garde independent brands like De Bethune and MB&F. For many, a watch is more than a timekeeping device—it's a symbol of identity, a status marker, and increasingly, an investment.

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Millennials and Gen Z are redefining watch collecting—combining passion, personal expression, and investment savvy to shape the future of this timeless craft.”

Avi-Meir Zaslavsky

“Watches are no longer just about telling time,” says Avi-Meir Zaslavsky, founder of [999Watches](https://www.999watches.com), a global platform dedicated to watch collectors and enthusiasts. “For

younger buyers, they represent personal expression, a connection to craftsmanship, and in many cases, a way to diversify their investment portfolios.”

At first glance, it might seem surprising that digital-native generations are flocking to mechanical timepieces in an age when smartphones can do it all. Yet experts point to several key drivers:

1. **Heritage & Storytelling:** Younger collectors are drawn to the narratives behind iconic watches—whether it's James Bond's Omega Seamaster, the moon-landing Omega Speedmaster, or Paul Newman's Daytona. Storytelling adds depth and emotional value to each piece.

2. **Status & Identity:** In an era of fast fashion, a well-chosen watch conveys taste, success, and individuality without saying a word. Unlike a phone or sneakers, watches are often worn daily for years, making them deeply personal.

3. **Investment Potential:** With some models appreciating faster than traditional assets, watches have become an attractive alternative investment. Vintage models from Rolex, Patek Philippe, and Audemars Piguet can fetch multiples of their original retail prices.

4. **Sustainability:** Millennials and Gen Z care deeply about sustainability. A well-maintained mechanical watch can last generations, reducing the cycle of disposable consumer goods.

"Young collectors are combining passion with practicality," explains Zaslavsky. "They want something beautiful and meaningful, but also something that makes sense in the long term. Watches uniquely check all those boxes."



A curated watch collection featuring both classic and contemporary designs—a reflection of how Millennials and Gen Z are shaping the future of horology through passion, personalization, and investment.



A luxury timepiece examined with care—symbolizing the precision, craftsmanship, and investment value that make watches a cornerstone of modern collecting among Millennials and Gen Z.

Another major driver behind this generational shift is the rise of digital platforms. Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Reddit have turned watch collecting into a global, accessible hobby. From short-form reviews to livestreamed unboxings, younger enthusiasts learn and share knowledge in ways that were unimaginable just two decades ago.

“Social media has democratized the world of watches,” Zaslavsky notes. “Before, you needed access to niche magazines, specialized forums, or local dealer connections. Now, a 20-year-old in Los Angeles or Tokyo can learn everything about a rare Patek reference in minutes and connect directly with other collectors worldwide.”

Online communities have also normalized the idea that watches are more than accessories—they’re part of lifestyle culture. Posing with a Rolex Submariner or a Cartier Tank has become shorthand for elegance, achievement, or a particular aesthetic.

While both generations are driving growth, their preferences diverge in interesting ways.

- Millennials, who are now in their late 20s to early 40s, often lean toward classic heritage brands like Rolex, Omega, and Patek Philippe. Many seek out vintage pieces with a history, appreciating the legacy of mid-20th-century design.

- Gen Z, meanwhile, gravitates toward bold, experimental styles. Independent brands with futuristic aesthetics—such as Richard Mille, Hublot, and Urwerk—hold strong appeal. They are less tied to tradition and more focused on statement-making, limited-edition pieces.

Both, however, are united in their appetite for personalization and limited editions.

“Customization is a huge trend we’re seeing, especially among younger buyers,” Zaslavsky says. “They want straps, dials, or engravings that make the watch truly theirs. In a world of mass production, individuality matters more than ever.”

The financial angle is undeniable. Millennials and Gen Z are more financially savvy than they are often given credit for. Many see watches as a hedge against inflation and a way to diversify their portfolios.

Take, for example, the Rolex Daytona, which retailed for around \$12,000 a decade ago but now sells on the secondary market for upwards of \$40,000. Or the Patek Philippe Nautilus 5711, which doubled in value after being discontinued.

“Smart collectors aren’t just buying watches to wear—they’re buying with an eye toward appreciation,” Zaslavsky emphasizes. “That doesn’t mean every watch will gain value, but those who do their research often come out ahead.”

Zaslavsky cautions, however, that emotional connection should come before profit. “The best

investments are the ones you love to wear. A watch should speak to you first and then to the market.”

Looking ahead, experts predict that the influence of Millennials and Gen Z will only continue to grow. As these generations gain more purchasing power, their preferences will shape the direction of the industry—from design trends to marketing campaigns.

Brands are already adapting by:

- Launching sustainable watch lines with recycled metals and eco-friendly straps.
- Offering digital certificates of authenticity tied to blockchain, appealing to younger buyers who value transparency.
- Creating collaborations with streetwear brands, musicians, and artists to attract a wider audience.

“The market is becoming more dynamic and inclusive,” Zaslavsky observes. “Watchmaking has always been about tradition, but now it’s also about innovation and accessibility. That balance is what excites young collectors the most.”

The rise of modern watch collecting among Millennials and Gen Z isn’t just a trend—it’s a cultural movement. It blends history with innovation, analog craftsmanship with digital communities, and luxury with investment.

As Zaslavsky puts it: “We’re at a turning point. Younger generations are not only collecting watches—they’re redefining what it means to be a collector. They’re proving that watches belong not just in glass cases but on real wrists, living real stories.”

From heirloom pieces passed down through families to Instagram-worthy wrist shots, the watch world is entering an exciting new era. And if Millennials and Gen Z have their way, the tick-tock of tradition will continue to resonate loudly in the digital age.

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