

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

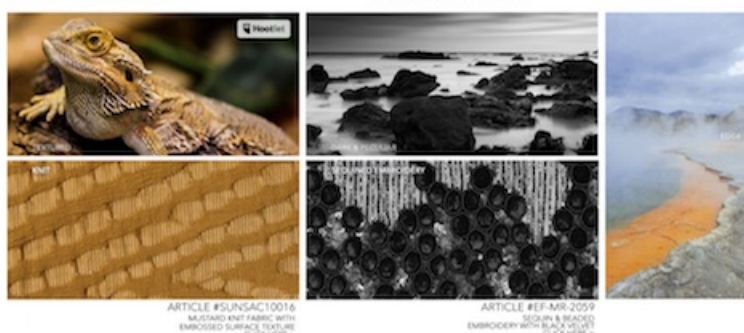
## Sundar updates fashion's antiquated, offline supply chain using data-driven insights

February 21, 2017

sundar

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sundar radar



*Sundar's Radar section of its Web site*

By JEN KING

Online discovery and sourcing platform Sundar is working to connect creative professionals with quality materials and qualified vendors in an increasingly fast-paced apparel and accessories industry where consumers demand near-immediate gratification.

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Rooted in the technologies of social networking, Sundar's aim is to revolutionize the fashion supply chain model by building out the world's largest wholesale marketplace. Sundar, conceived at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and incubated at Techstars, realized that the apparel supply chain, a trillion dollar global industry, was ripe for disruption.

For centuries, the apparel industry has relied on antiquated, opaque and offline methods to connect fashion designers, brands and retailers to textile mills and material suppliers for silks or lace, for instance. Sundar saw the opportunity to streamline this process through a sourcing platform that relies on sophisticated search, curation and data-driven insights that connect buyers and sellers 24/7.

Seeing that the textile supply trade fair circuit was not much better off than the day-to-day manufacturer-material relationship, Sundar also plans to roll out show-specific online platforms. The first trade show to benefit from a platform exclusive to its participating vendors and guests was Milan's 24th annual **Milano Unica**, a textile and accessories fair targeting high-end fashion production, Feb. 1-3.

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A post shared by Milanounica (@milanounica) on Feb 11, 2017 at 12:45pm PST

For Milano Unica, Sundar created the MU365 platform to connect buyers to a customized, 365-day ecosystem representing the entire trade show network. In an industry first, Sundar's streamlined technology brought a trade fair's offerings online, thus easing the process and often overwhelming climate of a large-scale show.

"Sundar is creating private platforms for trade show exhibitors and attendees to extend the show - which take place over three days and twice a year to a 24/7, 365 day-a-year experience aligned with the breakdown of the traditional twice yearly sourcing season to the always-on' and see-now, buy-now' model," said Jag Gill, founder and CEO of [Sundar](#).

"This does not replace the trade fair, which is an important face-to-face component of business for buyers and sellers," she said. "The first collaboration is with Milano Unica, the premier show in Europe for the finest Italian textiles, trim and components, as well as curated products from Japan, Korea and other growing markets.

"MU365 launched Feb. 1, and the fair's customer base has more than 400 exhibitors and 18,000 attendees."



*Jag Gill, founder and CEO of Sundar*

In a Q&A with *Luxury Daily*, Sundar's Ms. Gill discussed what inspired the platform's creation, its implications on the see-now, buy-now trend and the need for digital innovation in the apparel supply chain.

Here is the dialogue:

What inspired you to launch Sundar? How did your career experience prepare you to start Sundar?

I founded Sundar after a decade-long international banking career where, as a senior executive and trusted advisor to some of India's leading apparel industrialists, I uncovered a paradox: the complexities and inefficiencies of the fashion supply chain were in clear conflict with the fast pace of consumer demand for on-trend fashion. This became the white space from which Sundar was borne.

Soon after, I graduated from MIT, where Sundar was incubated, and won a spot in the Boston program of Techstars, the world's leading software accelerator. The company gained the attention of New Enterprise Associates (NEA), the largest venture capital fund in the world, who became investors.

In what ways will Sundar transform the fashion supply chain?

Currently, a digital consumer is served by an analogue supply chain. Sundar is transforming this system in three major ways:

**Speed:** The need for speed has become critical as consumers demand is tied to the Internet they see trends and want them instantly. The lag that existed between runway shows and production is giving way to see-now, buy-now' and production needs to change to accommodate.

Sundar allows designers to find fabrications, trims, accessories, components and wholesale product quickly, and enables suppliers to reach designers without friction.

**Transparency:** Sundar brings transparency into the price, composition and source of garment components and wholesale product, for better compliance, price and quality.

Supply chain transparency social & environmental compliance is increasingly demanded from consumers (especially millennials), and public companies have required this and passed it off through the supply-side where this information is obfuscated from the design and creative professional.

Now, Sundar will be a global benchmark and forcing function that ensures this data will be available, shared and later, ranked.



*Sundar's Radar category page*

**Aesthetic:** Designers will have the world at their fingertips when it comes to finding the components that make up a garment, as well as gain access to finished product that can be easily customized, manufactured and shipped for faster turnaround times.

Imagine having every button style categorized by type and size; or designs of off-the-shoulder' tops that can be pulled and put on the production line in a matter of minutes. Imagine being able to source both from the most prestigious mills and also from local artisans.

This is critical in a world where differentiation of product, and first-to-market is key to creating desire amongst consumers.

Can you explain how suppliers met with brands prior to digitization and Sundar's launch? How is this making fashion design easier?

History has shaped the fashion supply chain. The structural challenges mainly distance, time-zone and language meant that a legacy industry was created around third-parties and agents that behaved like intermediaries.

They are essentially offline players:

Trade shows, where buyers come to see the latest creations and discuss development for their lines. Typically trade shows happen twice a year, aligned to the traditional 'old-school sourcing season'.

Many require plane travel to attend, with limited opportunity for new discovery' as the shows are vast, un-curated and occur over a handful of days.

Agents are hired by fabric mills and garment manufacturers to meet with designers and sourcing professionals in their markets. Usually agents have an understanding of a label's aesthetic and they bring a pre-selected group of products and designs to the apparel companies.

Upside: no travel and can touch and feel products. Downside: Beholden to the agent's curation; there may be fabrications; accessories and garments that will not be seen.

The agency' model is diminishing as brands and manufacturers need to cut costs (agents can charge between 5 percent and 15 percent upwards of order volume in commissions) and take ownership and control of their product and design (Kate Spade recently and very publicly terminated its lengthy relationship with Li & Fung, the largest sourcing agent in the world); and suppliers move sales and marketing in-house to better serve their customers in an increasingly faster and leaner supply chain.



*Sundar's Radar category page*

How will being featured on Sundar benefit small manufacturers of silk or lace, for example?

Small suppliers remain analogue and have limited expertise of marketing their products beyond lugging a suitcase of samples to their customer's office on infrequent and costly business trips - a digital customer is served by analogue supply.

Their Web sites look like they are from the 1980s and their product catalogues are offline. With Sundar's flexible Web tools and service, they will have an equal opportunity for exposure so they can be discovered alongside the better and larger suppliers who have already caught onto digital by developing ecommerce sites and B2B tools to work with their existing demand.

With see-now, buy-now really taking off, how will the Sundar platform make production time more seamless?

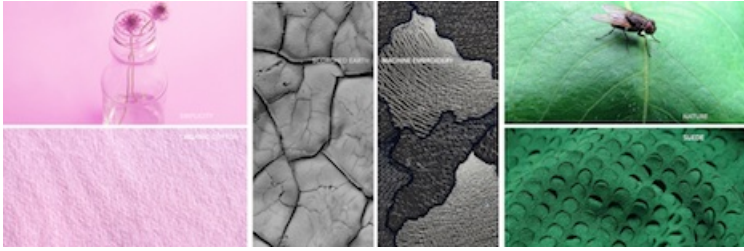
If the right fabrication, accessory or garment, at the right price and quality, can be discovered during the design process, rather than after the product is designed, that eliminates a step and increases speed to market.

Additionally, counter-sourcing' locating a product at a comparable quality and competitive price is the largest time component that can hold up production, and requires vendor development and immediate knowledge of technical, product, stock and pricing information. Sundar holds this data in the cloud from the get-go, where normally it exists in excel spreadsheets and fax copies.

Consumers are very much in tune with ethical business practices how will Sundar ensure sustainable efforts are used at all levels of the supply chain?

Collecting, collating and sharing social and environmental compliance information in a consistent way will empower the industry to make decisions and allocate resources to those that operate sustainably and fairly.

The weakest in these areas will be forced to shore up their ethical practices in order to compete.



*Sundar's Radar category page*

Do you think Sundar has potential outside of the fashion industry? Possibly for all kinds of artisan work?

Yes, in additional design-based industries (think interiors, furniture) as well as creating digital artisan networks that can serve local communities, and women's labor and empowerment opportunities.

Where do you see Sundar in five years time?

In five years, Sundar will be the system of record' for this industry and will have created the infrastructure to power the new apparel supply chain, and empower manufacturers and designers by bringing them tools that make sourcing as easy as shopping.

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