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## INDUSTRY REPORT

# What's Hot, What's Not 2016: Trends in Jewelry Retailing

Popular Jewelry Styles  
Top Sellers for Major Brands  
Celebrity & Online Trends  
Business Insights

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# What’s Hot, What’s Not 2016: Trends in Jewelry Retailing

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## INTRODUCTION

Since we last looked at the trends, styles and designs that are leading the way in the retail jewelry industry, the mood of customers and the industry at large have undergone some changes. Certain design trends that were taking off in 2014 have become the mainstream today, while other trends that we couldn't have predicted two years ago are now firmly embedded in popular culture. In particular, a few abstract themes – nature, sentimentality, and asymmetry – are present or dominant across all aspects of jewelry design and manufacturing. Ethical sourcing is a growing concern in jewelry supply chain, advertising and public relations.

Niche business sectors of jewelry retailing, including custom design and repair services, are growing rapidly, providing new opportunities for entrepreneurs and established businesses alike to build customer loyalty and increase revenues.

At the macro level, prices of diamonds and precious metals continue to fluctuate, synthetics continue to flourish, and online stores continue to absorb market share from brick-and-mortar retailers. These high-level trends are affecting the retail jewelry trade in several ways – learn more about these topics in our [Retail Jewelry Industry in the U.S. 2016](#) report.

In this report we will focus on the designs, materials and colors, celebrity bellwethers and industry trends that are shaping the retail jewelry industry in 2016.

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Brands are offering rings in white gold, with diamond or semi-precious stones.

### MAJOR BRANDS: TOP SELLERS

**Kay Jewelers'** Neil Lane bridal line, which features rings, necklaces and pendants based on the old-Hollywood aesthetic but styled with a modern twist, continues to be a successful revenue driver for the company. White gold, sterling silver and cultured pearls all feature prominently in the collection.



**Zales'** recent offerings also reflect the glamour of another time: white and rose gold rings, lab-created white sapphires, tanzanite and diamonds feature in many of their top-selling pieces. Pendant necklaces and the Vera Wang-branded Love collection are also popular.



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Wrap rings, cuff bracelets, and asymmetric designs are popular this year.

### MAJOR BRANDS CONT'D.

**Tiffany & Co.** charm and cuff bracelets, heart pendants, wrap rings, and sterling silver pieces also reflect the current trends of whimsy, asymmetric design, and bygone eras. Several Tiffany rings incorporate pastel pinks and blue, Pantone's colors of the year for 2016, while others, like their interlocking circles of titanium and sterling silver, are representative of the trend towards unconventional design elements. Others feature Roman numerals, delicate twist patterns, or oversized semi-precious stones including amethyst and chalcedony.



**Pandora** continues to be at the forefront of contemporary jewelry design, building on their casual, natural feel with rings and bracelets that incorporate nature-themed charms, bows (similar to other top brands), various shades of gold and colored gems.



Nature-themed jewelry has exploded in popularity over the past few years.

## POPULAR STYLES AND PRODUCTS

The [Style 360](#) blog provides great insights into the styles and designs that are defining the retail jewelry trends of 2016. We've included some of their on-point observations here.

### Stacking Rings, Colored Gems and Pearls

Jewelry designers and manufacturers of all sizes are coming up with novel stacking ring designs, many of which include colored gemstones. Yellow and white gold bands featuring tourmalines, aquamarines, peridot, sapphires, amethysts and topaz are some of the pieces being promoted strongly by brands. As well, pearls – especially cultured pearls - continue to increase in popularity since we noticed the trend two years ago, and so far, they haven't lost their hold on the popular imagination.

### Nature Themes

Jewelry featuring animal, leaf, flower and tree designs continue to grow in popularity at all price points. From fashion and charm jewelry to [high-end pieces](#) priced in the tens of thousands of dollars, nature themes have evolved beyond cuteness and novelty to become their own category of product, one that has proven staying power with consumers.

The trend came into high relief this year when the Golden Globes Celebrity Gift Lounge in association with The Artisan Group chose to give nature themed jewelry designed by small-town Canadian designer Sheri Dusseault to 100 celebrity guests at their 2016 event. Dusseault's company, Jasmine Thyme Designs, uses home-grown flowers, botanicals and handmade resins for their unique creations, which include pressed-flower jewelry pieces. The piece that was chosen for the Golden Globes – a necklace made from high-quality resin and real dandelion seeds – is called [Dandelion Wish](#).

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Choker necklaces, collars, and arm cuffs are some of 2016's top products.

## POPULAR STYLES AND PRODUCTS CONT'D.

### Collars and Choker Necklaces

As with pearls and nature-themed jewelry, [chokers](#) and collars are two fashion trends that continue to grow in popularity as celebrities and models make them a regular part of runway shows and glitterati events.



### Arm cuffs and Ear cuffs

Selena Gomez and other celebrities have been sporting slim arm cuffs, while Diane Kruger prefers the ear cuff. Brass arm cuffs by Giles and Brother and Catbird are priced in the \$60 range; lower-priced alternatives are available from Nordstrom, Madewell and other retailers. Nordstrom also offers affordable ear cuffs, while FreePeople offers a slightly pricier brass option. Revolve Clothing sells wide, brushed silver ear cuffs at a low price point.



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Karus Chains published a study showing the top jewelry searches on Google.

## CELEBRITY TRENDS

An article published by the Daily Mail revealed that the Love bracelet by Cartier (worn by Kylie Jenner) is currently the single most-searched for item of luxury jewelry on Google. In line with the increasing popularity of stackable rings and bracelets, Jenner often wears Love bracelets stacked six-deep on her arm. The article uncovered the Cartier bracelet insight from a [study of search habits](#) undertaken by Karus Chains, which we will look at in more detail below.

Drew Barrymore recently donned a gold ring featuring flourishes of blue and a line of French poetry, designed by Alison Lou.

Girls creator Lena Dunham received a moonstone and peridot ring from her boyfriend, a piece that was also inspired by the turn-of-the-century designs.

## POPULAR GOOGLE SEARCHES

The Karus Chains research study cited above also notes that, after the Love bracelet, the most searched-for jewelry items on Google are Tiffany engagement rings, followed by the Tiffany heart necklace and Swarovski crystal earrings.

The most popular jewelry brands as measured by Google search figures were led by Pandora, which took first place by a significant margin, followed by Tiffany & Co., Swarovski, and Cartier in fourth place.

For men's jewelry, the most popular accessories as measured by Google searches were wedding rings, gold chains, novelty cufflinks and leather bracelets, while the most popular brands for men's products were Cartier, Tiffany & Co., Miansai and Triton.



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Custom design and jewelry repair services can offer new revenue streams.

## BUSINESS INSIGHTS: JEWELRY REPAIR & CASUAL FASHION

### Fast-Fix

The Fast-Fix network of quick-service jewelry repair kiosks and storefronts is enjoying continued success after 30 years in business; in fact, they are doing so well that they plan to open at least 10 new locations in 2016. The company was bought up by an auditor originally hired to review the company's performance, who was so impressed that he made an offer to buy. Noting that most jewelry stores don't provide in-house service for customers, the new owner saw growth potential and a solid business model based on a need that wasn't being met.

In the last edition of [What's Hot, What's Not](#), we identified custom design and repair services as a potential growth market for chain jewelry stores, established independent retailers and newcomers alike. The ongoing success and expansion of Fast-Fix shows that the opportunities are real.

### Casual Fashion

Besides the high-level trends we've identified already, a general trend towards casual fashion is having a deep impact in the jewelry industry. Consumer fashion and jewelry designs that are focused on subtlety - as opposed to 'making a statement' - are leading the way in popular culture. Even jewelry that incorporates elements of glamour, such as Neil Lane bridal and other similar products, are doing so in a whimsical, almost ironic way, using throwback designs meant to inspire more than impress.

The rise of the casual aesthetic could be attributed to several things – a growing popular distaste for ostentatious displays of wealth, or a desire for 'the good old days' and simpler times – but regardless of what is driving the trend, it is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

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Ethical sourcing is a hot topic, one of growing interest to jewelry consumers.

## BUSINESS INSIGHTS: ETHICAL SOURCING

### Ethical Sourcing

We covered [Hoover and Strong's decision](#) to begin selling Fairmined gold back in 2014; since then, many forward-thinking companies at every stage of the jewelry supply chain have taken steps to ensure that their materials are sourced humanely. Eric Braunwart, CEO of Columbia Gem House, has been leading the way in ethical sourcing of gemstones for years.

It's heartening to see the onset of industry-wide respect for the individuals who mine and manufacture the precious metals and gems that retailers need to make a living. Ongoing human rights concerns in precious metal, gemstone and diamond mines around the world pose a threat to the reputation of the jewelry industry, while new revelations about violence and intimidation at mines appear in the news every day. Retail jewelers would be wise to invest in ethical suppliers and materials to ensure that they are compliant with the Kimberly Process, while also keeping up with the dovetailing trends of environmental sustainability and ethical business practices.