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LUXURY ON THE EDGE

Designing a Fall/Winter 2021 collection while maintaining her elegant approach to luxury, Catherine Gee allowed an edginess to influence her California sensibilities, thereby generating pieces that she has named the "New York Edit." Find more styles on page 12.

HAGOP KALAJDJIAN

INDUSTRY FOCUS: FINANCE

How Can Factoring Services Aid Apparel-Business Recovery?

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

Entering 2021, the apparel industry can see a bit of hope as businesses look toward maintenance and recovery from a tumultuous year. As apparel businesses examine their next steps while outlining new financial plans, they often look for guidance from experts.

While hope is on the horizon as COVID-19 vaccines continue to be administered across the country, there remain areas in which pandemic activity continues to be high, affecting citizens across the United States and businesses that still grapple with residual effects of stay-at-home orders and the challenges of meeting financial obligations. While government aid has been available, it has not been substantial enough to salvage many companies' full operations, nor has it reached

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WHAT'S CHECKING

Indie Retailers Ramp Up Digital Commerce During Pandemic

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

The COVID-19 pandemic forced retailers across industries to go on a crash course developing and scaling up their e-commerce. For many in the apparel industry, this platform saved their businesses. Applying principles of convenience to allure customers to their shops, including personal styling, shopping-incentive discounts, complimentary delivery and curbside pickup, fashion businesses also relied on selling through digital boutiques.

For independent California-based retailers, it's clear that their development of a greater e-commerce presence has aided them during this time of need and allowed them to remain in touch with trends that are selling well during these challenging times.

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SHANOWA JARVIS



OGE EGBUONU



For Black History Month, Levi Strauss & Co. unveiled its “Beauty Becoming Campaign,” which featured artists, advocates and athletes, such as Fresco Steez (left), a community organizer and artist.

Levi's Unveils Black History Month Campaign and Collection

Fashion brands and retailers are observing Black History Month during February with special capsule collections and support for African-American designers and creatives.

Denim giant **Levi Strauss & Co.** made a statement with its recently unveiled “Beauty of Becoming” media campaign, which features artists, advocates and athletes including tennis star Naomi Osaka and Melina Abdullah, a **Black Lives Matter** organizer and chair of the department of Pan-African studies at **California State University, Los Angeles**.

The campaign includes content by filmmaker Oge Egbuonu featuring Osaka, Abdullah and others talking about how they overcame adversity, in addition to advocating for racial and gender equity. The campaign will

be webcast on Levi's **Instagram** and other social-media platforms until June. It also features interviews with activists known for their advocacy promoting other social-justice and welfare movements including Delores Huerta, the United States labor leader who also led the **United Farm Workers**.

Levi's hopes its commitment to Black History Month will go deeper than a media campaign. In November, the San Francisco brand hired Elizabeth Morrison, Levi's chief diversity, inclusion and belonging officer, to develop a more-inclusive workplace.

The denim giant also worked with Fresco Steez, a grassroots community organizer and an artist to develop the **Levi's x Fresco Steez** collection, which is available at Levi's digital shops as well as the in-store **Levi's Tailor**

Shops. The collection features 10 different graphics on T-shirts, sweatshirts, totes and patches that pay homage to Black political movements, Steez said.

“I wanted to draw on political history for this collection, and I want people to see, even down to the typeface used, the subtle references to different political struggles,” said Steez, who noted that she has typically worn Levi's trucker jackets when organizing. “I wanted to illustrate Levi's being a part of this political history.”

Graphics for this collection include the Pan-African liberation flag and a Black fist rising from roses. Levi's said it will also make a donation to **Power U**, a Miami, Fla., nonprofit that trains Black and Brown youth to work on social and healthcare issues.

—Andrew Asch

Inside the Industry

Amazon.com, Inc. has a new chief executive officer. On Feb. 2 it was announced that Jeff Bezos, Amazon's founding CEO, will assume the role of the Seattle-based retail giant's executive chair of the board. He also will spend more time developing his other interests, which include *The Washington Post* newspaper and nonprofits such as the Bezos Earth Fund, according to a letter Bezos sent to his staff and workers. Andy Jassy, CEO of Amazon Web Services, was tapped to lead the influential company. He will start his new job in the third quarter of 2021. Bezos said that he felt the time was right to make a change. “Amazon is what it is because of invention. We do crazy things together and then make them normal,” he said in a statement. “Right now, I see Amazon at its most inventive ever, making it an optimal time for this transition.”

Boardriders Inc., the parent company for some of the action-sports market's most popular brands including Quiksilver, Billabong and RVCA, announced a new CEO on Feb. 3. Arne Arens, the former global brand president of The North Face label, is scheduled to start leading the Huntington Beach, Calif.-based company on March 1. Arens will succeed Dave Tanner, who will remain on the action-sports company's board of directors. Tanner led the campaign to restructure Boardriders' predecessor company, Quiksilver Inc. He also oversaw the 2018 acquisition of Billabong, one of Quiksilver's major rivals.

Kendra Scott, an Austin, Texas—based accessories retailer, announced Feb. 1 that Tom Nolan, its company president, has been promoted to CEO. Kendra Scott, the company's namesake and founder, will continue to serve as executive chairwoman and majority owner and will lead design, customer experience and philanthropy. Nolan worked on brand initiatives including developing omnichannel retail, rolling out physical stores and increasing the brand's wholesale presence.

Minnetonka Moccasin, the Minneapolis-based heritage footwear brand, is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2021 by releasing remastered versions of some of the brand's most popular styles. The 75th-anniversary styles will include its sheepskin slippers, white leather moccasins and Two Button Boots, which were seen on actor Brad Pitt's feet in the 2019 film “Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood.”

YKK Corp., best known for its production of zippers and plastic hardware, announced Feb. 3 a new initiative for its YKK Group Environmental Vision 2050 campaign. The new initiative will measure CO₂ absorption rates in the company's e-kakashi system at a company facility in Japan. Meteorological data and environmental data will be collected by e-kakashi sensors to visualize CO₂ absorption rates in real time. A YKK statement said that the initiative's information will be used in YKK's greening activities across the world as well as in promoting awareness of CO₂ absorption in green spaces.

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Patel Named Beverly Center GM

Taubman Properties recently announced that Elvina Patel was named general manager of the high-profile Los Angeles **Beverly Center**, a mall that focuses on high-end fashion, such as **Balenciaga, Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci, Louis Vuitton** and **Prada**.

Patel took the reins on Jan. 1, succeeding Michael Fenley, who spent more than 40 years working for Taubman.

“I am honored to be able to lead this talented team dedicated to serving customers in new and exciting ways and further integrating into our neighboring community,” Patel said.

Patel started with the Beverly Center in September 2019 as its director, a role in which she oversaw property logistical issues and worked as the center's representative in directing tenant construction, renovations and remodels. She was also responsible for managing the mall's on-site facilities team as well as developing and managing its common areas.

“Elvina's diverse background, including her combination of facilities, operations and hospitality experience, is bringing a fresh, forward-looking perspective to the role,” said Jackie Plaza, the Beverly Center's marketing and sponsorship director.—A.A.



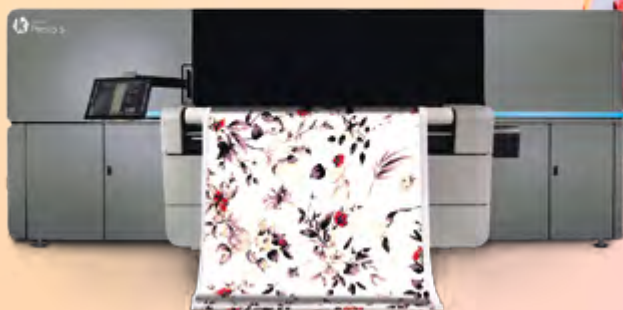
BEVERLY CENTER

Taubman Properties announced the appointment of Elvina Patel as general manager of Beverly Center in Los Angeles. Patel started in her new role on Jan. 1.



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DENIM



A commitment to vintage-inspired women's denim and a commitment to made-in-Los Angeles manufacturing is at the core of AMO, whose Spring 2021 collection relied on bright hues to inspire optimism.

From a Love for Heritage Women's Denim, AMO Grows Its Community Commitment

By Dorothy Crouch Managing Editor

Established in Los Angeles with its founding in 2014 and the release of its Spring 2015 collection, AMO founders Kelly Urban and Misty Zollars—both alumnae of the **Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising**—are also true-blue Los Angeles denimheads. Cutting their teeth in the local industry, Urban's résumé, which started in denim in 2004, includes time spent working with **Current/Elliott**, and Zollars was once an associate designer at **Joie**. The women met during their time at **True Religion**.

"After working for denim brands for the following 10 years, I realized there was something lacking in denim—a woman's point of view with an authentic denim approach," Urban said.

Creating the ideal denim meant shifting away from the stretch trends that were prevalent in the male-dominated jeans world. Dedicating the brand to principles based on a love of women and love of vintage denim, Urban chose the name AMO due to its Latin root for "love." The women who own and patronize local shops, including **The Alcove**, **Lake Boutique** and **MARKET**, have responded with a requited love for AMO.

"We love the way AMO makes us feel," said Madeleine Johnson, who co-owns with Christina Vakhshourpour **The Alcove**, which has doors in Malibu, Calif., and Long Beach, Calif. "The quality, fit and laid-back West Coast style speaks to **The Alcove** brand and lifestyle. We are proud to support a fellow women-owned business!"

To achieve a more-sustainable product, AMO is made from fabrics comprising natural fibers in linen, Modal and cotton, in addition to sourcing from suppliers that provide organic materials or are **Better Cotton Initiative** certified, yet Urban believes there is always room for improvement. In 2020, the brand chose to move into packaging based on fully compostable shipping bags.

There is also a dedication to produce locally. Urban notes that supporting manufacturing partners to maintain a made-in-Los Angeles denim industry is part of the brand's foundation, as the city's legacy in the category lives in AMO's ethos.

"Every single piece of clothing we have ever made has been designed and produced here in Los Angeles," Urban revealed. "I be-

lieve in keeping made-in-L.A. alive and hope to see more brands keeping their businesses close to home and working with our local vendors."

As AMO's preference is to maintain a presence in Los Angeles in order to remain part of its denim legacy, she has noticed that consumers are responding to this message. As denim consumers grow more informed and ask questions regarding sourcing before buying, they are embracing products created through nearshoring processes.

"Los Angeles has always been the top denim-manufacturing destination. Years ago we saw an industry shift of consumers preferring to purchase locally manufactured denim, and we on the other side have to make sure to keep that top of mind, championing and supporting each other," Urban explained. "We can help each other in maintaining jobs locally and continue to produce high-quality products."

Dedication to more-sustainable, locally made denim for women isn't the only mission AMO has adopted. Through its philanthropic efforts, the company is also giving back to organizations the founders view as contributing to the community, including **Every Town**, the **Natural Resources Defense Council**, **Planned Parenthood**, the **Spay Neuter Project of Los Angeles** and the **Women's March**.

"In 2020 we donated to **Color of Change** and **I Am a Voter**, two organizations we wholeheartedly support and believe are fighting for positive change," Urban said. "We also adjusted our company holiday policy to allow for paid vacation on election days, closing our office completely on those days to allow our employees the time they need to vote."

In its Spring 2021 collection, which is also available through amodenim.com, AMO was made using dye processes and in hues that promote "new beginnings and hope," according to Urban. The latest collection is priced at retail from \$79 for a tank top to \$350 for a surplus jacket. Applying colors in citron, sherbet, lilac and sea glass, Urban wanted to relay the optimism she felt as she pulled together the line and art direction for the campaign while eight months pregnant with her second child.

"I wanted to convey a light and happy feeling, a reawakening of sorts," Urban said. "Spring 2021 is really about a love for today and being optimistic about what's next." ●

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MySizeID Brings Virtual Measurement Tool to Footwear Category

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

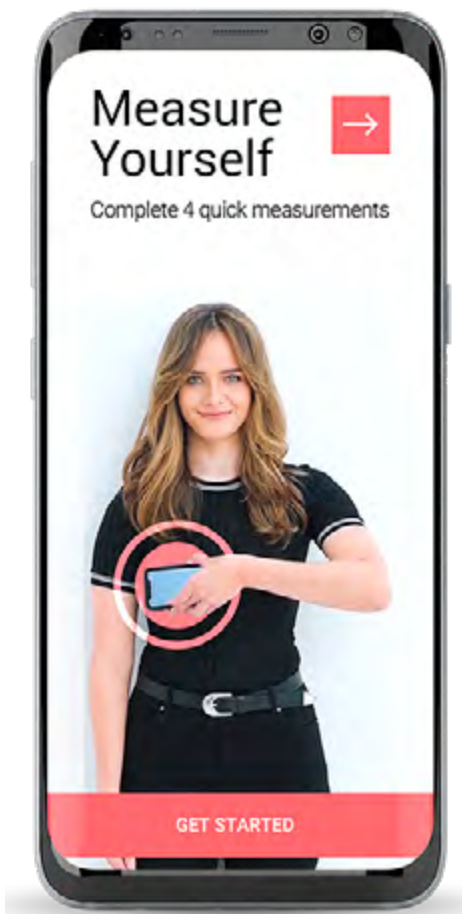
Since 2015, **MySize Inc.** has built a business on developing technology to enhance smartphone-measurement tools. One of its main products, MySizeID, is a smartphone-based body-measurement tool that was developed to help brands and retailers deliver ready-to-wear products that would best fit their customers. Much of MySizeID efforts have focused on providing measurements for garments, but on Dec. 22, the Israel-based company unveiled technology for footwear.

Ronen Luzon, MySize Inc.'s founder and chief executive officer, said the company's sizing services could help brands and retailers reduce customer returns, which is a growing concern. According to a recent study by the **National Retail Federation** trade group, \$428 billion in merchandise was returned in the United States in 2020.

Luzon said, "With the launch of our shoe-sizing solution, footwear retailers will finally be able to seamlessly and proactively address the problem and cut return costs while providing a more-confident shopping experience in the process."

MySizeID's main body-measuring service gathers information through a user's smartphone. Customers record information by holding the smartphone over their bodies. Size information is gleaned from sensors found in any typical smartphone as well as the company's patented algorithm.

Luzon said that his company's service can offer increased



MySizeID's body-measuring service uses information gleaned from sensors in a smartphone along with the company's patented algorithm.

security to consumers and companies selling apparel. MySizeID won't stock pictures of easily identified people, many of whom might upload images of themselves in fitting rooms.

"Every tech company is vulnerable to breaches, even if they follow all compliance guidelines and have the right security certifications. Half-naked photos are by definition sensitive, and, taking our approach, the prospect of any kind of data breach becomes less of an issue," Luzon said.

Consumers can download MySizeID's footwear-measuring tool and its body-measuring tool from e-commerce-application marketplaces such as the **Shopify** App Store. Consumers easily store their measurement information on their own MySize profiles.

Retailers are also able to benefit from the technology by using the MySizeID tool as a widget, which can be synchronized into the operations of a retailer's sizing charts, Luzon said. In October 2020, the company unveiled a made-to-measure feature for those consumers who are interested in custom-made clothing.

MySizeID has been adopted by companies across the globe, including **Levi's**, the **U.S. Polo**

Assn., Danish-brand **Isay**, French retailers **La Pièce** and **Habillez-moi**, as well as Turkish swim and lingerie company



According to founder and CEO Ronen Luzon, MySizeID delivered over 12 million size recommendations last year.

Penti and Turkish ready-to-wear line **Nocturne**. MySizeID delivered more than 12 million size recommendations in 2020. Also in 2020, MySize Inc. was awarded the third U.S. patent held by the company since it started business, in addition to its 12 international patents. MySize Inc. is listed on the **NASDAQ** and the **Tel Aviv Stock Exchange** and employs 30 people in Israel, Europe and the U.S. The

company has raised \$6 million in funding since starting business. In January, it raised more money, Luzon said.

"We've seen pretty incredible growth, especially with the accelerated shift to e-commerce. First, we've just received another vote of confidence from investors with an additional \$2 million offering. We're generating more-substantial revenues, closing partnerships with big niche brands and expanding the technology to the logistics space with **BoxSize**," he said of MySize Inc.'s measurement application for shipping ventures.

BoxSize enables package-delivery companies to measure the size of a parcel with a smartphone to calculate the parcel's shipping costs. The **BoxSize** tool measures dimensional weight details and integrates them with enterprise resource planning systems through barcode scans, image capture and geo-location, which makes arranging pickup times also possible.

In addition to its apparel and logistics applications, MySize offers a third smartphone measurement-tool product within the home-improvement space. **SizeUp** is a virtual measuring tape that helps homeowners, builders, contractors, decorators and designers measure dimensions of building materials and fabrics for home-improvement projects. ●

MADE IN AMERICA

Devoted to Nature, Family, Luxella Designs' Ana Guimaraes Crafts Exquisite Jewelry

By Dorothy Crouch Managing Editor

With roots that have grown throughout North America, the origin story of **Luxella Designs** is a true American tale. Founder and owner Ana Guimaraes was born in Mexico, where she studied accounting, eventually meeting her husband in Canada. The couple started a family, living first in Toronto, where Guimaraes studied photography. They then moved to Kitchener in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, and eventually to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

A lover of the arts and an aspiring entrepreneur, Guimaraes began learning jewelry making with David Casella and at **Silvera** after settling in San Francisco Bay Area. With a studio in Berkeley, Calif., the artist decided to launch Luxella Designs in December, proudly handcrafting her pieces in the United States with inspiration drawn from different regions of North America.

"In March, I decided that I have to have a goal. One of my goals during the pandemic was to start my business, so I launched Luxella Designs," she said. "We are a NAFTA family, I always say. My husband is Canadian and my other two kids are Canadian. One was born here [in the United States] and I am from Mexico."

Pieces from Luxella Designs are created using quality metals in bronze, 14- and 18-karat gold, and sterling silver, with Guimaraes opting for recycled materials when possible, with particular emphasis on this mission through her Modern Elegance Collection. This collection focuses on making jewelry through responsible sourcing and replicating the textures of different elements such as a coral reef, a strawberry or the forest. Other collections include the Star Light, which is inspired by snowy nights in Edmonton, Canada, which afforded the artist's first experience with snow. The Modern Elegance Collection draws inspiration from powerful women, citing the beauty in strength.

"With Modern Elegance, I want my daughter to be inspired by strong women, and I say to her, 'You can do everything,'" she said.

Luxella Designs' Butterfly Collection is a homage to the delicate, beautiful insects whose migration has been similar to the travels of Guimaraes, as the family has traveled through-



LUXELLA DESIGNS



Pieces from Luxella Designs are created using quality metals in bronze, 14- and 18-karat gold, and sterling silver and utilizing recycled materials when possible. The collections focus on making jewelry through responsible sourcing and replicating the textures of different elements in nature.

out Canada, the United States and Mexico.

"I am from Mexico and the monarch butterfly is a statement," she said. "They come all the way from Canada, pass through the U.S. and go into Mexico. The Butterfly Collection is representative of my family."

After investing in herself through launching her own business, Guimaraes is continuing to invest in her family through collaborating with her daughter, Ana Paola, a middle-school student. The pair's first project together was Luxella Designs' Mother Daughter Collection, a fusion of their design tastes to create pieces that are meant to become family heirlooms, enjoyed across generations. Next, the Luxella Teen Collection saw Guimaraes affording great freedom to her daughter, who makes the pieces by hand, with the recent collection of earrings encasing gold leaf in resin with sterling-silver wire.

"My inspiration is always nature and my kids. The Mother Daughter Collection was designed by my daughter. After we made that collection, she decided that she wanted to make her own line," Guimaraes said. "Hopefully soon we'll have a Luxella Teen website."

A firm believer in contributing to her community, Guimaraes is also working with **The Practice Space**, a nonprofit organization managed by AnnMarie Baines that works with

children and adults to cultivate confidence through strengthening their communication skills. Located in El Cerrito, Calif., The Practice Space holds personal significance in Guimaraes's heart.

"My older son was really shy and intelligent. He was getting bullied. We discovered The Practice Space Summer Camp. He is now debating in high school. He is not shy anymore," Guimaraes explained. "The Practice Space helps through community enrichment and [supporting] underserved kids."

A direct-to-consumer operation, Luxella Designs can be found at luxelladesign.com with prices ranging from \$15 for pieces in the Luxella Teen Collection to \$1,500 in the Modern Elegance line. As an artist who has lived throughout North America, Guimaraes is proud to cultivate her brand in the United States and has adopted the business mindset common to the country, which is particularly important when experimenting with more-responsible production.

"My work is sustainable, ethical and long lasting," Guimaraes said. "I was really encouraged by how, in the United States, you always try to do things better. If you fail, it's okay. You learn from your mistakes and keep going. I have really bought into that mentality. I am really proud to be making something here." ●



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How Can Factoring Services Aid Apparel

Industry Focus *Continued from page 1*

every business that needs it. For apparel-industry businesses, factors—financial agents that serve as lenders through purchasing a company's invoices—serve as an additional option, especially during challenging times.

To explore these financial-support options, *California Apparel News* asked finance-industry experts: *How can factoring services aid apparel-business recovery from the tumult of 2020 throughout 2021, and what challenges can factor options help companies overcome?*

Darrin Beer Western Regional Manager CIT Commercial Services



As we enter 2021, apparel companies face many of the same challenges seen throughout 2020, including the ever-changing bricks-and-mortar retail landscape, the shift in consumer-buying preferences, the migration to online purchasing and the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. In-person shopping will not go away, but many retailers must continue adjusting their store footprints to balance both forms

of consumer spending.

Typically, apparel companies use a factor to support financing needs in difficult times and to finance growth and seasonality. In addition, companies look to a factor to help them navigate the retail landscape by underwriting the credit-worthiness of their customers.

The best factors can provide clients with industry knowledge derived from decades of experience in servicing a diverse apparel-client base. Financing, credit protection and collections are important, but having a capable adviser to help navigate the fluctuations in this environment is arguably even more important. A strong relationship between the factor and the client sets the stage for even better collaboration.

For instance, based on prior and recent stay-at-home mandates, many clients have made investments to improve their wholesale and online distribution channels. In such cases, an experienced and flexible factor can provide the right financing. Additionally, it's important to navigate today's retail climate and utilize a factor's services to underwrite and promptly collect accounts receivable in order to mitigate bad debt. These are powerful examples of how a factor can add value and help apparel companies remain competitive in 2021 and beyond.

Mark Bienstock Managing Director Express Trade Capital



Factoring services can be a true lifeline for many apparel-related companies. With the number of recent bankruptcies and those retailers that are still struggling, the ability to have credit coverage is potentially priceless. Additionally, with most manufacturers having concentrated receivables, the ability to access immediate cash flow against their receivables is critical in moving the sales process along. Purchase-order fi-

nanancing, which can be supplemented with most factoring facilities, provides additional liquidity when orders become too large for a manufacturer to handle by itself. Lastly, the factor provides a very important knowledge-bank service of up-to-the-minute industry developments, news and trends that can be instrumental to the well-being of the client.

Sydnee Breuer Executive Vice President, Western Region Manager Rosenthal & Rosenthal

Certainly 2020 was a very tumultuous year. Interestingly, like many challenging periods, the year was not uniformly bad for all businesses nor even for all apparel businesses.



While men's suits and ladies' dresses struggled, athleisure and casual-apparel companies were a bright spot, with some even performing better in 2020 than in prior years. And those scraps of fabric that had been tossed aside are now revenue-producing, as many apparel companies pivoted to add masks to their product offerings.

Just as wholesalers, importers and manufacturers weren't uniformly impacted, the same was true for retail. Those designated as essential businesses or with e-commerce platforms firmly in place fared better. Others struggled with more-restrictive requirements from overseas suppliers and had difficulty getting product shipped internationally at a fair price—and in some cases even at all.

Navigating the credit minefield—something that is unpredictable at best even in non-pandemic years—was also challenging. During the pandemic, our factored clients have been relieved to know that Rosenthal continues to work with the retail trade, analyzing current financial results as they become available and assessing credit risk in order to credit-protect receivables. In fact, as credit-insurance companies were reducing a vast number of credit lines, especially on retailers, we were getting calls from the insureds looking for alternative credit-protection mechanisms. This led to a robust year for Rosenthal's own business.

Additionally, since we also collect the receivables, Rosenthal was able to use the leverage we have to collect faster than our clients could on their own. This is critical when retailers' cash flow is tight and they need to ration the cash and payments.

On the subject of tight cash flow, we also provided lending services to our clients via factoring, purchase-order supply-chain financing and asset-based lending arrangements. Banks are stricter with their lending criteria and typically cannot work with companies showing losses even if due to a global pandemic. Nor do bank lines grow as quickly as a growing business's cash flow often requires. As an independent, third-generation family-owned business, Rosenthal understands the multitude of challenges our clients have been facing and how those challenges have impacted their cash-flow needs.

Gino Clark Executive Vice President and Managing Director of Origination White Oak Commercial Finance, LLC



As apparel companies regain their footing in 2021, their management of budget, inventory and accounts receivable will be vital to recovery. In this environment, factoring is a smart financing solution for companies to leverage their existing assets and take advantage of new opportunities.

When factoring is used in conjunction with other lending products that leverage inventory, intellectual property and real estate, it provides a long-term working-capital strategy that can scale with a business at every stage.

The comprehensive financing that factoring offers can remedy some of the most-pressing challenges consumer-facing companies may experience this year: managing counterparty risk in the customer base with longer terms, smoothing out supply-chain disruptions and expanding distribution channels into e-commerce. With deep roots in the apparel industry, we understand that factoring is more than a seasonal funding solution and requires a long-term partnership that provides companies with a platform for success.

For middle-market apparel companies to sustain growth as well as weather future market headwinds, they need customized solutions from industry experts that take the time to understand their unique challenges and can provide fast liquidity, certainty-to-close and scalable funding at high-dollar ranges.

As staffing reductions have constrained apparel-company resources, factoring with White Oak allows them to streamline their operations and save time and money by outsourcing back-office collection duties. Businesses can choose to do so on a non-notification basis to maintain control over their customer relationships, thereby allowing them to remain focused on product development and unlocking opportunities.

Eric Fisch Senior Vice President—National Sector Head for Retail and Apparel HSBC Bank USA N.A.



Factoring-and-receivables financing has provided integral services for the apparel industry for decades. The value of this service is never clearer than in times of disruption as we have experienced this past year. With numerous retailers filing for bankruptcy and many others under stress, having credit protection on your company's accounts receivables is a way of limiting exposure and protecting your business when it

needs it the most.

As we—hopefully!—approach a recovery, some companies will view this as an opportunity to reduce or forego this type of coverage. While each situation is unique, factoring provides important real-time information on the retail market throughout the economic cycle.

Understanding the coverage limits and costs for covering any individual retailer can be an early warning to a wholesaler on a potential future problem. While immediate protection of factoring is on sales already invoiced, the larger strategic benefit is for a seller to consider future programs and where to dedicate resources for expansion. These decisions can benefit from any signs of weakness in a key customer.

Rob Greenspan President and Chief Executive Officer Greenspan Consult, Inc.



There had been many changes in the wholesale, retail and e-commerce environments before the COVID-19 pandemic. Market shifts were taking place with e-commerce business continuing to grow. The retail landscape was changing due to the shift to e-commerce resulting in many retailers, including major, specialty and mom-and-pop stores, being forced into bankruptcy. Wholesale business was getting more

difficult as a result of these market shifts.

The COVID-19 pandemic just forced a more-rapid acceleration of these market changes with regard to retail overall and incredibly speeding up the process of consumers buying more and more apparel through e-commerce sites. The result of these rapid changes has impacted the apparel industry.

There are ways factoring companies can continue to help serve their apparel clients. First, though it is becoming more difficult, is to continue to approve the credit of the retailers. By doing so, the factored apparel companies will not have responsibility for any bad debts or credit losses from their retail customers if there are not any disputes on the invoices. Apparel companies should not be in the business of granting credit to retailers. Find a factor who can do that for you.

Another way the factor is immensely helpful is on the lending side. The factor will advance or lend money to the apparel company based upon their shipments to approved customers. So, the apparel company can borrow up to 80 percent or sometimes more of the unpaid accounts receivables. This will provide daily cash flow into the company.

Inventory can also serve as another form of factor financing. Depending upon your financial position, cash flow needs and other issues, the factor will advance usually up to 50 percent of eligible inventory. This will provide additional cash flow into the company. So, by being factored, the apparel company can get cash flow up on accounts receivable and inventory.

Sometimes apparel manufacturers face additional cash requirements based upon constraints by their retailer or e-commerce customers. The factor can help with these types of challenges by providing temporary over-advances of funds to help the manufacturer or importer get through issues of goods being delayed in shipping, a temporary buildup of inventory or other types of retail requests that prolong shipments going out the door.

Business Recovery After a Tough 2020?

DREAMSTIME.COM

Richard Kwon
Executive Vice President and Portfolio Manager
Finance One, Inc.



While the COVID-19 vaccines are finally available, the economic activity will not return to pre-pandemic form in the short term. Online sales will continue to be the growth driver for apparel retail as there were more than 12,000 store closings by major chains in 2020.

For the apparel manufacturer and importer clients, factors can review the portfolio of current and prospective accounts from a credit-risk perspective and provide guidance and credit protections.

In the continuously shifting retail landscape, a company should always seek updated information on its customers before deciding to invest its resources in developing samples and follow up on orders.

A well-established, full-service factoring company can streamline its clients' credit-risk mitigation, financing and effective A/R management. Along with primary functions as a factoring company, Finance One identifies our clients' business needs, such as finding a new supplier, buyer, logistics solution, and assist them with finding the best solutions possible. The key is to have consistent and diligent communication with our clients and combine our efforts to navigate the business toward recovery.

Robert Meyers
President
Republic Business Credit, LLC



Without stating the obvious, 2021 provides the opportunity to examine your business model going forward. For many apparel manufacturers, 2020 and now into 2021 will be forever remembered as the most reactive period of entrepreneurship. Those forced reactions occurred with stakeholders, lenders, supply chains, customers and how to pivot with the various onslaught of inputs during the year. 2021 presents an opportunity to be more proactive as apparel brands reevaluate their business models for the year.

We recommend that brands evaluate three key decisions with their factoring companies as part of their overall strategy in 2021. Firstly, factoring companies provide unrivaled insight into the creditworthiness of available wholesale channels. Secondly, factoring companies provide a barometer of industry trends on retailer terms, discounts and returns. Thirdly, evaluate how the factoring company can support the overwhelming requirement for an e-commerce strategy. At Republic, our clients regularly discuss ideas and best practices as they refine the best approach with their target customers.

Our partnership with brands often extends beyond just funding receivables. Regularly we provide additional funding on e-commerce, merchant and inventory facilities. The conversations for 2021 should be where you are going and making sure you have a funding partner that can support your strategy. We are excited about the developments and trends that will emerge throughout the apparel community in 2021.

David M. Reza
Senior Vice President, Western Region
Milberg Factors, Inc.



Factoring has always been and will continue to be a service that can help a company to thrive in both bull- and bear-market environments. Last year was a stern test for all resources serving the retail-sector supply chain, including factors. Now, as the industry recovers from the disruption of 2020, factors will continue to prove their value by providing their traditional core

products such as debtor-risk coverage and third-party accounts-receivable management. The recent rash of high-profile retail failures underscores the value of third-party credit protection and accounts-receivable management.

Of course, these services are often coupled with working-capital and trade-financing tools that are specifically designed to help apparel companies deal with everyday challenges such as seasonal cash-flow needs, customer-delivery pushbacks, vendor-credit issues and product development. Further, in cases where a factor may only be providing credit coverage and collections to a client, our presence and expertise often provide comfort to banks that are lending to apparel companies.

Factors are risk-management and financing resources. While we are not consultants, we can be consultative. Over the years we have seen many clients negotiate their way through difficult market conditions. In addition to delivering our core products and services, we can—and do—share many best practices among our clients that will help them navigate these uncharted waters.

Kevin M. Sullivan
Executive Vice President, Wells Fargo Commercial Services
Wells Fargo



It's pretty clear that 2020 was a year in which factoring services proved to be a vital tool for apparel companies. We essentially witnessed 10 years of change crammed into a 10-month period, which resulted in a sizable increase in retail bankruptcies. The consumer shift toward direct-to-consumer purchases at the expense of bricks-and-mortar retailers was pronounced and doesn't appear to be a temporary trend.

Companies that were able to rely on the support of factors found that, in spite of the significant increase in retail insolvencies, they were able to move forward because of the credit coverage provided by their factors.

While it was a concern that a company might have lost two or three sizable customers, they were paid out on receivables that would otherwise have been customer-credit charge-offs. Companies that did not utilize the services of a factor were now faced with the double-edged issue of losing valued customers and absorbing potentially large write-offs.

With the continued restrictions related to COVID-19, as we've entered 2021, there is little doubt that the retail landscape remains somewhat challenged. While many retailers were able to benefit from an already-robust direct-to-consumer business that increased as a result of COVID-19, those who didn't have those capabilities have, in some cases, continued to struggle. Now more than ever it's important for an apparel company to have a financial partner who can not only provide liquidity in the form of lending facilities but also provide factoring services that allow the company to be better informed about the credit status of their customers while at the same time providing credit insurance on accounts receivable in the event that bankruptcies continue in 2021.

Another important benefit of factoring relates to the collection-and-cash-application services that a factor offers. Every apparel company in 2020 was forced to take a serious look at head count and efficiency. A factor enables an apparel company to essentially outsource functions that would otherwise represent additional expense to the company if they chose to manage these functions on their own. We've been approached by companies over the last year or so who had never previously considered factoring and now consider it a vital service, given the uncertainty that 2020 produced. The benefit that a bank such as Wells Fargo has is the ability to tailor these programs to whatever a client seeks. We can provide advance-factoring facilities that feature credit, collection and cash-application capabilities along with advances against receivables and inventory. We can also provide what's referred to as collection-factoring facilities, which feature credit, collection and cash-application services without any lending facility attached. In either case, a company can be confident in the fact that credit-approved accounts receivable are backed by Wells Fargo. Should a company choose not to utilize factoring,

we can also provide asset-based lending facilities that do not have a factoring component. Given the uncertainties of today's marketplace, we're definitely seeing more companies express an interest in factoring services as we move into 2021.

Ken Wengrod
Finance Committee Chair
District Export Council of Southern California



Gathering and understanding real-time company data in today's environment is crucial in making effective business decisions. Companies may benefit from collecting real-time data from their customers by asking the following questions: Does the customer have the ability to pay their bills in a timely manner?, What's their cash availability?, Is the customer paying their suppliers on time?, Are they requesting extended terms?, Are chargebacks increasing?, Are their online sales significant? and Are their stores even open?

Despite their reluctance to share these details, companies should be requesting these data from their customers and factors. Maintaining and expanding relationships with their customers is vital rather than limiting it to merchandisers and buyers and accounts payable. The company should take notice and refrain from being overly aggressive on the sales side when the factor is not approving an account.

Factors can assist the apparel companies with increased availability to properly match their trade terms. Negotiating with the suppliers for increased terms is yet another avenue for companies to consider during these uncharted times. Retailers are offering their own supply-chain financing programs with very competitive terms, which companies can explore. Expansion of their factoring facilities is recommended for growth, not to cover losses. Exploring new ways to expand sales to good-credit customers and reducing unnecessary overhead and inventory are fundamental to flourishing.

Companies need to broaden their customer base. Now is a critical time to expand exports. The weakened dollar makes U.S. exports far more competitive, with 95 percent of potential customers outside U.S. borders. Staying on top of customer credit and collection matters and not being solely reliant upon the factor are advantageous steps to take to overcome business challenges in the days ahead.

Adam Winters
President and CEO
Merchant Financial



2020 was certainly a challenging year on all levels. Businesses were, of course, greatly impacted by the pandemic. As retail shut down, many of our clients began importing PPE. This was significant as clients were able to ship goods during a time when retailers were closed. Merchant provided an enormous amount of purchase-order financing in order to help our clients achieve these sales.

As business begins to recover, it is paramount for companies to have a factor in their corner that is willing to approve credit while in difficult market conditions. We have seen a surge in retail bankruptcies over the past year, yet we are still out there approving those tough credits.

We strongly believe that we will see an increase in apparel sales as the economy improves over the next 12 months. Having a favorable factoring or asset-based-lending facility will give businesses the flexibility to take advantage of new opportunities. We at Merchant don't believe that one size fits all when it comes to financing. Whether you're a DTC business, a traditional business selling to retail or an omni-channel brand, structuring a facility suited to your specific business needs is paramount. ●



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WHAT'S CHECKING



Elisa B. exterior

Elisa B.

16 East Holly St., Pasadena
www.elisab.com

Since 1993, Elisa Bruley has run her better-contemporary boutique Elisa B. She said that the secret to longevity is good customer relations. "It's important to have a point of view, but it is more important to understand your customer. I rely on the loyalty of my clientele, and they have been fiercely loyal. I've been lucky," she said.

To keep business going during the toughest months of the pandemic, Bruley offered a number of promotions, including one called "Love Virtually," which was inspired by the 2003 hit movie "Love Actually." In this campaign, Bruley filmed herself using cue cards proposing to her customers to take advantage of a special promotion.

With this promotion, if shoppers redeemed unused gift cards, they would receive progressive discounts. Gift cards were offered in denominations of \$100, \$300, \$500, \$1,000 and \$3,000, and the discounts on the gift cards ranged from 10 percent to 50 percent. Bruley estimated that 90 percent of the gift cards were redeemed, and it helped to safely



MOTHER DENIM

Mother Denim

steer the shop through some of last year's worst times. Creative promotions also gave her time to scale up her digital-commerce operations with a **Shopify** store.

Elisa B.'s digital shop has continued developing, and what Bruley has found trending, not surprisingly, is anything casual, comfortable and cozy. Popular items include the High Waisted Hiker Hover jeans from the **Mother Denim** label, which retail for \$258. "It's not the typical boyfriend jean," Bruley said. "They're not oversized. The leg is straight, but it has a vintage look and wash."

Los Angeles-headquartered **The Great** has also been selling well. The brand makes a range of clothing including tops, sweats and printed dresses. Among the top performers are The Great's knit cardigans, priced between \$300 and \$400.



Gisele Tune Clothing interior



Sundry

Gisele Tune Clothing

12660 Ventura Blvd., Studio City
www.giseletune.com

Gisele Tune Clothing has sold contemporary and one-of-a-kind clothing in Los Angeles' Studio City neighborhood since 1993. Since the pandemic started, Gisele Tune, the founder of the self-named store, said that she has sought to blend what her customers loved about her physical shop with digital business.

"Making sure my customers feel safe shopping is my top priority," Tune said. "People shop with me because they appreciate the personal attention and care they receive. Now, I'm not just delivering on this expectation in-store but also via one-on-one virtual appointments and phone and video consults."

Personal appointments are conducted through **FaceTime** and **Zoom**. If sales are made locally, products are dropped off at

consumers' residences for free.

Pre-pandemic, a major focus of Gisele Tune was denim. Pants with an elastic waist and anything that is stretch is now popular, she said. Top-selling items have been from the Los Angeles-headquartered label **Sundry**. Sweatpants sell from \$180 on up.

"Sundry sweats are super soft and come in popular styles like camouflage," Tune said.

Her customers also have been buying pants from an Italian brand with a name limited to one letter—I. The pants retail for \$68. Israeli label **Bevy** makes pants out of a stretchy material that retail for \$185 and also has been selling well.

For one-of-a-kind clothing, Tune plans on further developing her T-shirt store's detailing and alteration service, where she and her staff alter T-shirts and put decorations on them. "It's harder for individuality to shine through on a computer screen, but with customizing T-shirts we can help our clients with that," Tune said.

WHAT'S CHECKING



Button Up Boutique store exterior

Button Up Boutique

Palladio, 330 Palladio Pkwy. #2017, Folsom
Buttonupboutique.com

During the pandemic, Robin Bernardoni built omni-channel and digital channels for her Sacramento-area stores. Two locations do business under the nameplate of Button Up Boutique; another is named **Runway Boutique**.

Bernardoni's team helped develop an e-commerce shop that attracts buyers from throughout the United States. It has also served as a billboard to increase interest in the physical stores, where shoppers can pick up goods curbside, said Lucy Wheeler, a Button Up manager.

"Instagram has been a driving tool for us, keeping our feed fresh and posting new arrivals daily," Wheeler said. "Customers use this to screenshot pieces they love and send to their personal stylist at Button Up or simply shop directly from the post."



Maven West

Button Up customers are buying denim. A popular item has been the jogger pant from the **Paige** brand. "Looser fits are in now," Bernardoni said. The jogger retails for \$225. "Cost has not been an issue," she said. "People are spending. But they are just spending differently."

Another popular item has been the cargo-pocket tie-front top from the **Maven West** label. It retails for \$188. "It's ageless. My mom will wear it; my daughter will wear it," Bernardoni said.



Callie Girl interior

Callie Girl

25350 Marguerite Pkwy. #D, Mission Viejo
calliegirlloc.com

With roots in selling clothing at private parties in addition to fund-raisers for local high schools and nonprofit organizations in South Orange County, Calif., the bricks-and-mortar store Callie Girl was gaining momentum selling affordable casual clothes with trend-driven styles for major events such as **Coachella** and the **Stagecoach Festival**. In 2019, the store was put on the radar of reality-television-show fans when it was featured in an episode of "The Real Housewives of Orange County."

But when physical stores were required to close due to COVID-19 restrictions, Callie Girl's income dropped to almost nothing, said Jennifer Arnott, the store's founder. In March and April of 2020, her staff worked 15-hour days to redevelop the skeleton e-commerce website Callie Girl had kept to merely maintain an online presence by transforming it into a competitive e-commerce shop. The



Z Supply

business made it through a tough year, and Callie Girl continues to employ nine people who work in the bricks-and-mortar store and the e-commerce shop.

As the pandemic changed fashion trends, since March 2020 Callie Girl customers have focused on clothing to lounge around in and run errands in.

"I'm buying stuff for people to wear to **Trader Joe's** and still look cute," Arnott said.

Top selling items include sweatshirts from **Z-Supply**. Retail price points range from \$44 to \$50. Another popular item is the "shacket," or shirt jacket, which starts at \$44. ●



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Remaining True to Everyday Luxury, Catherine Gee Fall/Winter 2021 Adds an Edge

As trends ticked strongly toward comfort in 2020, with loungewear continuing to remain popular into the new year, Catherine Gee saw that there was a need for elegant pieces that were versatile. Gee was committed to providing her clientele with the luxurious silks, rich velvets and stunning jacquards that have become stylish, comfortable alternatives to the casual trends of the past year. Beginning the year by unveiling the Fall/Winter 2021 collection of her eponymous brand, Gee remained true to her easy elegance while catering to women who welcome a return to wearing beautifully made garments.

“What I saw happening during COVID-19, even after the initial lockdown, was a certain sect of women became fatigued with wearing sweatpants and they wanted to look good and feel good again,” Gee explained. “I saw this uptick in silk-shirting sales because they were going to the site for the masks and then they were discovering these classic, timeless blouses like the Daria blouse, cut in prints and fall colors.”

Remaining loyal to her aesthetic, Gee wanted to lightly

wade outside of her expected styles by expanding from her sophisticated resort roots toward more of an urban look, resulting in the current collection, which she has named the New York Edit. An emphasis was placed on tops in bright prints and vibrant colors in addition to fitted pants in a raspberry hue and an exquisite belted car coat in hot pink, black and white. A luxurious full-length, long-sleeved button-up shirt dress was made in a color Gee refers to as “orchid purple” but seems to transition to different shades of the hue nearly reaching a fuchsia depending on the light.

“It’s not an everyday dress,” Gee said. “It’s another statement piece, and you can do it two ways. You can have it buttoned up with the ties in a very Victorian style or you can unbutton it as high up the leg as you want, untie the ties and it feels a little bit more resort.”

Using her beloved silks, for which she is known, in addition to the jacquards and velvets, Gee’s goal was to not only elevate women’s style but to improve their outlook by creating luxurious clothing in bold colors and patterns. Gee in-

tended to lift the mood of her clients, thereby improving their outlook during a challenging time while they were living their lives in a new way.

“I wanted women to feel very cool, confident and sexy in their everyday wardrobe,” Gee said. “We coined the term ‘Zoom chic’ because women started buying the silk blouses and they were Zooming in them because they looked nice and they are everyday pieces.”

Looking toward this year, Gee is optimistic about the future of fashion and the expression it will afford. She foresees trends shifting toward the unique and designs in colors that promote an optimistic outlook.

“People will want to live again. We’re going to live again. We’re going to crave the individuality that is fashion, especially the colors,” Gee said. “We might not see in the streets or trending maximalist fashion so much, but our senses will see it when we finally emerge again. That is why I love bold colors and rich fabrics. I think they will speak once everything opens up again.”—Dorothy Crouch

CAL POLY POMONA ANNOUNCES NEW MASTER’S DEGREE IN

INTERNATIONAL APPAREL MANAGEMENT

The program provides a high level perspective on the emerging technologies, consumer trends, companies and social issues reshaping the global apparel sector. The program focuses on the development of analytical and management skills to identify and evaluate business problems, and to communicate and implement effective solutions. The objective is to equip graduates to navigate the complex and changing business landscape, and be prepared for leadership.

The program consists of 30 semester units.

The core curriculum (18 units) embraces global apparel markets and competitive dynamics, emerging technologies, information and quantitative reasoning skills, international consumer behavior, and management insights from industry executives and thinkers in the field. Electives (6 units) include brand management; product innovation; and international retail strategy. A research project (6 units) is the culminating experience, and focuses on development of advanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

The program is taught by our international faculty team who hold advanced degrees from top universities in the US, Europe and Asia. Their backgrounds combine extensive research with significant industry experience in management and consulting roles.

The GRE/GMAT requirement for Fall 2021 Admission has been waived



CalPolyPomona

www.ceu.cpp.edu/iam

Contact Chitra S. Dabas
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Project Digital's Sophomore Run Includes CFDA Partnership, Concierge Service

Informa Market Fashion's classic- and contemporary-menswear trade show **Project** rolled out its first virtual trade event, **Project Digital**, during Summer 2020 in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. On Jan. 19, working with the e-commerce wholesale-platform partner **NuOrder**, Project Digital started a sophomore run, and show producers will further develop certain programs they started testing during the summer.

An important program that was unveiled at the second Project Digital is the Retail Concierge. Industry consultants, such as people formerly employed as retail buyers, merchandisers and showroom representatives, serve as concierges for this new program, said Jason Peskin, vice president of events and corporate development for Informa Markets Fashion.

"We wanted to take the next step in the evolution of our retail-relations service and cater more to the retailer and make discovery easier for them," Peskin said.

The Retail Concierge is available through email, **Zoom** and telephone to introduce retailers to brands and consult on industry trends.

Throughout its history, Project has cultivated a reputation for introducing new sections of its show that maintain their own identities, such as Project N:OW, which has been



Project Digital's Retail Concierge service utilizes industry consultants such as former retail buyers, merchandisers and showroom representatives to cater to retailers' needs. Shown above: Victor Li Spring/Summer 2021 Collection

devoted to new styles the show believes push boundaries in fashion and cultural relevance. For the second run of Project Digital, it was announced that the **Council of Fashion Designers of America** and **New York Men's Day**, an initiative that presents emerging designers, would produce CFDA and

NYMD at **Coterie** and Project Digital. Erin Hawker, owner and founder of **Agency PR** and NYMD, was thrilled to be part of an initiative that can further promote emerging designers during a challenging time.

"What appealed to us was having this global audience, the trade show, the selling component and the media all in one fell swoop," Hawker said.

Project Digital also will produce four special events on the Zoom platform. Content providers and magazines such as *High Snobiety*, *Blamo!*, *Scandinavian Mind* and *The Tenth Magazine* will produce seminars on industry topics.

An announcement was also made extending Project Digital for an additional week. The last show day will be Feb. 22. While Informa Markets Fashion is beginning to reintroduce on-site events, beginning with its **MAGIC Pop Up Orlando** Feb. 9–11, Peskin said to expect digital shows to continue.

"Digital has been a big shift for us," Peskin said. "It's a hard thing to master and do it right, but it's been a great experience. We always thought about doing it. But the pandemic accelerated where everyone in the events industry was going. When we bring back live events, we hope to have a hybrid future where we blend live and digital."—Andrew Asch

NRF Big Show Charts How Retail Survived COVID-19

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

The **National Retail Federation's NRF 2021: Retail's Big Show—Chapter One**, an annual exposition that produces seminars and keynote addresses by industry stars, went virtual because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many of NRF 2021's virtual sessions discussed staying afloat during the pandemic. It was produced over six days, Jan. 12–14, 19 and 21–22. The shared challenges of the past 11 months created a camaraderie of getting through an unusually tough time, said Mike George, president and chief executive officer of **Quarante Retail Inc.** and chairman of the NRF, who gave the keynote address.

"This year's theme of the Big Show, Forward Together, reflects the pride that I think we all feel in how we became tougher as an industry to meet the extraordinary challenges of 2020 and also our confidence that together we will take retail to new heights in 2021 and beyond," he said.

Retailers and analysts speaking at the event charted what was next for the industry. Retailers interviewed forecasted that bricks-and-mortar would continue to play a vibrant role. During a Jan. 21 fireside chat titled "Retail's Rethink Moment: Reimagining Business as Unusual With Saks Fifth Avenue and Lululemon," Marc Metrick, president and CEO of **Saks Fifth Avenue**, said his store's digital business surged during the pandemic. But the luxury retailer's business started growing even faster when its physical stores reopened for business, albeit at limited hours.

"Stores are still very important," he said. "Stores are a very important part of the overall customer experience. For luxury especially, it's theater. To touch, to feel, to experience. I used to compare it to 'Hamilton'—until they streamed it on **Disney+**. People want to go to the theater. They want to experience it not just stream it online."

Fashion retail also got a vote of confidence during the pandemic, Metrick said.

"I was pleasantly surprised by the resiliency of our consumers and how it relates to their desire for fashion. People were buying things at the worst times of the pandemic that



Clockwise from top left: Ira Kalish of Deloitte; Janey Whiteside of Walmart; Marc Metrick of Saks Fifth Avenue; Colleen Taylor of American Express, who interviewed Marc Metrick; and Mike George, chairman of the NRF

there was no functional end use for, but they love fashion, they view the luxury as the comfort food of retail. It was their escapism," he said.

Janey Whiteside, chief customer officer at **Walmart Inc.**, also forecasted that bricks-and-mortar stores would continue to be important. But she noted that there is a robust future in omni-channel services, such as buy online, pick up at store.

"We saw the use of services like pickup increase dramatically, particularly as it relates to pickup and delivery of food and other consumable items," she said. "At the beginning of

the pandemic in Q1, we saw a peak of 300 percent growth in those services and four times as many new customers using pickup and delivery services."

The past 11 months have forced retailers to change. Marvin Ellison, president and CEO of **Lowe's Companies, Inc.**, said his company redeveloped its e-commerce business.

"Two years ago we couldn't offer a customer an e-receipt. We couldn't set up a schedule for associates in the stores that worked for both customer demand and the associates' lifestyles. The e-commerce platform was running on a decade-old infrastructure. Our job was to put the foundation in place so the superstructure could grow quickly and be stable," he said.

Expect technological change to continue in the upcoming year, said Christina Fontana on the panel "Luxury Goes Digital: Understand How Alibaba and Moschino Are Driving New Innovations." Fontana is the head of fashion and luxury with the Tmall Luxury division of the **Alibaba Group**, a China-headquartered retail, digital-media and cloud-computing company. She forecasted that digitization of functions would continue to inform the development of supply chains, logistics and merchandising. She also forecasted that local shopping would become more important and shoppers would increasingly seek retailers based in regions where they live.

Customers' receptiveness to working with technology has increased. During a seminar with the retailer **Zulily**, Brian Long, CEO and co-founder of **Attentive**, a personalized mobile-messaging platform, said that more than 90 percent of customers are interested in getting texts from brands.

Economic forecasts also were made during the show. During a talk with Walmart's Whiteside, Ira Kalish, chief global economist for the **Deloitte** accounting, consulting and professional-services network, said that the economy would continue to experience disruptions. "Our expectation for much of 2021 is that the economy will grow slowly and there will continue to be substantial disruption of the consumer market. Our hope, of course, is that with the vaccine we'll see by the end of the year a significant pickup in economic activity," Kalish said.

The **NRF: Retail's Big Show—Chapter Two** will start on June 6. ●

TEXTILES

USFIA Panel Tackles Eco-comfort in the Outdoor-Performance Category

During a Jan. 21 virtual presentation, "A Review of Tree Climate: A Collaborative Collection by Concept III and Tencel," moderated by the **United States Fashion Industry Association's** communications director, Shannon Brady, new fabrications for the sustainable outdoor-apparel market were introduced.

"The outdoor-performance-apparel industry constantly demands innovation that is the lifeblood of outdoor apparel today," textile-solutions provider **Concept III** founder David Parkes said.

Wood-pulp fiber provider **Lenzing's** business development manager for Tencel, Sharon Pérez, revealed the characteristics that make Tencel Lyocell fibers ecologically sound yet comfortable.

"The Tencel Lyocell fiber absorbs the majority of water. As it absorbs the moisture, it is quickly passed through the fiber through little channels," Pérez explained. "The transpor-



New fabrications for the outdoor-performance-apparel market have the resilience of rugged workwear but with a more fashionable hand and drape.

tation of that water pulled out of the fiber into the surface happens at a much quicker rate; therefore, by default, it lends

itself to a positive thermal-regulation experience."

At Concept III, Parkes noted that the company would be introducing a Tencel Lyocell capsule that includes a flat-back rib at 47 percent Tencel Lyocell and 53 percent recycled polyester in March with a larger push in spring 2023.

Steven Lerman, executive vice president of the integrated-textiles company **Brookwood Companies Inc.**, noted that it was revisiting its heritage fabrics. Its Redwood Performance Duck comprises 77 percent Tencel Lyocell, 20 percent cotton and 3 percent spandex.

"[It's a] perfect fabric for a jean-type pant or heavy-cotton-duck-canvas workwear-type jacket," Lerman said. "While it has workwear attributes, because of the Tencel it has a beautiful drape and hand, giving it a much more fashionable, comfortable look rather than what traditional harder-hand-feel workwear would be."—Dorothy Crouch



PORT OF LOS ANGELES

The Port of Los Angeles has instituted a new incentive program to shorten the time it takes to process trucks handling cargo.

Traffic Congestion at Ports of L.A. and Long Beach at High Levels

Cargo-ship congestion at California ports and those located around the United States is at some of the highest levels in years due to supply-chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. To help break up the congestion, on Feb. 1 the **Port of Los Angeles** started an incentive program to move trucks more efficiently and at a faster pace through its terminals, said Gene Seroka, the port's executive director.

The incentive program will offer financial rewards for shortening the time it takes to process trucks handling cargo, he said. Terminals that improve truck turn times from 5 percent to 20 percent can earn 50 cents or \$2.75 per loaded or empty 20-foot-equivalent unit containers. If a terminal averages turn times of 35 minutes or less in a given month, it will earn a top rate of \$3 per loaded or empty container, he said.

"These best practices are needed now more than ever to relieve pressure on the supply chain due to the ongoing surge," Seroka said. "Ports are more fluid when trucks move quickly in and out of the gates and are more productive when a truck delivers one container and leaves with another in a single trip. We're going to reward terminals for better

performance."

Traffic has gotten so bad at U.S. ports that the Federal Maritime Commission, a Washington, D.C.-based federal-government agency that regulates international ocean transportation, announced late last year that it would form a commission to investigate the bottlenecks at U.S. ports. The commission is investigating shipping-company practices that may have contributed to port congestion. Commission findings had not been announced by press time.

Reasons for congestion in Los Angeles and at its neighboring **Port of Long Beach** are multifaceted. One issue is a labor problem, said Robert Krieger, president of **Krieger Worldwide**, a Long Beach, Calif.-based freight-forwarding service. The pandemic has cut into the numbers of longshoremen available to take cargo off of ships.

"There have been situations of strikes and lockouts at the ports. This is similar," Krieger said. "When they have lockouts and strikes, it may take many weeks to clear out backlogs. Now there's just a backlog that won't get cleared out for many months. It's hard to say when the port situation will go back to normal."—*Andrew Asch*

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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Fax: (213) 748-3400
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www.cinergytextiles.com

Products and Services: For over 25 years, Cinergy Textiles has been specializing in stock and order-based programs consisting of hundreds of solid and novelty knits, wovens, and linings. Our product line provides piece goods for all apparel markets, including children's, juniors, contemporary, activewear, uniforms, and special occasions. Our fabrics are imported from Asia and stocked in Los Angeles. We have a one-roll stock minimum. Orders are generally processed on the same day and ship out within one or two business days, depending on the size of the order and availability of the particular style ordered.

Design Knit Inc.

1636 Staunton Ave.
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Phone: (213) 742-1234
Fax: (213) 748-7110
info@designknit.com
www.designknit.com
Contact: Shala Tabassi, Pat Tabassi

Products and Services: Design Knit, Inc. is a knit-to-order mill based in Los Angeles specializing in the development and production of high-quality, sheer to heavyweight knit fabrics for contemporary, athleisure, sportswear, and loungewear markets. The collection includes but is not limited to: Supima Cotton, TENCEL™, Lycocel, TENCEL™ Modal, Organic Cotton, ECOLIFE®, cashmere blends, linen blends, rayon, mélange, triblends, etc. Fashion-forward athleisure collection. Cut-and-sew sweater knits. Now introducing STUDIO DK, the fabric source for your growing brand. Lower minimums and some stock items available.

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Products and Services: Fabric Selection Inc. is a premier wholesale fabric supplier, providing the highest quality textiles and in-house designs to designers and manufacturers in the Los Angeles area and beyond. Our assortment and specialty is vast, including basics, novelties and prints in both knits and wovens. All of our print designs are copy-righted. We have polyester/spandex, rayon/spandex, cotton/spandex, Alpaca and more unique fabrics to inspire your next fashion collection, and will work with you to get a price that will fit your bottom line.

Fashion

Dallas Market Center

www.dallasmarketcenter.com

Products and Services: The Dallas Apparel & Accessories Market is held five times each year at the Dallas Market Center. Located in one of the country's fastest-growing regions, the Dallas Market Center brings together thousands of manufacturers and key retailers in an elevated trade-show environment.

Featuring 500 permanent showrooms and over 1,000 temporary booths, including expanded contemporary lines and resources, the Dallas Market Center is where inspiration starts. Upcoming events include the Apparel & Accessories Market on March 23–26.

The New Mart

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Products and Services: In the heart of Los Angeles' Fashion District is the landmark New Mart Building. The showrooms of The New Mart represent the most exclusive and coveted contemporary lines from an international array of designers and manufacturers. The New Mart is unique in both architecture and style. The intimate setting creates a user-friendly experience for visitors. Each of its glass-fronted, uniquely designed showrooms provides a buying adventure that cannot be experienced at any other showroom destination. The New Mart is open year-round to the wholesale trade only and we host over 100 showrooms that carry over 500 collections.

Technology

Kornit Digital

480 S Dean Street
Englewood, NJ 07088
Contact: Isaiah Jackson
(201) 608-5750
kdam-info@kornit.com
www.kornit.com

Products and Services: Kornit Digital is the leading provider for digital textile printing solutions. Kornit's innovative printing technology enables businesses to succeed in web-to-print, on-demand, and mass customization concepts. We offer a complete line of direct-to-garment printing solutions that range from commercial to mass production level. Offices in Europe, Asia, and North America.

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tukateam@tukatech.com
www.tukatech.com

Products and Services: Tukatech applications combine the artistry of traditional fashion production with the efficiency of modern manufacturing, culminating in an end-to-end fashion technology powerhouse. We simplify design and development processes and create fashion technology that companies of every size use to bring the right product to the consumer at the right time.

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Products and Services: White Oak Commercial Finance, LLC (WOCF), formerly Capital Business Credit/Capital Factors, is a global financial products and services company providing credit facilities to middle-market companies between \$1 million and \$30 million. WOCF's solutions include asset-based lending, full-service factoring, invoice discounting, supplychain financing, inventory financing, U.S. import/export financing, trade credit-risk management, account-receivables management, and credit and collections support. WOCF is an affiliate of White Oak Global Advisors, LLC, and its institutional clients. More information can be found at our website.

Education

Cal Poly Pomona Department of Apparel Merchandising & Management

Dr. Chitra Dabas
Graduate Program Director and Associate Professor, Apparel Merchandising & Management
csdabas@cpp.edu

Products and Services: Gain Apparel Business Management Skills with a Master's in International Apparel Management from Cal Poly Pomona. Offered by the Department of Apparel Merchandising & Management, the program will provide graduates with an exceptional insight into the emerging technologies, consumer trends, international management issues and dynamic companies shaping the global apparel sector. The program focuses on building the critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills required in today's high tempo business arena. Graduates will be equipped to navigate the complex and changing business landscape, and be prepared for leadership positions. The program will be taught by our international faculty team who hold advanced degrees from top universities in the US, Europe and Asia, and who combine academic distinction with extensive industry and consulting experience. The program comprises 30 semester units. The core curriculum embraces international consumer behavior, global apparel markets and competition, emerging technologies, information and quantitative reasoning skills, and a seminar providing insights from leading executives and thinkers in the field. Elective courses feature diverse topics for specialization. For the culminating experience, there is the opportunity to choose between a master's thesis or an applied research project.

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Jobs Available

BEDHEAD PJAMA DESIGN ASSISTANT

Must have at least 1-5 yrs exp. in design assist, working with a CAD with pattern in a plant. Must have strong color sense, tech design, CADs, color separation & spec sheets. Must be highly motivated, energetic, & willing to adapt quickly in a fast paced environment. Must have great computer skills in Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop & Photoshop. Will be in charge of the full sample process from fabric & trim purchase to CAD & sew sheet production. Must be highly organized & not afraid to try new systems or develop systems to save time.
Contact: wendy@bedheadpajama.com

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Contact: wendy@bedheadpajama.com

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