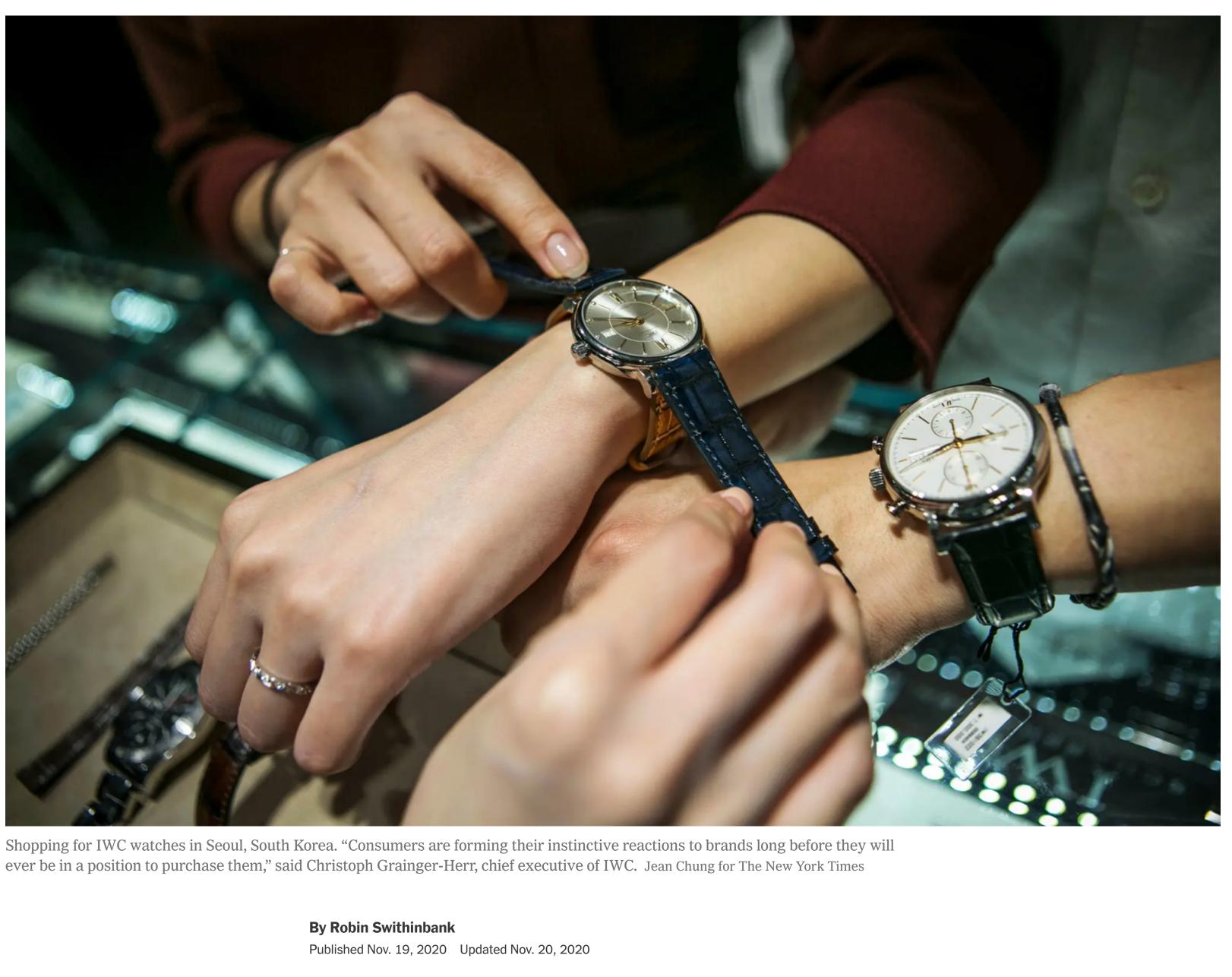
## Sustainability in Watches: Do You Really Care?

Watch companies say younger buyers simply expect it to be part of any product.

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their green initiatives, the question remains: Do consumers

luxury universe, "people in sales didn't have the responsibility global co-head of consumer and retail research at HSBC. But evidence of consumer appetite for sustainably produced

"As watches are luxury items, by definition they aren't a necessity, so I absolutely expect the manufacturing process to have a strong enthusiast who is host of the YouTube watch channel **Bark & Jack**. "I'm shocked when watch companies announce they are only now

Others said claims of sustainability were a veneer. "How is a recycled or sustainably produced watch strap on a production run of 500 watches going to impact the environment in any way?" said Justin Mastine-Frost, a Toronto-based watch collector and editor in

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Oliver Müller, founder of the Swiss-based watch consulting firm LuxeConsult, estimated that Baume, with prices from \$500 to \$1,500, had sold just 1,500 watches. (Richemont brands do not

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sustainability with cool design and trying to appeal to a younger generation was excellent, but does this generation want to pay a premium for sustainability? Unfortunately, I think those clients in Generations Y and Z don't." Rolf Studer, co-chief executive of Oris, a brand known for its

But David Chaumet, chief executive of Baume et Mercier, said the company remained committed to creating sustainable watches.

"Soon, the question will not be how much recycled material you

Neoking

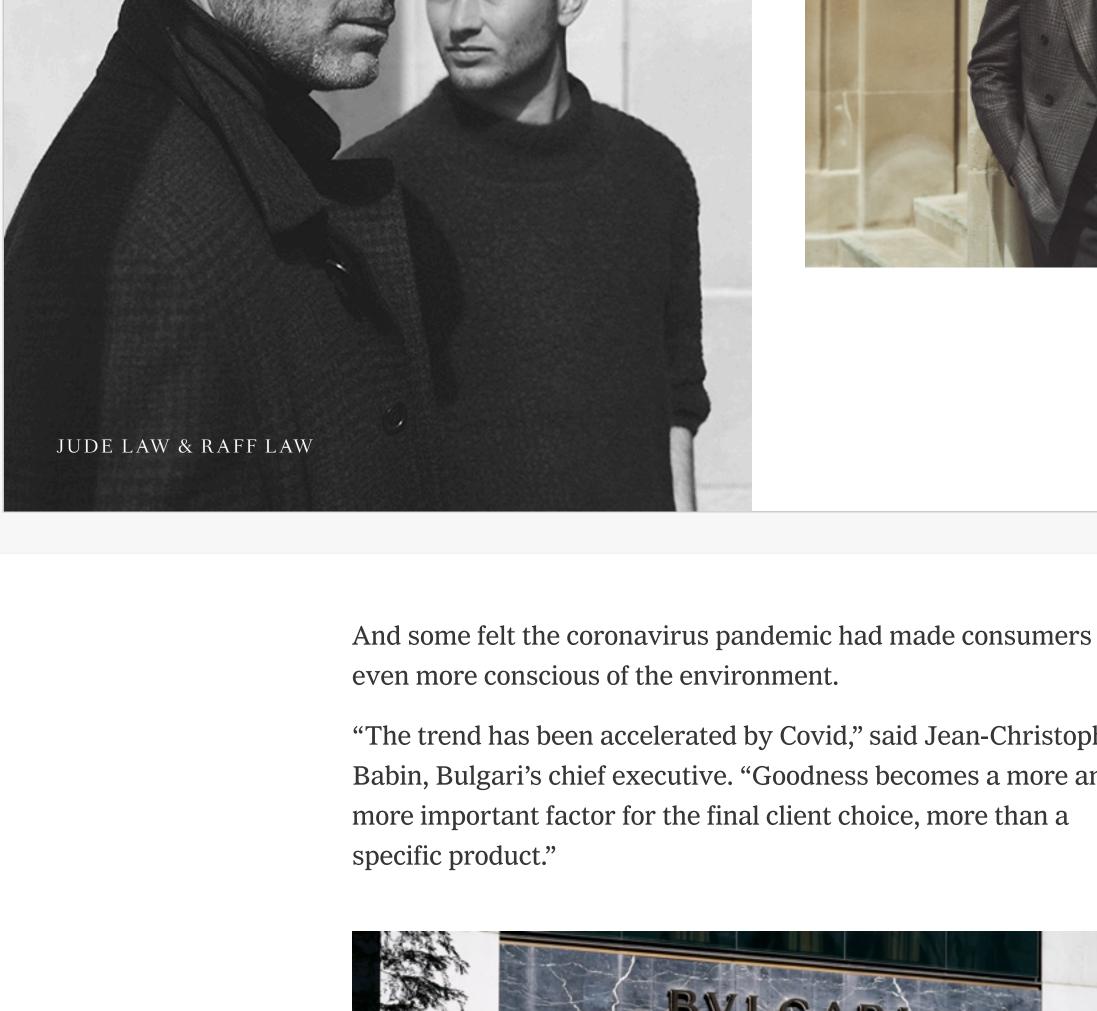
use, but why you're not using any at all," he said.

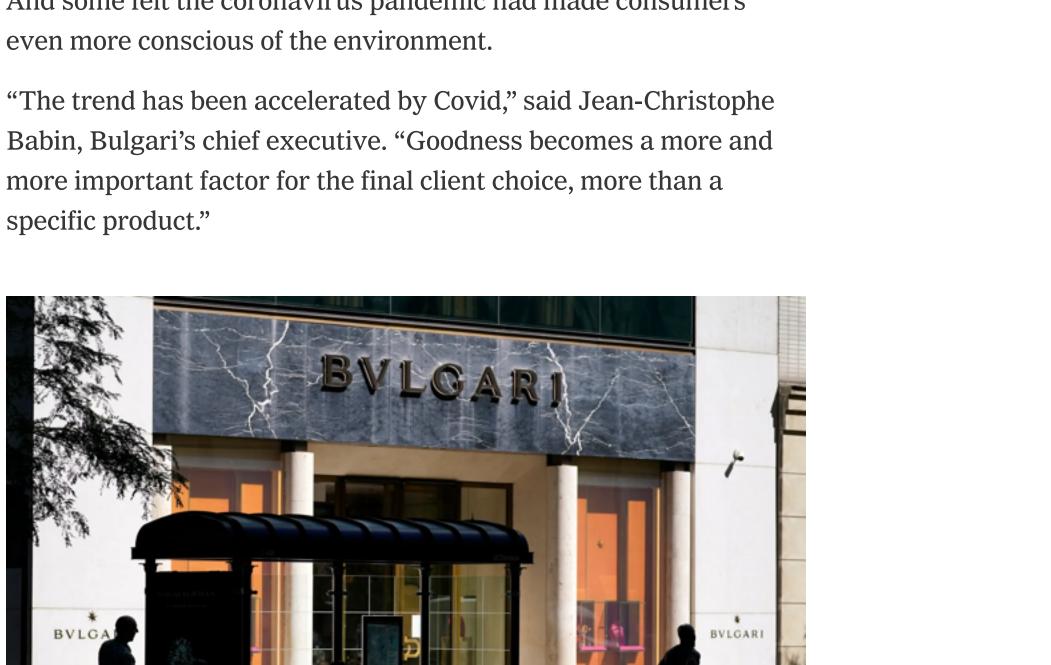
## In April, Mr. Pontroué said, Panerai intends to introduce a luxury

mechanical watch made entirely of recycled materials. "It's purely personal. It's a sense of responsibility," he said. Panerai is not alone. Bulgari, Ulysse Nardin, Breitling and Oris all have marketed new watches with recycling, upcycling or sustainability partnership stories this year. Some brands said sustainability would future-proof their

them," said Christoph Grainger-Herr, chief executive of IWC, which has made a big play of its environmental policies and was given the highest environmental rating of any Swiss watch brand by the WWF in a 2018 report. "The impression you make on a younger

consumer is fundamentally important to build the right image, and hopefully that will pay off in years to come."





from being involved in the game." Mr. Rambourg offered some general perspective. "There are very few Gretas, but they're very vocal," he said, referring to the climate activist Greta Thunberg. "Few consumers are asking for this, but they're the youngest and the loudest. So you can have two attitudes as a brand: Either you hope it passes, or you start to invest because you know that those few vocal consumers today are the beginning of a wave." Because it was becoming an underlying expectation, some said sustainability would never be the first consideration in a luxury

when they're coming in," said David Hurley, executive vice president for Watches of Switzerland Group U.S. But that didn't mean they were ignoring the topic. Mr. Hurley said he had been training sales staff members to explain the environmental credentials of brands and their products to customers.

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fishing nets.

said Georges Kern, Breitling's chief executive. "You have such transparency with digital tools. You cannot hide. When your customer sees you're lying, they will stop buying from you." In October, Breitling announced its new watches would be presented in boxes made of upcycled plastic bottles. Several now do have plans, and at least one includes digital tracking of its materials. For example, Mr. Babin said, Bulgari has been working with the Aura platform being developed by its parent company, LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, to use blockchain

accused of greenwashing, because you cannot lie to the consumer,"

"will bring full transparency," he said. "Many clients will want to know much more about what the product is made of." And in the end, some brands said, improving sustainability will help consumers to care. "When you're selling an emotional product, you want to give customers something they can genuinely feel good about," said Mr. Grainger-Herr of IWC.

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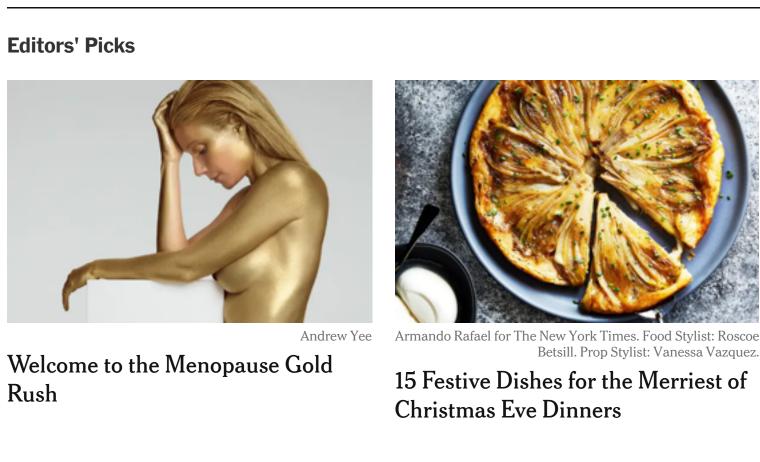
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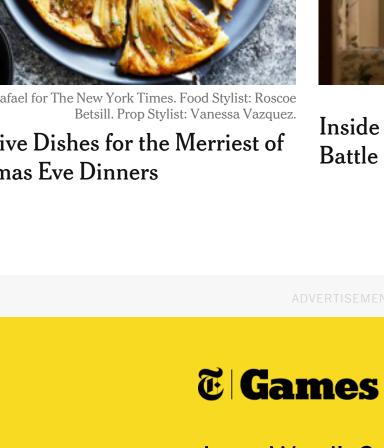


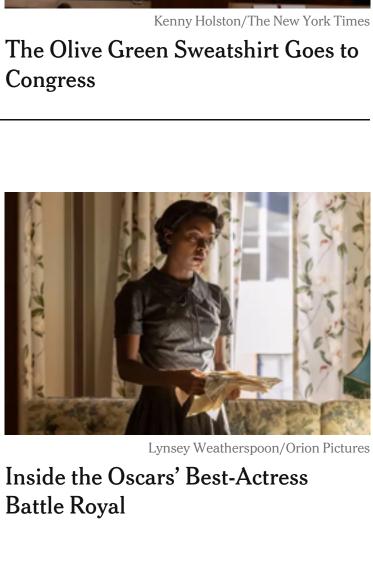


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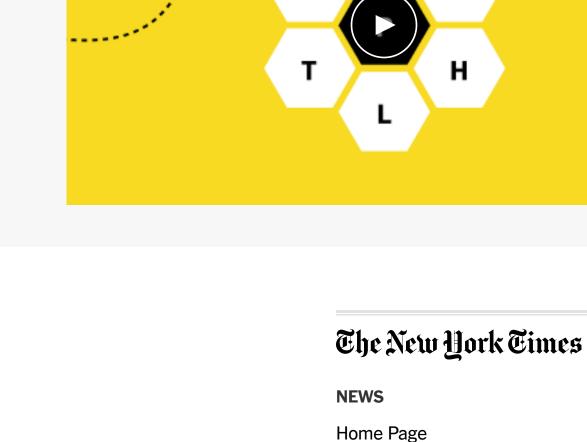
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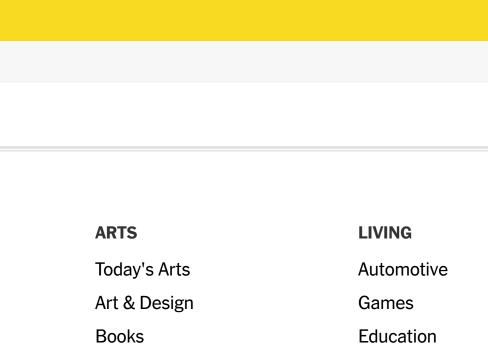
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## Sustainability, a term increasingly used to describe the practice of environmentally conscious manufacturing, has become a watchmaking buzzword. But even as luxury watch brands tout actually care? According to some analysts, increasingly, they do. Across the question three years ago and now they do," said Erwan Rambourg,

watches has been mixed.

focus on sustainability," said Adrian Barker, the British watch using recycled materials for their packaging."

And when presented with a luxury watch brand built around sustainability, customers apparently failed to respond. Baume was introduced by Richemont in 2018 as an online-only operation based on sustainability and customization, but earlier this year it was absorbed into Baume et Mercier, another Richemont brand.

chief of the watch forum WatchUSeek.

release sales figures.) **Timely News and Features About Watches** • What Are You Wearing? A new European Union regulation is expected to

change the industry's longstanding culture of secrecy.

visual, if subtle, guides to places that their makers find meaningful. • More on Watches: Stories on trends and issues in the industry. "Baume was a total flop sales-wise," he said. "The price point was way too high for a concept meant to challenge the likes of entry-

level brands such as Daniel Wellington. The concept of combining

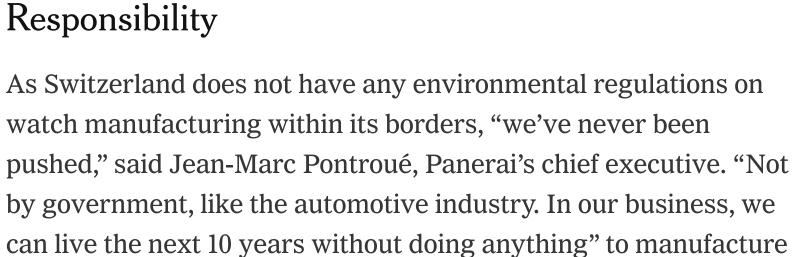
ecological orientation, said this was because they expected it.

Before the pandemic, he invited students to the company's headquarters in Hölstein, Switzerland, to discuss the topic. Sustainability "wasn't something that's a bonus for them," he said. "They expect it; it's not a reward." The New York Times | All Access

Five Times experiences.

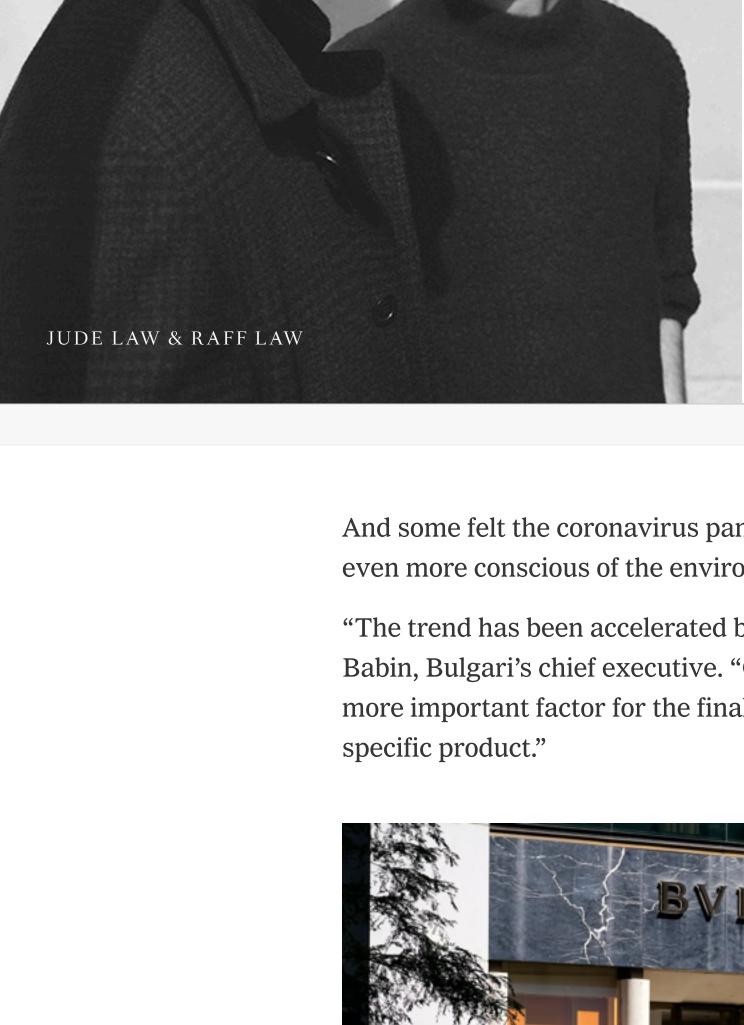
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watches more sustainably.

businesses. "Consumers are forming their instinctive reactions to brands long before they will ever be in a position to purchase



A Bulgari store in Chicago. The brand is working toward using blockchain technology to trace the supply chain of its products. Charles Rex Arbogast/Associated Press Mr. Pontroué said that, despite little on-the-ground evidence of

consumer demand, the industry was approaching the point of no

return. "I've never had one customer who has said they want to

sustainability," he said. "But if you don't do it, it will disqualify you

buy a Panerai because we started to make some efforts in

watch purchase. "I don't think people buy a watch because it's environmentally friendly; they buy it because it's a great product," said Patrick Pruniaux, chief executive of Ulysse Nardin, which this

month announced a concept watch with a case made of recycled

Retailers said the same. "It's not something people are mentioning

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## neither Watches of Switzerland nor Ulysse Nardin will disclose specifics, Mr. Hurley said sales of the brand — whose ambassadors include a great white shark — had doubled in his U.S. stores this year. "Sustainability is one of the factors," he said.

Concerns about greenwashing — brands using environmental

There are signs that this is already affecting revenues. While

partnerships to appear more attractive to conscientious buyers were once high. "If you look at sustainability, three years ago it was greenwashing, it was box-ticking," said Mr. Rambourg of HSBC. "It was clear very few brands actually had a plan and a vision." Some brands, however, disputed that. "I'm not worried about being

technology to trace the supply chain of its products. Blockchain, used for tamper-proof storage of digital information,

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