

CALIFORNIA ApparelNews

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The Bloc



Americana at Brand



South Coast Plaza



Fairfax District

INDUSTRY FOCUS: TECHNOLOGY

How Apparel-Technology Companies Could Reset the COVID-19 'Time Machine'

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

As consumers adapted to a new way of life with most of their shopping conducted through e-commerce, businesses that viewed this method of selling as uncharted territory learned quickly in order to survive. With almost nine months of COVID-19 under its belt, the apparel industry is rebooting, and, while the most-basic technologies have kept businesses relevant during this time, they will again have to adopt advanced methods of creating and selling apparel to remain agile, reduce waste and accommodate a changed, post-pandemic consumer.

Making our way into 2021, with the pandemic remaining a challenge, *California Apparel News* asked apparel-technology experts: *What do you view as the most important technology that retailers and manufacturers should adopt during this COVID-19 climate?*

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RETAIL

Digital Commerce Grows Over Black Friday Weekend Marked by Change

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

It was a Black Friday Weekend during which digital commerce surged. More than 100 million consumers shopped online on Nov. 27, Black Friday, the traditional start of the holiday season, and Small Business Saturday, Nov. 28, according to the **National Retail Federation** trade group. The number of people shopping online increased 8 percent over the Black Friday Weekend, which ran from Thanksgiving, Nov. 26, through Cyber Monday, Nov. 30, compared to the same weekend in 2019.

An estimated 186.4 million consumers shopped over the 2020 Black Friday Weekend, according to a survey released Dec. 1 by the NRF and **Prosper Insights & Analytics**. The NRF said that the survey showed that business was good despite a number of challenges including COVID-19 and the

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INSIDE

Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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HEADING INTO HOLIDAY COMMERCE

The official holiday-shopping season began the day after Thanksgiving with Black Friday on Nov. 27 and continued into Cyber Monday on Nov. 30, with e-commerce experiencing strong gains as retailers and consumers continue to experience challenges.



Melrose Place



Glendale Galleria

ANDREW ASCH (THE BLOC, AMERICANA AT BRAND, FAIRFAX DISTRICT, MELROSE PLACE, GLENDALE GALLERIA), SOUTH COAST PLAZA

Informa Markets Fashion Heads Into 2021 With Hybrid On-site/Digital Schedule

On Dec. 3, **Informa Markets Fashion** announced its 2021 schedule of digital events and on-location expositions. In January, it will host the second installment of its digital marketplace events through its partnership with **NuOrder**, while a **MAGIC Pop Up Orlando** show will take place Feb. 9–11 at the **Orange County Convention Center** in Orlando, Fla.

“Orlando has that similarity to Las Vegas. It is a town based on the convention center,” Informa Markets Fashion’s commercial president Kelly Helfman, explained. “It has a campus-like layout. All the different hotels and restaurants are within walking distance to the convention center so it will limit the amount of transportation [attendees] have to take.”

MAGIC Pop Up Orlando will be produced as a limited-capacity, appointment-driven intimate on-site show that will focus on diverse product offerings featuring contemporary apparel, accessories and footwear from the women’s category and a selection of men’s brands.

The event producer emphasized safety and will implement the Informa AllSecure protocol. This process includes temperature screenings at entry, mask requirements and physical-distancing guidelines according to local and government regulations. The show



JENNA BASCOM
After much anticipation from the apparel industry, Informa Markets Fashion announced its 2021 event schedule, which includes a hybrid model of digital and on-site events.

will feature wider aisles, open-air concepts, and sanitization and deep-cleaning measures.

Though Helfman is looking forward to welcoming buyers and brands, she noted that safety is her priority and the digital option remains for guests who are not yet comfortable with on-site shows and those who face other challenges.

“Safety is at the forefront of everything,” Helfman said. “We really thought this out and wouldn’t be doing it if we didn’t think we could be doing it properly, have effective monitoring in place for safety.”

On Jan. 19, **Project Digital** will launch as a

comprehensive menswear marketplace, which will be accessible until Feb. 15. The fashion-footwear show **MICAM Americas Digital** will run Jan. 19–March 16. **MAGIC Digital** will be held Feb. 1–March 1 to serve the women’s young contemporary and trend marketplace. The elevated women’s marketplace **Coterie Digital** will be hosted Feb. 16–March 16. Through its proprietary platform, Informa will host **Sourcing at MAGIC Online** March 1–May 1 to serve the sourcing and supply-chain needs of the apparel community.

“We will do a hybrid model moving forward. This is the first introductory event to that,” Helfman said of the MAGIC Pop Up in Orlando. “There will be MAGIC Digital going on alongside that show, so it will give buyers the opportunity who feel comfortable to come into the live event, shop and preview some of the brands prior and follow up with shopping on the digital platform.”

Informa also revealed a return to Las Vegas and New York in 2021, with the **Las Vegas Convention Center** hosting **WWD MAGIC, Project, Project Womens, MAGIC Mens, MICAM Americas** and **Sourcing at MAGIC** Aug. 9–11. Sept. 19–21, **Coterie** will be held at New York City’s **Jacob Javits Center**.

—Dorothy Crouch

Promenade 2035 to Offer a Range of Amenities in Woodland Hills, Calif.

A unanimous Los Angeles City Council vote recently gave a green light for final plans of **Promenade 2035**, a more-than-\$1-billion mixed-use project that is scheduled to be constructed on the site of the now-shuttered **Promenade** retail center in Los Angeles’ Woodland Hills neighborhood. The property is owned by **Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield**

and is adjacent to the **Westfield Topanga & The Village** retail centers, which offer 2.1 million square feet of retail, including a **Nordstrom**, high-end shops such as **Louis Vuitton** and specialty shops such as **Vans**.

Construction on Promenade 2035 is scheduled to begin within two years, according to media reports. The plans for Promenade 2035



PROMENADE 2035
Plans for Promenade 2035 encompass retail, entertainment and sports complexes, hotels, and residential units on its 34 acres.

focus on developing the 34-acre property into a downtown district for the West Valley region of Los Angeles’ San Fernando Valley. According to Bob Blumenfeld, the L.A. city councilman who represents Woodland Hills, Promenade 2035 would be a “game-changing development for the West Valley.” (The name invokes the Warner Center 2035 Specific Plan that was adopted by the city council in 2013, not the expected date of completion.)

The development will be anchored by a community grocery store and pharmacy that will complement retail in the neighboring malls and focus on “smaller, more localized retail opportunities,” according to *promenade2035.com* website.

The new development also will feature a 10,000-seat entertainment and sports center, two hotels, 10 acres of green space, creative-office space and about 1,400 residential units.

The development will strive for sustainability by achieving LEED Silver status for its buildings and irrigation plans that will rely on capturing and reusing rainwater.

Construction will create more than 10,800 full and part-time jobs. At completion, the development will create more than 9,700 full and part-time jobs and generate an estimated \$1.7 billion in economic output.

—Andrew Asch

Corrections and Clarifications

Regarding the Curve listing within our “Trade Show” special section, which published in our Nov. 13 issue, the correct website address should have been shown as <https://curve-newyork.com/>.

Inside the Industry

Macy’s national Believe Week benefiting the Make-A-Wish Foundation, a nonprofit that grants wishes to critically ill children, is encouraging people to send letters to Santa online at macys.com/believe or drop them off at Macy’s stores. For every letter received, Macy’s will donate \$1 to Make-A-Wish, or up to \$1 million. A final deadline to submit a Believe letter to Macy’s is Dec. 24. Pledges will be doubled to \$2 for every letter collected by Dec. 5. On Dec. 8, Macy’s and Make-A-Wish will realize the wish of Kennise, a 5-year-old leukemia patient from Brooklyn, N.Y., who wished to stay in a castle, which will be constructed in a portion of the retailer’s downtown Brooklyn store.

Foot Locker Inc. recently announced that Lauren B. Peters, the retailer’s executive vice president and chief financial officer, is retiring. Peters is scheduled to step down in April 2021. Foot Locker will be working with Crist Kolder, an executive-search firm, to look for a successor. Richard Johnson, Foot Locker’s chairman and CEO, said Peters helped to drive a period of growth at the company.

MarketTime, a Dallas-based B2B software-as-a-service provider, recently announced an agreement with the Brussels Trade Mart, which is Europe’s only permanent wholesale market center. The Brussels Trade Mart will work with MarketTime’s proprietary platform to link buyers and sellers. The Dallas Market Center uses MarketTime’s platform. The Brussels deal will help develop the first global omni-channel marketplace, according to a statement from Cindy Morris, the DMC’s president and CEO. “Our shared goal is to broaden the reach of tenants in Dallas and Brussels to open new accounts with buyers around the globe and provide access to quality merchandise to help retailers thrive,” Morris said.

The Garment Worker Center and a number of other Los Angeles labor organizations joined Dolores Huerta, a pioneering activist for labor and civil rights, in signing a letter asking President-elect Biden to appoint Julie Su as the U.S. Secretary of Labor. Since 2019, Su has served as secretary for the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. The Garment Worker Center’s Marissa Nuncio said that Su has built a track record fighting apparel-industry sweatshops. “In 1995, Julie’s groundbreaking advocacy for garment workers trafficked and forced to work under armed guard in an apartment complex in El Monte helped expose and catalyze the fight against modern-day sweatshops,” Nuncio said.

GQ magazine announced its 2020 Fashion Awards in its December issue, and California fashion was among several honorees. The Los Angeles boutique Union was named Store of the Year for its new focus on fashion labels made by People of Color. Stüssy, based in Irvine, Calif., was named Comeback Brand of the Year. Stüssy, which celebrated its 40th year of business in 2020, gained notice for partnerships with Our Legacy Work Shop for a collaboration that used dead-stock fabric. San Francisco designer Evan Kinori was named Breakthrough Designer of the Year.

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New CFMB Criterion From Textile Exchange Outlines Environmental Impact

The sustainable-fiber-and-materials-sourcing nonprofit **Textile Exchange** announced Dec. 2 that it is introducing a new criterion to its Corporate Fibers & Materials Benchmark that will afford greater insight regarding the impact on biodiversity caused by apparel companies.

Through its work with United Kingdom-headquartered **The Biodiversity Consultancy**, which outlines responsible, nature-considerate decision-making for fashion and textile clients and is supported by the Johannesburg provider of pulp **Sappi**, the Texas-based Textile Exchange encourages brands to use its new tool to plan for progressive changes that will support biodiversity. According to Textile Exchange chief executive officer La Rhea Pepper, there are a number of steps that the organization can guide brands through in order to gain more-responsible business operations.

"I am an organic-cotton farmer, so biodiversity is at the heart of everything for me. It provides benefits that address climate change, such as carbon sequestration, regulation of local climate air quality and moderate to extreme natural events," Pepper said. "Additionally, biodiversity plays a key role in other benefits such as pollination, erosion prevention, wastewater treatment, biological control of pests and disease, and preventing species extinction. Our sector can do so much that is nature positive, and I look forward to seeing the first benchmark results."

Currently comprising around 200 brands and retailers including **Gucci**, **H&M Group**, **Norrøna**, **Patagonia**, **Tchibo** and **The North Face**, the CFMB has identified ways these members can incorporate preferred materials such as organic



A new benchmark set forth by Textile Exchange will guide fashion brands through cleaning up their sourcing practices to yield an ecologically sound apparel industry.

cotton, recycled polyester and man-made cellulose. Since it opened its membership to suppliers and manufacturers this year, the CFMB has worked with more than 20 leaders in textiles, including **Lenzing** and **Birla Cellulose** of the **Aditya Birla Group**, **The Schneider Group**, **Sulochana** and **World Textile Sourcing**.

"Participating companies are already making significant headway in identifying their portfolio of materials, the sus-

tainability programs they are investing in, targets for uptake and improvement, and calculating their volumetric uptake of preferred fibers and materials in use," said Liesl Truscott, director of the European and materials strategy for Textile Exchange. "The new biodiversity benchmark can help take them to the next stage, from de-carbonizing their materials to embedding positive biodiversity outcomes in their strategies."

These advanced efforts by Textile Exchange align with commitments made by global leaders during September's "United Nations Summit on Biodiversity" to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. As part of its 2030 Strategy: Climate+, the Textile Exchange seeks to reduce carbon emissions from textile-fiber processing and material production by 2030.

The new benchmark has launched in beta, and its survey, which was launched Dec. 1, is available to responses until Jan. 31, 2021. Companies that are participants in the CFMB's Material Change Index will gain access to the survey via its existing portal. New participants are welcome to register online at cfmb.textileexchange.org/.

"The fashion and textile industry now has an opportunity to establish a leadership position in how it tackles biodiversity and nature loss," The Biodiversity Consultancy's chief executive, Dr. Helen Temple, said. "Nature is in the spotlight more than ever before, and understanding where and how companies impact nature—and what they can do about it—has become increasingly important, both in terms of operational decisions and in the pursuit of the systemic, transformational shifts we need to drive nature-positive change."

—Dorothy Crouch

RETAIL

Black Friday *Continued from page 1*

economic fallout from the pandemic.

More people shopped during the 2020 Black Friday Weekend compared to the same period in 2018, when 165.8 million consumers shopped, according to the NRF. However, the numbers of Black Friday Weekend shoppers in 2020 was less than the same period in 2019, when 189.6 million people shopped.

The pandemic overturned Black Friday Weekend traditions such as big crowds at malls, said Matthew Shay, the NRF's president and chief executive officer.

"This five-day holiday weekend was unlike any other we have seen," Shay said. "We knew the pandemic would affect in-store traffic."

Many major retailers were closed on Thanksgiving Day, Shay said, so in-store-shopping traffic dropped by 55 percent compared to last year. The NRF survey also found that in-store-shopping traffic dropped 37 percent on Black Friday compared to the same day in the previous year.

Other market-research groups also found that the 2020 Black Friday Weekend not only provided a stage for a major increase in e-commerce business but also featured a big leap for omni-channel retail. **Salesforce**, a San Francisco-headquartered customer-relationship-management platform, also surveyed shopping during what it called Cyber Week, Nov. 24–30. It found that consumers in the United States spent \$60 billion on digital commerce during that period, though social-media platforms made up only 4 percent of digital orders.

Salesforce also found retailers that offered omni-channel delivery options such as curbside pickup at physical stores increased their digital revenue by 29 percent compared to the same period the previous year.

Changes in Black Friday retail were perhaps most felt at malls. At the **Glendale Galleria** in Glendale, Calif., omni-channel retail played a more important role in the business of the Galleria's **JCPenney** store, said General Manager Brett Wolever.

"Curbside pickup has been huge this year. This is new for us. A lot of customers are taking advantage of it. We had hundreds of orders when we first came in this morning," Wolever said of Black Friday.

Social-distancing rules required by government authorities such as the State of California and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health also changed other aspects of Black Friday shopping. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, stores were ordered to only allow 25 percent of a retailer's typical consumer capacity inside. Still, Southern California mall managers such as Steven Sayers of the Glendale Galleria reported that crowds were good.

"It is certainly not as busy as past years, but there were a lot of people shopping and shopping safely," Sayers said.

Debra Gunn Downing, a spokesperson for **South Coast Plaza** in Costa Mesa, Calif., also said that her retail center was busy throughout the entire Black Friday Weekend though



Glendale Galleria



Melrose Place



Rodeo Drive



Americana at Brand

consumer traffic volume was lower than previous years.

Consumer traffic also appeared to decline on many retail streets during Small Business Saturday. While shoppers lined up in front of stores offering exclusive products, retailers such as Arlington Forbes, co-owner of **Canvas Malibu** in Malibu, Calif., said that the pace of business was much slower than previous years.

"It's a challenging time. There's a lot of confusion. A lot of people don't know what they should be doing. Should they be at home or should they be at the mall? It had tremendous impact," Forbes said.

There have been some silver linings to pandemic restrictions on stores, Forbes said. Only four shoppers were allowed in Canvas at one time. "Our second floor became more of a private shopping space," Forbes said. "When you have a private shopping experience, it creates a level of comfort for people."

Dan Jablons, president of the Los Angeles-based **Retail**

Smart Guys consultancy group, also said that pandemic restrictions have helped businesses in that only the most serious shoppers are going to stores. "It's not a casual browse; sales are being closed faster," Jablons said. The mindset is good for retailers as long as they apply effective marketing techniques to get customers into the stores.

"The key is to turn faster than before," he said. "We're pushing people to plan their assortments. There are plenty of people who buy, buy, buy."

For the retail industry, 2020 might be a year of exception, said the NRF's Shay. "Black Friday is a consumer day that once upon a time was a day of consequence and remains of consequence," Shay said during a Dec. 1 conference call with reporters. "If we roll the clock forward a year and vaccines are widely and safely distributed I wouldn't be surprised if Black Friday will be the biggest in years. Black Friday will be relevant in the future no matter what happens." ●



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FALL/WINTER 2021–2022 TEXTILE FORECAST

Walking the Line Between Necessity and Creativity

By Peclers Paris

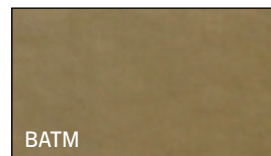
The world we know is undergoing a necessary transformation, speeding up toward more-responsible consumption. Faced with this new economic and ethical crisis, we must think about tomorrow's fashions, which we are no longer compelled to endlessly reinvent. We focus on well-thought-out essentials but not without their own character. Women rediscover the pleasures

of dressing, free to be who they want to be.

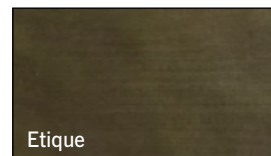
This season, they channel a multifaceted femininity that is committed, confident, laid-back and motivated. Whether dressed as a modern warrior fighting for a better world; confidently and proudly seductive, provocatively shaking up vintage codes; or ultra-modern and creative, they boast a strong and inspired personality. Key materials for the Fall/Winter 2021–2022 season include:

Puffy Quilting

This season, quilting gets an ultra-light update. With little or no topstitching, we like the puffy effect it delivers in luminous nylon for a tech effect or in matte for a more upscale look. It's perfect for outerwear that is high coverage but not too heavy, yielding a blanket effect.



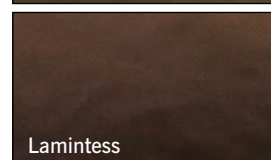
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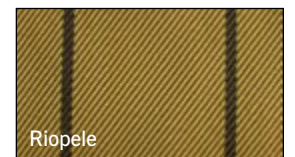
Lamintess

Liquid Shine

Shine features on satin and velvet this winter in a super-fluid application. Reflections react to movement, creating a liquid or even mirror-like effect. From soft and lightweight panne to heavy and ultra-shiny twill, these fabrics boost dresses and blouses for a 1980s effect for both day and night.



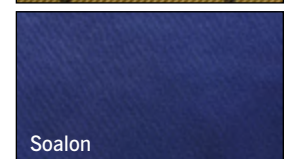
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Riopelle



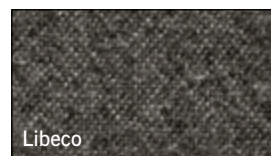
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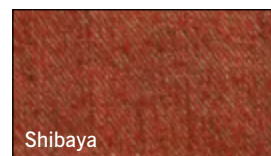
Soalon

Blurred Wools

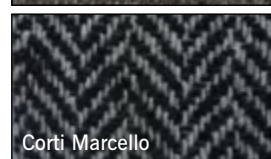
The focus is on raw and rustic broadcloth inspired by the masculine wardrobe: blurred, piqué, micro or macro herringbone; soft tweeds; and solids. We love it in color for greater novelty. It's adaptable to an entire wardrobe of classic pieces, from pencil skirts to masculine overcoats.



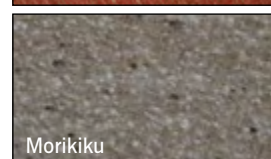
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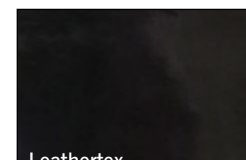
Corti Marcello



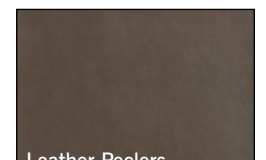
Morikiku

Tender "Leathers"

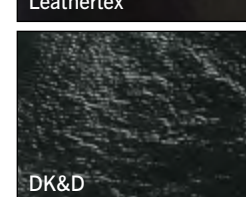
Omnipresent this season, faux leather is openly embraced. Whether vinyl and plastic or super-soft vegan, these textiles are collectively known as "faux leather." Trending pieces are found in 1980s-colored patent versions or ones smooth and more delicate. Dare-to-wear looks for the adventurous are found in pants, Bermudas, skirts, shorts, jackets and coats that offer a femme-fatale or retro effect.



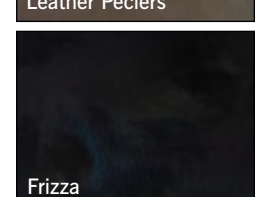
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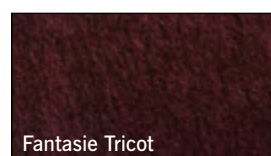
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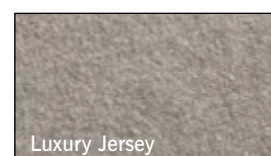
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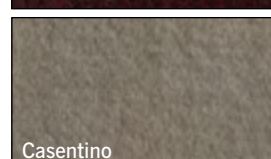
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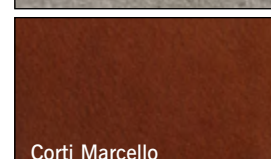
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Luxury Jersey



Casentino



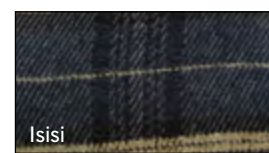
Corti Marcello

Luxury Broadcloths

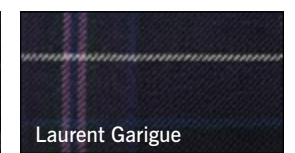
Combed looks, with a soft hand in cozy wool, favors a luxury take for the season. For coats in military and strong, reassuring silhouettes, the product is treated using natural materials—pure new wool or 100 percent cashmere. These textiles are ideal for a luxurious and comfortable look.

Winter Dishcloth Checks

Dishcloth checks are updated for mid-season or even the heart of winter. We love them recolored or darker with stripes relying on delicate colors for a hyper-feminine look. Classic and go-to checks are reworked on shirt, flannel and coat weights.



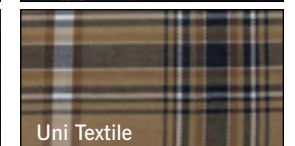
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What do you view as the most important technology that retailers and manufacturers should adopt during this COVID-19 climate?

Technology *Continued from page 1*

Alvanon Jason Wang Chief Operations Officer



Businesses and the planet cannot sustain oversupply. Accurate, current data are the basis of producing less, more-relevant and successful products. Standardization is key, and data-driven standards must underpin all product development. Companies must use data to generate standards on the size, shape and demographic characteristics of its target consumers. Only if these data are truly relevant to a defined consumer population will garments be relevant.

Digitalization enables companies to standardize and share all of their critical standards information and tools in a hub that everyone who needs to can access. A library of agreed-upon, defined and consistent standards, which would include body blocks, fabrics, fit standards and 3D avatars, must form the basis of all product development. These asset libraries are the key to generating authentic digital garments that are truly representative of the physical product.

We have an opportunity today with the technology and tools available to us to build a new future for the apparel industry—one where the digital and physical are closely connected and work together.

Backbone Matthew Klein Chief Executive Officer and Founder



We are now living in a direct-to-consumer world where customer demand and the democratization of e-commerce are driving the supply chain of modern products. This supply chain has become retail's competitive advantage. Technology is leading the charge to help retailers and manufacturers adapt to a new normal during this COVID-19 climate.

The first mile of the supply chain has become increasingly vital to get right. Product creation, vendor collaboration, assortment and demand planning in a direct-to-consumer economy have created stress on the traditional supply chain. Product-development, design and planning technology are must-have tools in today's ecosystem. If you can't nail the first mile there is no way you will win the race at retail in this new normal.

Bierrebi Giuseppe Cianci Chief Operating Officer



In these challenging times, it is essential to keep innovating and adapting all strategies, processes and products to the continuous changes in the market environment. Leading manufacturers need to make all of their production processes more efficient while at the same time constantly improving the performance of their products and shortening the supply chain. Priorities for manufacturers should be focused on

maximizing cutting-room efficiencies with low operating costs and high cutting quality for large or flexible outputs.

Bierrebi was able to anticipate market trends, developing the Crystal machine, an innovative cutting system with very low consumption levels. Crystal does not use suction to keep the fabric on the cutting area as an electrostatic bar keeps the materials perfectly aligned on a special glass surface that offers less wear and maximum flatness.

Brandboom Mark Kwong Head of Business Development



While the technology or product may differ between retailer and manufacturer, the primary goal for them both is to use this break in play to discover sales-and-marketing enablement tools that can either change their approach or enhance it. We're in a unique situation where marketing has been equalized. Your local mom-and-pop shop now has the same available marketing opportunities as a big

box. Sure, the budgets are different, but the opportunities to have a voice are much more equal. The power is in how effectively you use your social networks and how you present yourself to prospective buyers.

At Brandboom, we provide an AI-driven marketplace called Connect, which has been helping brands find relevant buyers for their products. Our brands have been finding different channels, territories and buyers to work with, and they are able to present them with a beautiful look book to purchase straightaway.

Brandlab Fashion Dan O'Connell Co-founder and Chairman



Over the last six months, fashion companies—particularly those reliant upon face-to-face interaction and commerce—have been forced to come up with new and more-innovative ways to do business.

Prior to the lockdown, virtual reality was generally used as a marketing gimmick rather than a serious sales channel. However, closed wholesale showrooms and a drop in shop footfall have rendered traditional sales channels unviable. Many businesses have had to reinvent their operations with incredible speed in order to survive.

The fashion industry has changed on a huge scale and will never be the same again. What was an inevitable move to digital over the next three to five years because of sustainability, market forces and pressures on margins has happened now because of COVID-19.

The future has arrived now, and the companies who are investing in immersive technologies for this sudden cultural shift are the ones who will prosper in this new world.

Celerant Technology Corp. and CAM Commerce Michele Salerno Director of Marketing and Assistant Vice President



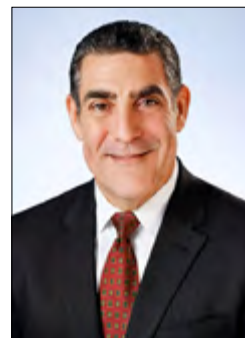
Being able to quickly shift to online sales, market to your customers via digital marketing efforts such as personalized email marketing and social media—keeping in touch with your customers and staying top of their mind—is what has enabled the savviest of retailers to stay successful during these challenging times. But, most importantly, being able to continue to sell to your customers—however they want to shop—and then deliver the orders to them—however they want—has been absolutely vital these past nine months and, now, moving into 2021 as well.

If customers want to shop on your e-commerce site with same-day, in-store or curbside pickup, order online and have fast or free shipping to their door, or visit your store for contactless, mobile payment processing, retailers must adapt and meet the changing needs of all different customers.

At Celerant—after seeing a need back in April—in addition to our e-commerce we quickly launched our curbside-

pickup application to help our retail customers streamline and organize the curbside-pickup process via text-message notifications. What's most important is that retailers can pivot and adapt to newer technology to quickly meet the different needs of their customers.

Computer Generated Solutions Paul Magel President of Business Applications



Retailers have accelerated their investment in e-commerce, which has become the preferred choice of consumers and a majority of the revenue stream for retailers during the shutdowns. Innovative retailers will measure sales from all channels as a single revenue stream and stop differentiating sales by channel. In the new normal, a sale will involve multiple channels rather than one or the other.

To ensure a seamless customer experience, consumers want to easily view and purchase online and choose delivery—shipping, pickup in-store or curbside. An omni-channel experience is critical to the success of retailers and brands alike, and a fully digitized supply chain is required to make that happen. Technology is the key to connecting the disparate links of the supply chain—from concept to consumer—to provide the experience consumers demand and the visibility retailers and brands need to thrive.

For buyers who continue to be unable to view the latest designers' showcases—at trade shows, on runways, or at design studios and showrooms—technology has been a lifeline. Virtual showrooms and B2B platforms are imperative for designers and buyers alike. An immersive experience will allow for the most efficient and effective experience for retailers, wholesalers and, ultimately, consumers.

Cymbio Roy Avidor Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer



Grow and nurture digital sales channels is what I think any brand and retailer in the industry should do. Being able to sell your inventory across the multiple channels that your customers and potential customers are at is key to winning in the new era of commerce.

With bricks-and-mortar being closed on and off and digital commerce increasing, I think every brand should establish a wider online presence. Having your own e-com site is one thing, you should also make sure to be where your consumers are. We see drop-shipping and marketplaces becoming more and more significant in brands' and retailers' revenue streams, and I believe this will significantly increase in the coming years.

Cymbio's drop-ship-and-marketplace platform seamlessly connects and automates all processes for brands, retailers and vendors. Since COVID-19, we've added new systems. We can now easily connect any brand, wholesaler and supplier to any retailer.

EFI Reggiani Adele Genoni Senior Vice President and General Manager



Online sales have grown exponentially since COVID-19, accelerating a trend that was already emerging boldly, along with online sales calls for personalization, design-to-shelf speed and localization near the markets of consumption—the so-called re-shoring phenomenon.

When thinking about technology in printing, digital is really key to riding the wave of these emerging trends thanks to faster time to market. Manufacturers are better able to react quick-

ly to fashion trends and minimize losses from fashion flops. They can lower their costs with reduced setup time and leaner inventory management thanks to the possibility of efficient print-on-demand capabilities—all while delivering products with better and richer color palettes and more-detailed designs.

Digital possibilities are further enhanced in terms of time to market and, above all, sustainability, a crucial ask from consumers, by short green processes that reduce water, energy and chemicals consumption.

This market demand finds an answer in EFI Reggiani's core approach to sustainable solutions under the theme of Innovation in Green, which includes an EFI Reggiani TERRA pigment solution that eliminates the need for steaming or washing on direct-to-textile applications and a high-quality direct-to-fabric sublimation process that ensures superior color brightness and penetration.

Epson America Inc.

Tim Check

Senior Product Manager of Professional Imaging



Producers turned to their digital equipment to quickly pivot and create the new products that were in demand. Nobody would have ever forecasted that printed face coverings would be the hot-selling product of 2020, and by using their digital-print equipment they were able to produce in-demand products and keep their businesses afloat.

The manufacturing supply chain was shaken as customers suddenly shifted their purchasing from in-store retail to online. Mass production of a few designs going to major in-store shelves halted. Physical proximity to customers is now less of an advantage, and customers are looking for more-unique products. Digital production methods provided the means for companies to not only produce truly unique products but also to significantly reduce their finished-goods inventory.

Physical products are not required to sell online, and companies can market thousands of products with little to no inventory. Product is produced or replenished when orders are received, with minimal raw-material stock in hand. Lower fixed costs and predictable variable costs along with lower inventory-holding costs results in greater financial flexibility. The new normal with improved production efficiencies by using digital print equipment will help companies not only survive but thrive.

Kornit Digital

Robert Zoch

Global Content Manager



Whether we're discussing fashion brands or contract fulfillers operating on a local or global scale, technologies that enable rapid, on-demand production are optimal, which is why we believe in digital workflow and production technologies.

When your processes demand considerable lead time, disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic catch you in an extremely vulnerable position with unsold goods translating to considerable waste and poor sales. Conversely, if you can change your output to meet these disruptions at the push of a button, that agility empowers you to meet new product demands and then continue to do so for the long term.

With consumers migrating heavily toward online shopping, producing on-demand becomes more feasible, even preferable, as a profitable business model. Your brand was built on team sportswear, but suddenly everyone wants face masks? You can make those instead, with little difficulty. The pandemic marketplace has subsided and consumers want your bread-and-butter pieces again? Digital commerce plus digital production means you can make only what you've sold, and it's far more eco-friendly than most traditional analog processes. Digital means removing waste and vulnerability from the equation. The current level of quality, graphic detail and durability achievable via digital means is amazing.

Launchmetrics

Alison Bringé

Chief Marketing Officer



As we enter a post-pandemic world, the way brands connect with their customers will be more critical than ever, and, at a moment where companies seek to reduce costs, maintaining brand-building initiatives will be vital to driving brand equity. With that in mind, brands need to build smarter initiatives with smaller budgets, and to do this they need the right data-intelligence tools to help them understand how their

brand is perceived through each of its actions and initiatives. As the shift in the values that consumers consider when making buying decisions continues to change, brands must constantly monitor the evolution of their markets, to evaluate what is working now and how to quickly adapt to changes as the world reopens.

Lectra

Edouard Macquin

President of the Americas



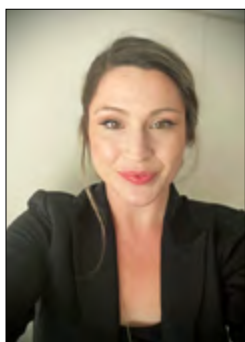
Supply chains include people, processes and technology. Each of these needs to be revisited, introducing new technologies such as PLM to replace legacy systems. New processes need to be established to foster agility and collaboration, and people need to be upskilled to make this happen.

Adoption of innovative digital tools like 3D, virtual prototyping and material management, and the implementation at scale of collaborative processes will be critical assets for a successful transformation. In other words, any initiative that brings retail and manufacturing together will be critical. We have to think end-to-end.

Mimaki

Victoria Harris

Senior Textile Segment Specialist



Brands, textile-print-design agencies, suppliers and designers are all currently facing challenges with extended delays in their supply chains, specifically in regard to sample production. Sample production has been disrupted in the current COVID-19 climate, making it very difficult to obtain and produce samples within the pre-pandemic timelines.

Digital textile printing allows for these fashion-and-textile companies to print on-demand in any quantity for sample and small-lot production, resulting in increased speed to market and turnaround times. The flexibility to print some of their production on-demand in-house within the United States also reduces cost and risk associated with unsold stock inventory and markdowns, empowering companies with faster turnaround times to deliver the right products, in the right quantities, at the right time.

Businesses should seek partnerships with providers from whom they can obtain technical service, inks, software, pre- and post-treatments, and printers from a single source. A complete digital-printing solution enables textile-and-apparel-production adaptation within the United States.

As the industry moves through the COVID-19 pandemic, brands and fabric suppliers are going to continue to look for solutions to produce supply in the U.S.—solutions that Mimaki can provide.

MySizeID

Tao Fleury

Director of Sales for North America



Returns are soaring as bricks-and-mortar shoppers are forced online—some with little experience shopping online. Many are unsure of what size to order, especially with new brands. The situation is forcing e-commerce apparel retailers to review how products are presented to their shoppers and whether the common size chart is fit for the purpose.

Size-and-fit technology that translates the complicated size chart to shoppers—and recommends the correct size for their unique body shapes—is surging in popularity, more so now than ever. It is no longer a nice thing to have but rather a necessity for providing customers with a level of service on par with in-store experiences.

If brands can reduce the need for shoppers to buy two of the same garment in different sizes, they can significantly reduce the impact of the worst holiday-return hangover that is approaching. The customer journey is equally as important, ensuring new and returning customers feel confident about their purchases, providing the additional benefit of increased conversions for the retailer. Being proactive and thinking ahead with a technology such as MySizeID will be key to ensuring retailers and manufacturers are successful as we all explore a new retail landscape.

NGC Software

Mark Burstein

President and Chief Strategy Officer



Digital supply chains are, by far, the most important technology for fashion retailers during COVID-19 and beyond. Dedicating resources to digitizing the supply chain is a significant priority for all retail and brand executives I meet.

Retailers can't run their businesses on disconnected systems, spreadsheets and email. Digital supply chains bring disparate systems together into a single, enterprise-wide digital platform. This provides the resiliency, agility and speed that retailers need, and it is essential during a crisis such as COVID-19. Retailers must be able to respond to sharp fluctuations in customer demand, which is what happened this year when demand for fashion apparel plunged almost overnight. Companies that were able to quickly adjust production levels or pivot to casualwear or personal protective equipment have fared much better than many other retailers and brands.

A digital supply chain provides the visibility retailers need to understand the full impact of a crisis such as the coronavirus, as well as ongoing concerns such as looming shortages or overstocks on merchandise and bans on cotton from Xinjiang. COVID-19 wasn't the first crisis to hit retailers and it won't be the last. Retailers that digitalize their supply chains can weather the storm.

Oracle Retail

Mike Webster

Senior Vice President and General Manager



The most important technology for retailers and manufacturers to adopt and fine-tune is forecasting. With all the changes in consumer buying habits that have happened in 2020, including many shopping online for the first time and the increase in e-commerce, it has been challenging to get a holistic view of demand. As more consumers shifted to shop online, retailers needed to quickly reconcile multiple data inputs to get a holistic

view of demand and pivot to change their replenishment strategies.

We learned from our holiday-shopping survey that a lack of inventory is the fastest way for retailers to end up on this

➡ Technology page 8

What do you view as the most important technology that retailers and manufacturers should adopt during this COVID-19 climate?

Technology *Continued from page 7*

year's naughty list, with 47 percent of respondents saying out-of-stock merchandise topped their list for a bad shopping experience and 63 percent unwilling to wait for an item to be back in stock before trying another brand. During the holidays, it will be critical for retailers to fill the shelves and use their physical locations both to serve shoppers and as fulfillment centers to handle online orders and get shipments out to customers as quickly and safely as possible to ensure a holly, jolly season for all.

Quadpay
Adam Ezra
Co-Chief Executive Officer



There are a number of factors in play that have led to the rapid ascent of buy now, pay later (BNPL) globally this year. I believe that merchants should adopt BNPL in order to reach consumers where they love to shop—whether that's online or at physical retail locations. At Quadpay, we offer our 3 million U.S. customers the flexibility to shop where they prefer across hundreds of thousands of retailers.

BNPL empowers merchants to provide their customers with flexibility to pay over time, which ultimately fosters customer loyalty, increases conversions and creates a better customer experience. Consumers—particularly Millennials—are wary of high-interest credit cards and accruing additional debt. This concern was prevalent before 2020 as many Millennials are saddled with student-loan debt and now has been heightened by the economic impact from COVID-19. The BNPL industry has been a major disruptor to credit cards, and companies like Quadpay represent the new world of interest-free and transparent digital-payment products.

Although we are shifting the way we live due to COVID-19, people are still spending money, and that was very evident this past Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday. The upcoming holiday shopping season will be pivotal for retailers, and adding payment options that consumers are using and want is an important step for growth.

Ricoma International Corporation
Henry Ma
Chief Executive Officer



Embroidery machines are the most important pieces of technology during this COVID-19 climate. Since the pandemic's inception, we've seen a surge in requests for custom-embroidered face masks as well as other items such as patches, uniforms and more for essential and nonessential workers.

Consequently, decorators are now investing in embroidery technology as a way to generate more revenue for their businesses while also playing a role in the fight against COVID-19. Moreover, as we adapt to the new norm, it's safe to say that embroidery machines will be fundamental in providing customized apparel that will keep millions of people safe and healthy for years to come.

Suuchi Inc.
Donna Spillane
Vice President of Customer Success

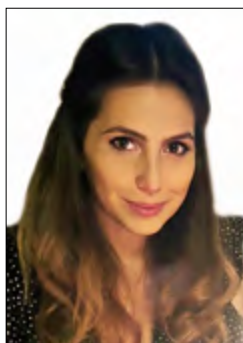


Now is the perfect opportunity for retailers and manufacturers to innovate and digitize their supply chain's infrastructure. As opposed to further investing in the siloed, antiquated software systems of the past, industry innovators should invest in next-generation supply-chain-management platforms.

Systems that create visibility from product conception through

to delivery and connectivity across all supply-chain participants will be what sets apart manufacturers and retailers from their competition moving forward.

SynZenBe
Katrina Duck
Business Development and Partnerships Manager



Platforms that have built-in custom tools—that enable you to move beyond your pre-COVID-19 business to give you streamlined communication with existing clients and unlimited opportunities with new clients—should be prioritized.

At SynZenBe, the B2B online fabric-sourcing platform, we have digitized over 10,000 materials through high-quality photographs, enabling brands to continue sourcing and developing new materials without the need for in-person meetings or trade shows due to an added one-on-one scheduling tool with integrated call, video and instant-chat features.

COVID-19 has accelerated the digitization process; however, many platforms' business models are built entirely without any offline interaction even for accounting, marketing, supply-chain management, etc. Retailers and manufacturers should spend their time leveraging technology that exists out there rather than trying to build their own systems. Time is precious, and it should be focused on how retailers and manufacturers want to showcase their companies and products in the best way.

Tecsys
David Mascitto
Retail E-Commerce Supply Chain Product Marketing Manager



COVID-19 has propelled digital commerce, but not all brands are equipped for the shift. With rolling shutdowns, reluctant shoppers and surging online orders, inventory can be tied up in shuttered stores while e-commerce platforms are maxing out and siloed fulfillment channels are throttling capacity.

Retailers with omni-channel order-management capabilities are able to scale order-processing capacity, virtualize disparate inventory, route orders dynamically, handle returns without hassle and offer flexible fulfillment like click-and-collect, helping to meet shifting customer expectations.

Texbase
Kimberly Ridings
Business Development Manager



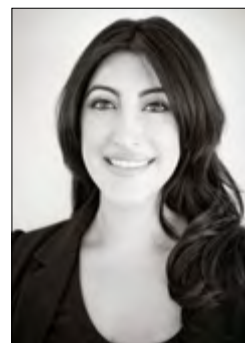
With travel restricted and trade shows canceled, now more than ever we need to optimize our workday and streamline processes. Online communication and direct integration between suppliers and customers decrease time to market and build business fast.

Texbase Connect is a proven solution that allows brands and retailers to collaborate with their supply-chain partners and testing labs to accelerate the process of sourcing fabric and trim, testing and certifying materials, and ensuring the quality of finished products.

These types of technologies, which eliminate the need to use email to exchange material-definition templates, are integral to adapting. Customers define requirements and push them to suppliers, where test results are collected and performance confirmed. Lot-to-lot production testing is captured and automatically analyzed to guarantee quality. Sustainability metrics, supply-chain mapping and certificates of compliance ensure transparency

Adopting multi-tier collaboration platforms that mimic the way the industry works should be a priority of apparel businesses. Suppliers enter and update data, thereby eliminating work while increasing accuracy and automating processes.

True Fit
Jessica Murphy
Co-founder



COVID-19 has accelerated and sustained demand for online fashion. Brands who are most successful will make permanent changes in the way they do business. Retailers must reassess and reimagine how to use customer data to add value for the customer—through personalization and perpetuating a loyalty loop, which improves customer lifetime value.

Consumers who shopped online by necessity during the pandemic rather than by choice and found that e-commerce worked for them will present retailers with long-term opportunities. Data from our Fashion Genome show that demand for online personalization has increased upwards of 123 percent since March. For many apparel and footwear brands, the insistence from customers to improve one-on-one engagement is where their strategic focus must land.

The most important technology that retailers should adopt builds true personalization that gives online shoppers more confidence in their purchases. Retailers need access to customer data, not just around the purchases that they make within that retailer's brand but on style, size and fit preferences across the multitude of brands they shop. To understand how a shopper behaves across a multitude of fashion-buying journeys allows retailers to build those personalized journeys as well as designs and offers.

Tukatech
Ram Sareen
Chief Executive Officer and Founder



Retailers and manufacturers both need to adopt 3D-design-and-fit software if they haven't already. Companies that already had 3D-fashion-design software had to figure out the transition to working from home, while those businesses where it wasn't implemented had the additional challenge of training on a new technology while also working remotely.

Another issue lies in the desire of many fashion businesses that want to be made in the U.S.A.; however, there is a notable skills gap because of decades of offshoring manufacturing. Simplified digital-design tools bridge the gap so that the technical skills required are not so intimidating.

Reshoring production must be much more streamlined because labor is so much more expensive in the U.S.A., but manufacturing closer to the customer allows for more agility in responding to market demand. Micro-factories are a great option for domestic manufacturing because they allow for the production of goods only after they have been sold.

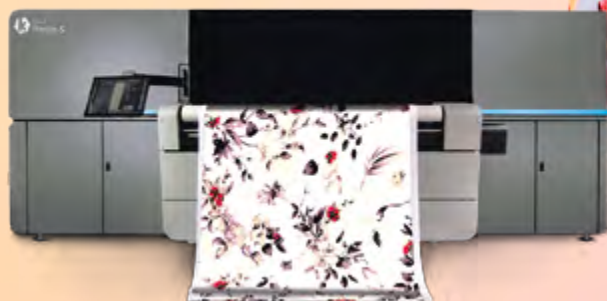
Tukatech has lowered the barrier to entry into a 3D-design process by offering subscription-based 3D-visualization software and readymade 3D garments available for purchase, along with its Automatic Pattern Making add-on module for TUKAdesign.

**Responses have been condensed for space.*



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ATS Post-Election Summit Affords Connections and Conversation on Future of Apparel

By Dorothy Crouch Managing Editor

Moving forward with its latest virtual event, **Apparel Textile Sourcing** hosted its Post-Election Summit and Sourcing Show to connect buyers, sellers, brands, manufacturers, retailers and factories to discuss the future of the industry in a post-election, post-COVID-19 world. Over the course of five days, Nov. 16–20, ATS connected professionals within the industry through buyer-and-seller matchmaking and interactive booths that enabled attendees to shop ready-to-order apparel, textiles and accessories.

For Jason Prescott, chief executive officer of **JP Communications LLC**, Apparel Textile Sourcing Trade Shows, *Manufacturer.com* and *TopTenWholesale.com*, exploring new ways to reach audiences virtually, while following methods to yield a live show, proved successful.

“The second edition of ATSV (Global Trade Summit and Sourcing Show) simply exceeded all expectations,” Prescott said. “We tossed out the virtual software and introduced a new truly live and immersive experience and the result was proof of concept—speed, relevancy and live were the key factors. We provided one very simple landing page offering seminars, matchmaking, networking and three sourcing halls.”

Attracting 1,100 visitors, the event drew major brands, retailers and designers from the North American market including **PVH Corp.**, **Simons**, **Dillard’s**, **Perry Ellis**, **Giant Tiger**, **Brrr Inc.**, **Canada Sportswear**, **Gerber Technology**, **JD.com** and **Beall’s**.

“All of our attendees had the ability to first visit exhibiting suppliers’ company profiles hosted by *Manufacturer.com* and then, in the press of a button, they were in a live meeting



Apparel Textile Sourcing, in its Post-Election Summit and Sourcing Show, combined the best of virtual and live to create an immersive experience.

with the supplier of their choice—or a group of suppliers all at once—100 percent live and interactive and face-to-face,” Prescott explained.

While working together to maintain existing relationships or forge new connections that will benefit the apparel business is paramount within the sourcing show, ATS’s supply chain-focused seminars were integral as attendees sought guidance on how to approach this new landscape. Experts from companies and organizations including **The UpCycle Project**, **Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production**, **The Reverse Logistics Association**, **GioTex**, **Diversify Retail Inc.**, **Better Buying** and **Axlebek** offered valuable insights regarding such topics

as “Sustainable Products & Their Certifications,” “Supply Chain Resiliency Post-Pandemic,” “Diversity in Sourcing” and “Guiding Brands Through the Apparel Development Process.”

One particular segment—“How Did the Election Impact the Industry?,” led by Nate Herman, senior vice president of policy for the **American Apparel & Footwear Association**—touched on how the 2020 presidential election results would impact the industry. Reminding attendees that the electoral college would vote on Dec. 14 and that Congressional approval of this process would occur Jan. 6, Herman explored how a lame-duck Donald Trump presidency and President-elect Joe Biden administration would

affect different areas of the apparel business, including the supply chain, environmental concerns, human-rights issues and domestic manufacturing. One of these priority issues is the next COVID-19 stimulus package, which would lend much-needed support to the apparel industry and is currently being negotiated by lawmakers.

“Even though many members of Congress were voted out or retired, they are still coming back to finish off the business that was not done before the election,” Herman said, regarding the lame-duck session that is scheduled to end Dec. 11.

Another issue facing the U.S. Congress during this time is the alleged oppression through forced labor by the Chinese government of ethnic Muslim Uyghurs in the Xinjiang province. Following a yearlong outcry for the United States to take steps to oppose the oppression, Herman sees this as a priority for Congress to pass legislation regarding the issue, which would affect the apparel industry due to Xinjiang’s status as a source for the majority of China’s cotton in addition to other materials.

“The legislation would ban all imports from China that contain any nexus with Xinjiang. For example, Xinjiang produces 85 percent of the cotton that is produced in China. It also produces a lot of yarns and fabrics,” Herman explained. “There is a strong effort to get this legislation passed during this lame-duck session.”

Under a Biden administration, Herman explained that ending tariffs on goods from China would likely not be a priority. In addition to the human-rights issues, President-elect Biden would likely focus on other areas first, many of which would likely lead to a decision that

➔ **ATS** page 12

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OBITUARY

Tony Hsieh, Zappos Founder, 46

Tony Hsieh, the celebrated entrepreneur who built the online shoe retailer **Zappos.com** into a \$1 billion footwear-and-clothing company and spearheaded a revitalization of downtown Las Vegas, died Nov. 27. Hsieh succumbed to injuries from a Nov. 18 New London, Conn., house fire, according to a statement from **DTP**, formerly the **Downtown Project Las Vegas**, which Hsieh founded in 2012.



Tony Hsieh

Hsieh was a computer-science graduate of **Harvard University**. He was among the first wave of entrepreneurs who developed e-commerce from a startup market to one of the dominating forces of retail. In 1998, he sold his first company, **LinkExchange**, an online advertising network, to **Microsoft** for \$265 million.

Eventually, Hsieh invested in a San Francisco-based retail startup called **ShoeSite.com**. He renamed the site Zappos, after *zapatitos*, the Spanish word for shoes. At Zappos, he encouraged a business culture that was considered unconventional at that time but has been credited for the company's skyrocketing growth. In his best-selling 2010 book, "Delivering Happiness," he wrote that happy employees helped to develop an environment that created satisfied customers.

Hsieh's creed emphasized joy and a spirit of discovery, according to his **LinkedIn** profile. "Let's fall down the rabbit hole, together," he wrote on his social-media page. "Let's choose our own adventure and follow our own blues in this thing we call life. Let's create a better world, together. Let's imagine."

In August 2020, he retired from helming Zappos to focus on revitalizing downtown Las Vegas.

Hsieh's passing was met with an outpouring of grief and affection from luminaries and stars from the worlds of fashion, technology, venture capital and politics including supermodel and venture capitalist Tyra Banks, who wrote on **Twitter**, "Mentor, friend, visionary, embracer of weirdness & oh so much fun. You didn't see the world how it was, but how U wanted it to be."

Bill Hornbuckle, president and chief executive officer of **MGM Resorts International**, released a statement that said, "Tony Hsieh was a unique visionary who leaves an indelible mark on Las Vegas and the world. He touched countless lives in our community and brought to life a vision for downtown Las Vegas that will continue to grow and flourish."—*Andrew Asch*

TRADE EVENTS

Key Congressional Committees & U.S. Government

Congressional Committee	U.S. Government Agency
House Ways & Means Committee	Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR)
Senate Finance Committee	U.S. Department of Commerce
House Foreign Affairs Committee	International Trade Administration
Senate Foreign Relations Committee	U.S. Department of State
House Energy and Commerce Committee	U.S. Department of Treasury
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
House Armed Services Committee	U.S. Department of Labor
Senate Armed Services Committee	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
House Financial Services Committee	U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee	U.S. International Trade Commission
House Appropriations Committee	U.S. Federal Trade Commission
Senate Appropriations Committee	U.S. Patent & Trademark Office

Nate Herman, senior vice president of policy for the American Apparel & Footwear Association, presented a seminar on "How Did the Election Impact the Apparel Industry?"

ATS *Continued from page 10*

would affect the United States' trade war with China, but Herman mentioned a potential for an eventual trade partnership to ease the effects of this conflict on the United States.

"A President Biden [would have] other issues with China—human-rights issues, issues with Hong Kong as well, other issues on climate change and the Paris Climate Accords, and many other issues on territorial rights, China's aggression in the South China Sea," Herman said. "There will eventually be a discussion about doing some type of trans-Pacific partnership or TPP trade agreement with countries in Asia as a bulwark against China, so I think we would talk about rejoining TPP or other comprehensive trade agreements."

Part of the AAFA's prediction regarding a delayed decision to change tariffs on goods imported from China also stems from President-elect Biden's commitment to focusing on fortifying the U.S. economy.

"President-elect Biden has made clear that he will focus on domestic investments within his first year, so it is unlikely—even if there

is a new trade-promotion authority—that we would see a President Biden initiate new trade agreements in his first six months to as much as his first year, until he has fulfilled the commitment to make investments in the domestic economy."

One area that the AAFA is hoping will gain momentum over the next year is combating the expanding counterfeit-goods market, whose growth has been facilitated by third-party marketplaces that face no accountability. The Shop Safe Act would require online marketplaces to actively prevent the sale of counterfeit goods, while the Inform Consumers Act would hold these platforms responsible for disclosing information that verifies sellers.

"We've already had a major issue with third-party platforms like the **Amazons** of the world and now social-media platforms like **Facebook** and **Instagram** regarding counterfeit products being sold," Herman explained. "The pandemic has made that situation 1,000 times worse. Just as everybody started buying more online, counterfeiters have been selling a lot more online." ●

Go Beyond the News and Behind the Scenes

The editors and writers of *California Apparel News* are blogging at ApparelNews.net

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In Eco Category, Aura7 Activewear Is Focused on Sustainability, Local Manufacturing

By Dorothy Crouch Managing Editor

Approaching her new eco-activewear line **Aura7 Activewear** in the same manner as she lives her life, Franciska Bray-Mezey believes that performing good works will yield positive results. As an Orange County, Calif., yoga instructor and life-long enthusiast of the discipline who has served the local community for 10 years, she began offering complimentary classes online to help her clients cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. After launching Aura7 Activewear in Orange County, Calif., in August, Bray-Mezey remains optimistic for the brand.

"It's very important when a brand has a story and has a heart behind it," Bray-Mezey said. "Many of my yoga clients were so amazingly grateful that it kept me going and gave me the positivity, the hope and the power to move forward. It came back to me. When I launched, it was all those people who showed up, made their purchases and supported me when I needed support."

While her original intention was to rely on a more-traditional sales strategy comprising wholesale partnerships for Aura7 Activewear's pieces, which are sized XS-L and retail up to \$84 for tops and up to \$112 for leggings, Bray-Mezey's plans were disrupted by the pandemic. She had envisioned selling the pieces through yoga studios but instead moved forward with an e-commerce platform at aura7activewear.com.

"One of my main marketing plans was to bring it into the local studios, but that didn't happen with the shutdowns and studios closing," Bray-Mezey explained. "It was a big question for everyone when the pandemic hit. Should I move forward or should I put it on hold? I went for it. This is my baby, this is my dream, and nothing can stop me now. I think it was

a great decision. It's been growing nicely. For the online market, it's a good place right now."

As an environmentally conscientious person, Bray-Mezey began thinking about launching an activewear brand a year prior to Aura7 Activewear's launch, but she wanted the line to reflect her values. Her formula comprises stylish details, such as tops that feature a front crisscross construction and leggings with a back tie that sits atop ruching, enhanced by bright pink and blue, sleek black and gray, and vibrant tropical and leopard prints that contribute to a positive outlook.

A large component of Bray-Mezey's sustainable approach is dependent on her manufacturing, which takes place in north Orange County, Calif., and Huntington Beach, Calif., allowing her to bypass extensive freight and shipping costs. By establishing connections with the people who make her clothing, Bray-Mezey is able to ensure that they are part of the Aura7 Activewear brand as invested creators who play an important role.

"It's really important for me to do it in the U.S. I know the factory, and I know every single person in the process. It was important to me to not just send it out somewhere. It has a whole story from the beginning to the end," Bray-Mezey said. "It is important that everyone who is involved with the creation of Aura7 Activewear is treated fairly and getting the amount of money they deserve for all the hard work."

Relying only on a sustainable-textile supply chain, Aura7 Activewear is made from Italian fabric created from **Econyl**, the recycled-nylon fiber that is manufactured from discarded fishing nets. Other pieces are made from **Amni Soul Eco**, a nylon sourced from Brazil that degrades in three to five years, vastly shortening the timeline for apparel to break

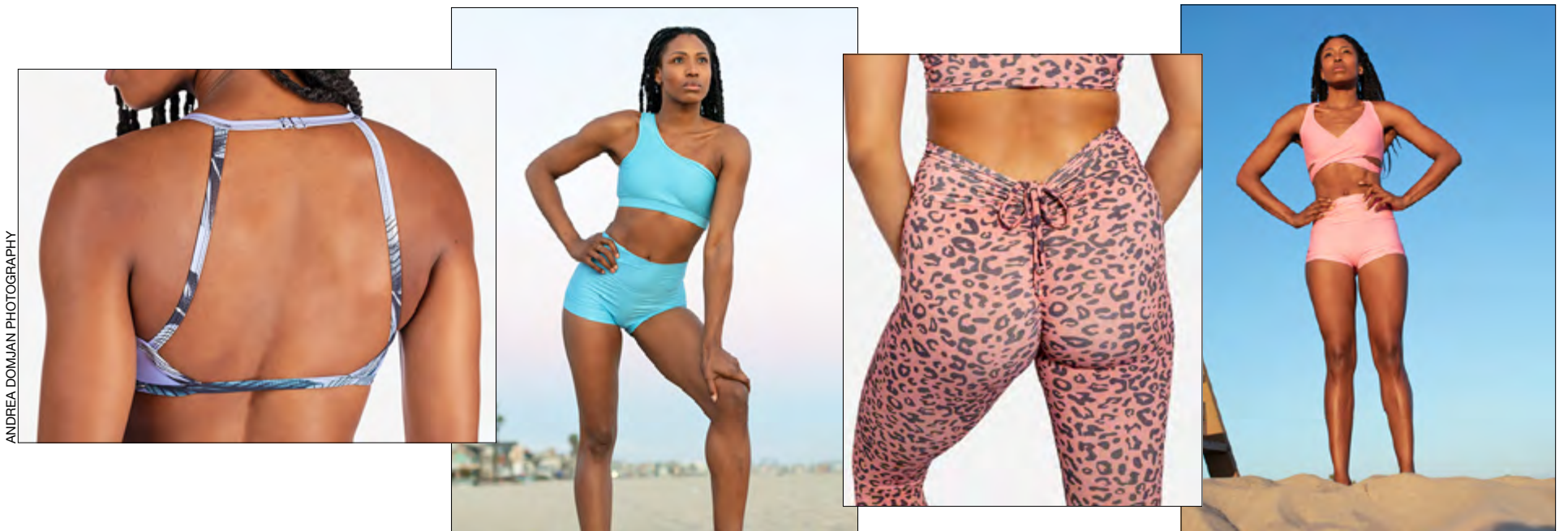
down. From using supplies such as thank-you notes created using 100 percent recycled seed paper to 100 percent recycled flap-and-seal shipping bags and compostable mailer bags, the brand relies on sustainable packaging as a finishing sustainable touch.

To support the manufacturing of its Econyl-based fabric, Aura7 Activewear donates a portion of sales to support **Healthy Seas**, an organization that hosts cleanups with volunteer divers who collect the ghost nets that are discarded in the ocean by the fishing industry but could be transformed into a resource for the apparel community. With every Aura7 Activewear purchase made, the company also works with **One Tree Planted** to plant a tree, thereby combating deforestation.

"Sustainability was always a big factor for me. When I started to source my fabric and my shipping materials, a lot of times I ran into pushback. 'Why are you doing that?' 'It's so much more expensive and nobody cares about it.' For me, it was because I care about it," she explained. "I don't want to do just another unsustainable activewear line."

Noting that there are many segments of the wellness industry that cater to healthier lifestyles, which promote the well-being of people and the planet, Bray-Mezey feels that she is providing a missing puzzle piece, as fashion—particularly the activewear segment—has historically been a tough business to clean up. In the yoga and active-apparel world, she is confident that effective change is possible.

"We can shift our focus and do things in a more sustainable way. It can be fashion. It can be the food industry. It can be anything surrounding our life," Bray-Mezey said. "It's about looking for those changes you can make in your life and that are going to create a huge change in the world." ●



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