

# Q&A: AptDeco disrupts consumer's relationship with home furnishing

Article

## Reham Fagiri

Co-Founder and CEO, AptDeco



Insider Intelligence spoke with Reham Fagiri, co-founder and CEO of NYC-based AptDeco, an ecommerce platform that enables individuals to sell and buy used furniture. In 2014, Fagiri

started the company after an unsuccessful attempt of selling furniture on Craigslist. AptDeco has since expanded to the Northeast and San Francisco Bay area.

AptDeco is part of the reCommerce movement, encouraging consumers to buy used items and shop in a more sustainable manner.

### **Insider Intelligence: Why did you start AptDeco?**

**Reham Fagiri:** We started the company out of our own frustration trying to sell furniture on Craigslist. I was trying to sell my furniture when I was living in Philadelphia and moving back to New York and had some negative experiences. Potential buyers did not show up when they said they would; people asked me for favors like moving the furniture with them and loading it in their cars; some haggled with me; and others made me feel unsafe in my own place.

I thought to myself: “There has to be a better way to do this, where you can make it a trust community. You don’t have to deal with the awkward cash exchanges, replacing it with online payments, and offering pick up and delivery to customers.”

### **II: You’re not a designer, so how did your background help build the company?**

**RF:** I’m an engineer and a very process-oriented person. I started AptDeco from the perspective of wanting to solve a problem, rather than coming at it from a furniture or interior design background.

When we were outsourcing the logistics and getting questions like, “Why are your routes so complicated?” or “Why can’t you promise shorter windows?” I knew how to provide customers with solutions, coming from an engineering background. I can write software to make this better, and being able to see the challenges and what’s not working is what helped us build AptDeco.

### **II: How did AptDeco convince new sellers and customers to use the platform?**

**RF:** The low-hanging fruit was actually going where we knew the customers were, like Craigslist, and doing a bit of outreach there. The first year we launched, we did some advertising in the New York City subway, and it was very successful. It helped with validation, as we were changing consumer behavior and bringing in a lot of users who are used to the scams of Craigslist.

People who may sell furniture, may not necessarily buy it. Thus, for us it is about translating what’s happening in the fashion reCommerce space into the furniture reCommerce space. We

talk about it from a sustainability angle, but also from an efficiency standpoint as customers face supply chain issues, especially with the holidays coming up.

**II: Why do you think consumers' relationship with second-hand items has evolved differently within the fashion versus furniture reCommerce space?**

**RF:** Hand-me-downs have always happened with babies or toys or even clothes when you're an adult. There is the element of you washing the clothing and then it being yours. This concept existed for so long and it has been brought online, exploding with Gen Z and millennials. Everybody has a lot of clothes, and they are not wearing all of it.

With furniture it's different—you have a finite amount of furniture and don't need multiple sofas.

One of our big goals is to get people to change their relationship with furniture, so they don't feel like it's just one big purchase decision that they have to be stuck with for years. You buy a sofa and if after a few months or a year you're tired of the gray sofa and you want a red one, you sell it. It will retain its value, and you can buy something used for the same price that you sold it for without having to spend anything out of pocket. You can then keep redecorating your space, and it becomes fun for the customer.

**II: What are some of the leading innovations in ecommerce that inspire you?**

**RF:** There's a lot of really cool tech out there, and as a company it is figuring out—how do you apply it so consumers will use it and benefit from it? That's the challenge.

For example, the tech innovation around augmented reality (AR) is amazing where you can see a piece of furniture in your room before buying it. People now are experimenting with getting things delivered within a few hours, which speaks to new customer expectations. With some of the new iOS operating systems, you can use your camera to measure the dimensions for you.