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Protecting Independent Local Contemporary Fashion: An exploration of policies that shaped the South African fashion industry and approaches to protect local independent South African contemporary fashion as cultural heritage

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This research report has been submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Policy and Management.

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To my family, friends, and loved ones, I express my sincere gratitude for all of your love, support, and encouragement through this research process. Without you, this research would not be what it is. Thank you.

Declaration

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

School of Arts

SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

Declaration by Students

I , Kendall Lee Atkinson, (Student number: 2632033) hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I confirm that ALL the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

Signature:  Date: 02 August 2024

Abstract

Local independent South African contemporary fashion designers face a challenging market when entering the South African fashion industry to sell their products. Local independent contemporary designers are forced to compete with the overwhelmingly popular international fast fashion brands that populate malls nationwide with little to no support. This has created challenging and convoluted entry points for local independent contemporary designers and continuous challenges to stay in the market. Independent local contemporary fashion designers offer something different than chain stores: a specific creative and cultural design perspective. People are naturally influenced by their environments and identity; therefore, local independent contemporary fashion designers instinctively design from their cultural perspective. We are losing aspects of cultural identity and history by not supporting or protecting local independent contemporary fashion designers' businesses. This paper investigates the challenges both the designers and consumers face in the industry and different methods of protecting local independent South African contemporary fashion designers to preserve their art and support the local fashion sector. The research methodology used was hermeneutical phenomenology, and my experience as a consumer of the South African fashion industry was not omitted due to the study method. Five interviews were conducted, three individuals participated in photovoice, and 84 participants were surveyed. The results show evidence of the innate interconnection of culture and cultural heritage with South African contemporary designers and the challenges that the designers face due to policy decisions by the South African government. In order to protect local contemporary fashion designers to allow them the opportunity for success, fashion should be declared as a cultural heritage by the South African government.

Keywords: *South Africa, Local Fashion, Cultural Industries, Cultural Policy, Heritage Protection, Fashion Designers, Independent Designers, Cultural Protection*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement **1**
Declaration **2**
Abstract **3**
TABLE OF CONTENTS **4**
List of Figures **5**
1. Introduction **7**
1.1 Background 9
1.2 Problem Statement 11
1.3 Research Questions 12
1.4 Aims and Objective 13
1.5 Research Rationale 14
2. Research Methodology **16**
2.1 Design and Data Collection 17
2.2 Data Analysis 19
2.3 Ethical consideration 21
2.3.1 Beneficence 21
2.3.2 Confidentiality 22
2.3.3 Informed Consent 22
3. Conceptual Framework **23**
3.1 Post-Apartheid Economic and Trade Policies 24
3.2 South Africa's Fashion Industry Flooded by Foreign Imports 25
3.3 An Underdeveloped Local Fashion Industry 25
3.4 Towards a Thriving Local Fashion Industry 26
4. Literature review **26**
4.1 History of the South African Fashion Industry: Transition into Democracy to Today 26
4.2 The Second-hand Market 30
4.3 Value of the Cultural and Creative Industries in South Africa 32
4.4 South African Culture, Arts, and Heritage Policies and Lack Thereof 35
4.5 Protection Policies by Foreign Governments 37
4.6 Fashion as Cultural Heritage 38
5. Findings **47**
5.1 South African Designers' Experiences in the Industry and Cultural Perspective 47
5.1.1 Participant 1 48
5.1.2 Participant 2 51
5.1.3 Participant 3 54
5.1.4 Participant 4 57
5.1.5 Participant 5 59
5.2 Fashion as a Cultural Heritage 61
5.3 Consumers' Relationship to the South African Fashion Industry 63
6. Discussion **68**
6.1 Fashion as Cultural Heritage 69
6.2 The Impact of Foreign Imports on Independent Brand Owners, Consumers, and Their Relationship 72
6.3 Lack of Resources 73
6.4 Designers' Call for Support 75
7. Recommendations **76**
8. Conclusion **77**

9. Limitations..... 79
References..... 80
Appendices..... 89

List of Figures

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework……..…23
Figure 2: Chart showing the USD to ZAR rates from 1975 - 2003 according to Bank of England……..28
Figure 3: Individual cultural sector's Gross Value Added towards SA GDP……31
Figure 4: The Herd's Handmade……38
Figure 5: The Herd's An Ode to Zulu Love Letters collection……..39
Figure 6: Thebe Magugu model wearing Home Economics Kitchentable Parka in Kimberly…….41
Figure 7: Thebe Magugu's "Domestic Venus" AW20……...43
Figure 8: "Big Hole" in Ipopeng, South Africa…….43
Figure 9: Yarn tuft samples……58
Figure 10: Archived roller printer……..59
Figure 11: Artificial flower craft……59
Figure 12: Natural clay polka dot cup……60
Figure 13: Pie chart survey results where participants primarily shop……..60
Figure 14: Pie chart survey results how participants look for new clothes……61
Figure 15: Pie chart survey results how often participants shop for new clothes……..61
Figure 16: Pie chart survey results if participants have shopped from a South African designer…….62
Figure 17: Pie chart survey results how often participants shop from a South African designer……..62
Figure 18: Pie chart survey results how participants find local South African designers/brands…..…63
Figure 19: Pie chart survey results if not, why participants don't shop from local South African designers/brands…….64
Figure 20: Pie chart survey results showing participants age……65

1. Introduction

The South African fashion industry[1] boasts powerful economic strength and significant artistic and cultural value. Despite this, it has been left vulnerable to trade policies and a depreciating rand that has decimated the industry. Over the past two and a half decades, the fashion industry in South Africa has been increasingly defined by foreign imports and brands. Currently, 33% - 82% of the South African fashion market share comprises foreign brands (Statista, 2023). Visiting any shopping mall in South Africa, one will likely be inundated with foreign brands and hard-pressed to find local independent contemporary designers[2] or brands. From Sandton Mall to rural communities and fast fashion[3] to luxury fashion[4], one will find that foreign fashion brands from designer to high street and fast fashion—such as H&M (Sweden), Jet (Zimbabwe), Cotton On (Australia), Zara (Spain), Gucci (Italy)—are the predominant resource for shopping in South Africa.

While luxury fashion has maintained its European dominance for decades (Statista, 2023), fast fashion has had a meteoric rise in the past ten years, with chain stores from Western brands taking over the global fashion industry and imposing its styles as the social norm due to its ease of access and popularity (Ledezma, 2017). There has been an exponential increase in fast fashion's powerful hold on global fashion and culture with the rise of social media and solidifying a more global society. In a South African context, the nation's increase in these foreign brands has been coupled with the early 2000's increase in foreign imports and the decreased value of the rand (Vlok, 2006).

In my own experience, I have seen quite a breadth of the South African fashion industry. During my time spent in Jozini, KwaZulu-Natal, a rural community, the fashion was limited to inexpensive fast fashion brands that took residency on the main road in town. These shops

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[1] For the purpose of this study, the South African fashion industry will be defined as consisting of any and all parties involved in the ideation, development, construction, and selling of apparel in South Africa. When referring to the local South African fashion industry, this will be composed of the aforementioned list of parties, but have the constraints that the parties must be South African and work within the borders of South Africa.

[2] A local independent contemporary fashion designer is defined as: being based in South Africa (local) and not working under an already established brand (independent), i.e. the designer produces and sells their own work under their own brand and are therefore also brand owners, and does not work only in traditional designs, but may be inspired by them (contemporary).

[3] Fast fashion is defined in this study as relatively inexpensive clothing produced by mass-market retailers. Fast fashion promptly responds to the latest trend by mass producing said trendy clothing expeditiously, typically with low quality materials and methods.

[4] Luxury fashion is defined as a tier of fashion retailers that produce expensive items that hold prestige and exclusivity and of high quality.

were Pep, Studio 88, and J-Zee Fashion. The clothing in these shops was of deficient quality, made of petroleum-based materials, such as polyester, with it not uncommon to find hems coming undone. In the mall down the road, quality and price slightly increased with Truworths, Mr. Price, and Exact. However, these clothes are still predominantly made of synthetic petroleum-based materials, which are commonly of lesser quality, meaning the clothes will not last as long as natural fibre textiles. With the exclusion of J-Zee Fashion, an independently run drop-shipping fashion company, all these brands are South African-based. However, they still represent a threat to local South African fashion as they are modelled after Western fast fashion brands that clog the economy and environment with low-quality products.

However, the biggest fashion presence in the area was the multitudes of older women sitting on the side of the roads with mountains of used clothing next to them. This is not used clothing from the community but predominantly shipped from North America or Europe. A shocking image depicting the infiltration of this foreign second-hand clothing was a man in the community wearing a shirt from a sorority from an American university. The issue of foreign second-hand clothing is an entire industry, which will be further explained in the Background section.

While my experience in Johannesburg was different, many challenges remained the same. Visiting most malls in the city, you will most likely see predominantly foreign-based fast fashion brands. Few stores are reserved for local independent contemporary designers and brands, namely Young Designer's Emporium, which carries smaller local independent contemporary fashion designers focused on easy ready to wear, and Africa Rise, which carries more luxury local independent contemporary designers, both located in the Sandton Mall. Shopping for local fashion is something important to me, so beyond these two stores in a very popular shopping area, it comes down to personal effort.

A foundational knowledge of the industry is required to find local independent contemporary fashion designers. Searching is done virtually through Google searches and Instagram; therefore, you need to know what to search for and what publications to find designers on, especially for specific styles. Once you are in and understand the network, it is easier to navigate and find more designers, stores, and fashion shows of your interest. Nearly all of this shopping is done online.

Local independent contemporary fashion designers and brands have thus decreased their market share. This has put a strain on the fashion industry in South Africa and has led to a less locally diverse market and many textile factories and brands closing their doors (Vlok, 2006). By legally protecting these creatives and this industry, South Africa could have a successful fashion industry that would provide for a more robust economy, more jobs, and a more sustainable environment by not relying on foreign imports.

From a philosophical point of view, stemming from the likes of John Locke and Jean Jacques-Rousseau, we are products of our environment. Therefore, in the context of determining what South African fashion is, we can argue that it is any fashion created by a South African or someone raised in South Africa. Whether a local designer is explicitly designing from a cultural perspective, by nature we are influenced by our environments and therefore, a local South African designer will always be designing from a South African perspective. Traditional designs are explicitly designed from a South African cultural point of view which adds a depth of history, relationships, and cultural perspective. While this research is not focused on traditional designs but rather on contemporary fashion, their value is important and adds greater value to contemporary fashion. Contemporary South African fashion sits at the nexus of traditional designs, Western fashion, and modern updates. It adds immense value to the greater fashion industry and society by allowing both designers and consumers to explore the depths of this intersection along with the South African cultural landscape and the personal self.

1.1 Background

In the mid-nineties, South Africa went through many transformations due to the end of apartheid. The country's systems and industries were put to the test. Prior to democratisation in 1994, the local South African fashion industry was exceptionally protected. For the purpose of this research, this paper will employ the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions definitions of "protection," "means the adoption of measures aimed at the preservation, safeguarding and enhancement of the diversity of cultural expressions," and "protect," "means to adopt such measures." In large part due to sanctions held against South Africa for its apartheid government. While the

industry was focused and performing well in the domestic market, issues and challenges were not properly addressed–such as export capacity and large production volumes–leading to a failure to launch internationally post-apartheid (Vlok, 2006). An already struggling fashion industry was further weakened by South Africa joining the World Trade Organisation in 1994. This provided many economic incentives for international trade with South Africa. Unfortunately, the effects of a depreciating rand, various incentives, and preferential access to the US and European markets shocked the local South African fashion industry by flooding it with imports. This created a crisis in the fashion industry, leading to the closing of factories and brands and the loss of many jobs. Between 1995 and 2005, South Africa lost nearly 100,000 jobs in the fashion industry, while fashion imports from China increased from under $100 million to over $600 million in the same period (Vlok, 2006).

There have been studies done showing Western fashion's impact on non-Western countries' fashion for consumers and consumer culture (Lee and Son, 2017) and on local independent contemporary designers economically (Sarpong, Howard, and Osei-Ntiri, 2011). These scholars agree that there is a direct causation between the increase in fast fashion presence in their respective countries and a decrease in local fashion's availability and economic power.

Both of these issues are visible in South Africa's fashion industry today. The current climate is saturated with foreign imports, diluting South Africans' access to local brands. In my own experience, in order to find local brands to purchase from, there is a significant effort required of the potential customer to research to find these brands. This is not a sustainable model for industry growth. How can the South African government legally protect the local South African fashion industry practitioners? Without such protections, it is hard to imagine local brands having a fighting chance to be seen in the market.

This requires the potential consumer to have prior knowledge of how social media and local brands operate to be able to aptly search for new brands on the various platforms–predominantly Instagram. Needing consumers to go out of their way to find your product online versus going to a shopping mall to be presented with options disenfranchises the former by nature of consumer effort and ease.

Many of these readily available brands in shopping malls are headquartered outside of South Africa and predominantly produced in foreign countries. By not legally protecting local

independent contemporary designers, the practitioners are losing income that could benefit the local population, community, economy, and an entire business sector–the fashion industry. Fashion as a creative industry has yet to be formally acknowledged by the South African government. In the 1996 *White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage*, there is no mention of fashion. There is a brief mention of clothing design when listing what the word "design" consists of; however, does not address it any further nor does the paper mention any design under the Heritage sections (Department of Arts, Culture, Science And Technology, 1996). This oversight has only been partially amended by the latest *Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage Fourth Draft* in 2017 with its recognition of fashion by being classified as a sector "where creative input is a secondary but crucial means of enhancing the value of other products whose marketability and effectiveness would otherwise be lessened, were also classified under cultural industries" (Revision of the Department of Arts and Culture 1996 White Paper Fourth Draft, 2017:43). This wording does not recognise the artistic and cultural importance that fashion holds, and rather puts fashion's utilitarian and economic value first. The foreign imports by South Africa create an environmental onus for the country, with increasing fossil fuels needed to transport the clothes. Additionally, many of the big box stores dump a lot of their product, which further strains the waste problem of South Africa. This industry is regulated under multiple facets, such as trade, labour, environment, production, creative, and culture. The commission to establish the local contemporary fashion industry under protections as a cultural heritage and creative industry proves to be a complicated one with the intersections of many other industries.

1.2 Problem Statement

Currently, fashion is neither protected nor defined as either a cultural heritage or art in South African policy and was only recently officially validated as a cultural industry in the 2017 *Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage Fourth Draft*. Despite being recognised as a cultural industry, it is only done so in relation to fashion's aspects of creativity and not culture. This leaves the fashion creatives vulnerable to the impacts of South Africa's export policies. This vulnerability creates a market that is increasingly challenging to compete in, with cheap, well-recognised fashion brands saturating the fashion market in South Africa.

Protecting contemporary fashion as a cultural heritage and creative industry is difficult, as fashion reaches beyond the artistic and cultural sectors into the creative economy. The industry's intersectional nature requires a multidisciplinary approach, possibly with multiple governing bodies involved.

1.3 Research Questions

The fashion industry in South Africa has been left vulnerable by the government to foreign threats since trade was opened and encouraged by foreign policies in the democratic transition years (Traub-Merz, 2005; Vlok, 2006; Morris and Einhorn, 2008). Many foreign-based mass retail brands saw this as an opportunity to enter a new market. Combined with the trade incentives and the depreciating rand, the local South African fashion market suffered. The local South African fashion industry continued to decline, causing practitioners (designers, garment workers, etc.) to lose income, work, and jobs for many. The second-hand market has also negatively affected the local South African fashion industry. With extensive dumping from Western countries and illegal second-hand trade being imported, this further undermines the local South African fashion industry. Could government intervention have prevented this drastic decline or mitigated it? This postulation is what leads this research to seek whether or not protection methods would benefit South African fashion practitioners in today's market.

How can exploring different methods of protecting fashion as a creative and cultural industry boost the local independent South African contemporary fashion practitioners and sector?

This research will additionally address the following sub-questions:

1. How has the lack of policy interventions affected local independent contemporary fashion designers thus far?
2. What, if any, interventions would support and benefit the fashion industry and local independent contemporary designers in South Africa?
3. What, if any, cultural and artistic value does fashion have?

4. What role does the South African fashion industry play in the country's economy? What role has it played in the past? And vice versa?

1.4 Aims and Objective

This research aims to show the creative and cultural value of fashion while exploring different methods of protecting local fashion. This research explores to what degree fashion has value as an art in culture globally and within the South African context. This research will explore the different proposed and enacted methods of protecting the local fashion industry and local independent contemporary designers from a cultural heritage and creative industries perspective from both South Africa and other countries. Additionally, this research will outline the role of the fashion industry within South Africa's economy and explore how that would positively affect the local economy, the South African fashion industry, and sustainable development. With the above, this study will seek to uncover why and how the fashion industry in South Africa should be protected. The further objectives will be:

1. Define what it would mean to establish policies to protect local independent contemporary designers through cultural heritage and the creative industry.
2. Explore South Africa's cultural benefits of establishing policies to protect local independent contemporary designers through cultural heritage and creative industry.
3. Demonstrate the artistic and cultural value of fashion.
4. Define what protection of local fashion would constitute.
5. Explore South Africa's economic benefits of establishing local independent contemporary designers as a protected cultural heritage and creative industry.

The above research aims and objectives function as the guide to what this research is meant to accomplish. They will act as the guardrails of this research's scope to not go beyond. By narrowing the scope to these degrees, the appointed research methods and the conclusions can be more easily evaluated. It also tells how this research will expand the existing body of knowledge within this field. This specific scope of research was chosen as current literature on this topic within South Africa does not exist, and while looking at the current and past influences the South African fashion industry has/had on local and national economics and

the demographics of the industry, this research has the potential to aid in boosting and supporting the aforementioned.

1.5 Research Rationale

Fashion is an art that is deeply intertwined with society and daily life. For everything we do, there are clothes for that activity: sleeping (pyjamas), working out (gym clothes), school (uniforms), going to lunch (casual wear). Fashion has a deep impact on our lives. Simultaneously, it speaks to the culture of the area and time. From trends to societal change, fashion is embedded into our culture and vice versa. Fashion historians spend their careers analysing the fashion of the past to tell us more about the people of that time period's habits, values, and culture. An art form–and its practitioners–of such societal and cultural importance needs to be protected and have its own policies. Fashion being left to a sub-category of design with no specific policy mentions for it leaves South Africa to lose significant amounts of art and cultural heritage.

In the 1996 *White Paper on Arts, Culture, and Heritage*, the South African government recognised (White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage | Department of Sport, Arts and Culture) fashion as a design sub-category but specified it as clothing design. There was no further discussion about the creative category in the white paper. Since the 1996 white paper, there have been few iterations. The current versions of the *White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage* that the Department of Sports, Arts, and Culture hosts on their website are:

- The original 04 June 1996 *White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage*
- The 17 March 2015 *Draft: Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage*
- The 14 November 2016 *Second Draft: Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage*
- The 01 June 2017 *3rd Draft: Executive Summary for the Revised White Paper AC&H*
- And the latest, 27 October 2017 *Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage Fourth Draft.*

In the meeting notes from the 03 December 2021 meeting regarding "Update on White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage & Sports and Recreation Amendment Bill; with Minister" of the Sports, Arts, and Culture Department, the General Director, Vusumuzi Mkhize, stated that the committee has approved the 2017 *Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage Fourth Draft* (pmg.org.za., 2021). The meeting notes reflect that "Cabinet approved the White Paper in October 2018 and Parliament approved it in November 2019, so there were no more consultation processes, it was being implemented now" (pmg.org.za., 2021). However, this is not reflected on the department's website, and no final draft has been found. Therefore, it is uncertain where the policy implementation and creatives stand concerning this creative and cultural policy.

In the updated fourth draft, fashion was classified as a cultural industry (Revision of the Department of Arts and Culture 1996 White Paper Fourth Draft). This was derived from the 1998 report on *Creative South Africa: A strategy for realising the potential of Cultural Industries* by The Cultural Strategy Group. In this study, the potential of fashion was not researched. This will be further addressed in the literature review. In the fourth draft, fashion was not further explored, and any further discussion on cultural industries was general and vague.

As an industry with immense economic potential and cultural and creative significance, it deserves to have further research and legislation to protect its practitioners. While there has been research on the economics of the South African fashion industry (Morris and Einhorn, 2008; Vlok, 2006), from both government and academic perspectives, there is a significant gap in knowledge about South African fashion and fashion designers. Addressing this gap in an attempt to close it will provide the needed support to seek protections for local independent contemporary fashion designers and thus enrich the local and national economies as well as preserve and stimulate culture and creativity. As someone who has involved myself in the local fashion scene[5] over the past three years, my perspective adds insight to the research via the hermeneutical ethnographic methodology.

[5] The local fashion scene is defined here as being knowledgeable of and involved in local independent contemporary fashion designers, events, pop-ups, where fashion and any happenings regarding local fashion and local independent contemporary fashion designers. Examples would be special pop-ups and secret sale events, launch parties for brands and collaborations such as Adidas x Thebe Magugu or MAXHOSA's sustainability event hosted at Nirox Sculpture Park.

2. Research Methodology

This research will use a qualitative design and be approached using phenomenology. As van Manen presents, this research will follow hermeneutical phenomenological approaches such that “the..hermeneutic phenomenological method does not offer a procedural system; rather, its method requires an ability to be reflective, insightful, sensitive to language, and constantly open to experience” (van Manen, 2015, xi). John Creswell further synthesises van Manen’s definitions of phenomenology “ as a dynamic interplay among six research activities” (Creswell, 2007:59).

> Researchers first turn to a phenomenon, an "abiding concern" (p. 31), which seriously interests them (e.g., reading, running, driving, mothering). In the process, they reflect on essential themes, what constitutes the nature of this lived experience. They write a description of the phenomenon, maintaining a strong relation to the topic of inquiry and balancing the parts of the writing to the whole. Phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also seen as an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation (i.e., the researcher "mediates" between different meanings; van Manen, 1990, p. 26) of the meaning of the lived experiences. (Creswell, 2007:59)

These principles guide the research. To understand the problems and realities (phenomenons) of the fashion industry, it must be viewed through the lens of those operating within its sphere. Fashion is something everyone participates in every day of their lives. It is inescapable and permeates and structures every facet and moment of our lives. Due to its significant and constant interaction within individual lives and society at large, this research requires phenomenology in its approach. The shared phenomenon amongst all participants is their lived experience (hermeneutic) of a lack of relationship with local independent contemporary fashion and the local South African fashion industry (van Manen, 2015). This is dissected into two groups: consumers and designers. The research will explore the lived experiences of local independent contemporary designers navigating their business (brand) in a community (South Africa) that lacks support and connection to its value and work. From a consumer perspective, the research will seek to uncover their relationship with the South African fashion industry.

2.1 Design and Data Collection

It is important to establish a structured data collection design to properly reveal the depths of information and connection within a studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Ramsook, 2018). First, I employed a qualitative online survey via Google Forms to collect data on South African consumer attitudes and relationships with the South African fashion industry and local independent contemporary designers (Braun, Clarke and Gray, 2017). This method was chosen as it is the most accessible to the most people with the ability to garner a geographically diverse audience not constrained to the limits of where I was present, making the survey more inclusive in nature (Braun, Clarke and Gray, 2017; Braun et al., 2021). This audience sample was, however, still limited to those with access to either a computer or mobile phone with internet, thus innately excluding a part of the South African community without access to either (Braun et al., 2021). This is not a major concern to the research as a majority of South Africans, 72 per cent, do have access to the internet and, therefore, have the potential to reach the survey (data.worldbank.org, 2021). Additionally, those with access to the internet (either by computer or mobile smartphone) would be more likely to have or could establish a relationship with local independent contemporary South African designers due to the overlapping economic demographic of both described demographics. The survey was designed with 11 multiple-choice questions, two of which were open-ended for further elaboration on the answer choices of "other." Two questions were demographic in nature to establish that the participants live in South Africa and their age. The following seven questions were to establish the nature of the participant's relationship to the South African fashion industry. Qualitative surveys tend to be brief (four to ten questions on average), as the longer the survey, the more likely participants will reach fatigue (Braun et al., 2021). The question design utilised the "mixed (qualitative dominated) survey" method of Braun, Clarke and Gray (2017). In the mixed survey method, "the primary focus is on the collection (and analysis) of qualitative data" (Braun, Clarke and Gray, 2017:18). So, while the survey was designed more similarly to a quantitative questionnaire with restricted answers (e.g. multiple choice), the goal was to extract and thematically analyse the qualitative data out of the survey answers. The survey was distributed via various accounts' Instagram stories and email. This survey was anonymous and no identifying information was recorded or provided.

Additionally, attitudinal observations and interviews with independent South African contemporary fashion designers were collected. The interviews are used to support the objective of exploring the artistic and cultural value of the fashion industry and how protecting fashion as a creative industry and art and cultural heritage would potentially affect those in the industry as well as South Africa's collective culture and economy. It is important to note that my own personal experiences and education will be embedded within these interviews as the questions will be coming from my perspective of the issue at hand and what is important to address. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, meaning that I prepared questions but left the flexibility to ask additional questions or not all the questions depending on participants' answers and the trajectory of said answers. Sankar and Jones state how semi-structured interviews provide a "richness of the data" as they allow for open-ended answers by the participants and can lead to further information outside of the pre-established questions (Sankar and Jones, 2008:118). As location is a factor for the participants, the interviews will be conducted via Zoom, an online meeting platform. Creswell explains how "a telephone interview provides the best source of information when the researcher does not have direct access to individuals. The drawbacks of this approach are that the researcher cannot see the informal communication" (Creswell, 2007:132-133). Participants and I did not live in the same areas and, therefore, were unable to meet in person physically. To mitigate the drawbacks mentioned by Creswell, interviews were done by Zoom, which uses both video and audio. One participant was unable to have their camera on due to loadshedding in their area, causing signal distress, and another was unable to have it on during the majority of the interview due to damaged mechanics on their laptop. From these interviews, I collected and triangulated the data to unearth what trends appear and further report on said trends.

Moreover, I utilised my personal experiences within the South African fashion industry as a consumer. Adding this perspective to my research will help shape the narrative of the experiences consumers in South Africa face when interacting with the fashion industry. This is used as an example of the availability of certain fashion products, brands, and designers to consumers and the effort needed to participate in the local South African fashion industry. It also provides further insight and reasoning as to why and how protecting local fashion could benefit consumers and potentially how they could then interact with the local fashion industry. Proceeding with great attention while expressing my phenomenological experience throughout this research will be of high importance. There are a few shortcomings to be wary

of when introducing hermeneutical phenomenology. The primary concern would be that this is only one perspective and an experience by someone of a certain economic status that is not indicative of the average in South Africa and did not grow up in the country. The aforementioned concern of the singular perspective will be addressed by conducting an anonymous survey via a Google Form to obtain a variety of perspectives, including but not limited to location, economic status, involvement in the local fashion industry, and attitudes towards fashion. This information is still limited to those who have access to the internet which does not address those of lower economic status. The fact that I was not born in South Africa or have grown up in any community around the nation will be a benefit. Someone who has grown up in South Africa will have a different connection and understanding of the local fashion scene and, therefore, may have a network that connects them to the industry better than a new arrival. Providing my perspective on how I have navigated and entered the local fashion industry as a consumer can call attention to barriers that someone who has grown up in South Africa may not be aware of due to familiarity.

Furthermore, to convey the creative and cultural practices of fashion, I employed photovoice as an additional methodology. Photovoice is participant-action research whereby the participants take and analyse photos to be further analysed in the research (Wang and Burris, 1997; Tsang, 2020). Its purpose is to show first-person perspectives on the lived experiences of the participants and their interpretations of such (Wang and Burris, 1997; Tsang, 2020). In this research, photovoice directly depicts how South Africa—in place and culture—-inspires local independent contemporary fashion designers. I designated three of these designers to undertake the project. The purpose of this methodology is to portray not only the creativity that goes into fashion design but also the significant cultural aspects as well. By showcasing the creative and cultural aspects of fashion design from a first-party perspective and their visual experiences of inspiration, I support the paper's objective of determining if—and if so, what—fashion has a value that should be protected from a creative and cultural point of view and not only from an economic standpoint (Tsang, 2020).

2.2 Data Analysis

The analysis of the survey findings was to reveal the consumer attitudes towards the South African fashion industry and their relationship to it. Answers were looked at using thematic

analysis drawn across all questions rather than taking each question individually (Braun, Clarke and Gray, 2017; Braun et al., 2021). The survey questions serve to present a singular narrative explaining consumer relationships and the possible reasons behind said relationships and draw patterns. As explained by Jansen (2010), the phenomenological survey aims “at conceptualising the common essence in these experiences”, which is seen through pattern analysis.

Conducting and analysing the one-on-one semi-structured interviews “are of paramount importance to unearth participants' experiences and semi-structured interviews are included for focus and direction” (Ramsook, 2018). The analysis of the interviews was to support the designers’ perspective and corroborate the historical economic data regarding the industry in the literature review with the personal and emotional. The interview transcripts were reviewed multiple times to interpret and classify the appropriate themes and key highlights in each individual interview. The notable points and prevailing themes were then grouped with the notes of the other interviews to draw themes and patterns across all interviews (Creswell, 2007).

The purpose of analysing the findings from photovoice from a hermeneutical phenomenological perspective is “to elicit the meanings participants give to their photographs” (Tsang, 2020:139). Through analysing the meanings behind the photographs, I drew connections and conclusions to how the meanings of each photograph relate each participant to their craft, artistically and creatively, and South African culture. Additionally, I drew the connecting threads of those narratives to local independent South African contemporary fashion designers as a collective based on the research analysis. Maintaining a balance between my interpretations and that of the participants of their photographs was carefully considered to respect the participants’ data and the “voice” aspect of their photovoice (Tsang, 2020). Across photovoice, I have employed thematic analysis. Thematic analysis allows for patterns and meaning in the research to be drawn to describe the collective phenomenon (specifically in the case of this research, the collective of local independent South African contemporary fashion designers) of culture naturally influencing fashion design (Glaw et al., 2017).

The analytical model used in the analysis was influenced by Collier and Collier’s (1986), Glaw et al. (2017), and Tsang’s (2020) approaches. Step one was translating the photograph

into written communication. Then, the participants' photograph analysis was studied, followed by my interpretation and a cross-comparison of the two. After these steps were completed, the photographs were coded into specific themes, with some photographs representing multiple themes depending on the angle of analysis. Lastly the photographs and following analysis were grouped thematically.

2.3 Ethical consideration

The ethical considerations of my research will be beneficence, confidentiality, anonymity, and consent. In Cassell's (1980) *Ethical Principles for Conducting Fieldwork*, she underlines the foundation for ethical research with human participants, "the principles of respect for the human autonomy—regarding people primarily as ends rather than means—may sound soft and indefinite when compared with utilitarian calculations" (Cassell, 1980:37). This principle has guided the choice in ethical considerations of beneficence (having the wellbeing of the participant as a primary goal), confidentiality (respecting participants identity and shared information through trusted anonymity), and informed consent (providing participants with all information and risks for them to make an informed choice regarding their involvement).

2.3.1 Beneficence

Beneficence will be a principal aspect of this research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) discuss the possible problematics of beneficence in such that "[b]eneficence, including risks and benefits, cannot be quantified, nor can a dear meaning be given to acceptable risk or to benefits that dearly serve a larger cause" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:37). The underlying purpose of this research is to lay a foundation for how South Africa can support its fashion industry and those working in it to create a better, more prosperous industry, therefore a larger cause. Since the purpose of this research is to benefit the research subjects, a key aspect of this research is maintaining a high awareness of the participants' comfort and rights and not exceeding any of the aforementioned for the sake of the research, i.e. larger cause. This research will be moulded by the participants' opinions, reactions, and experiences.

2.3.2 Confidentiality

For interview participants, confidentiality will be considered in all three steps: pre-interview, during the interview, and post-interview (Heggen, Guillemin and Kaiser 2012). In the pre-interview stage, potential participants were contacted individually and directly via private email and once accepted, the meeting was scheduled directly with the participant on a private online, password-protected calendar. The interviews conducted were one-on-one in a private online room through Zoom. Post-interview, all data (consent forms, transcripts, and recorded interview) were kept in files on a password-protected computer (Heggen, Guillemin and Kaiser 2012). While there will be the utmost care in trying to maintain the participants' anonymity and confidentiality via one-on-one interviews and keeping the data on a securely locked computer, a few of the participants are notable individuals, which will make it difficult to maintain full anonymity. When referring to the designer participants in the research, gender-neutral pronouns they/them/their will be used to add another layer of identity protection. The designers who participated in the photovoice research provided archived photographs they took as inspiration for their collections. Therefore, for those familiar with the designers, it may be possible to discern who the designers are by the photographs. Photographs were collected via email and were also kept in files on a password-protected computer. Consent to participate in the research–whether it be interviews or photovoice–was required with provided explanations of what participation constitutes and the scope and purpose of the research. In the analysis of the interview and photovoice participants, all identifiers were removed, bar what someone familiar with a specific designer may be able to astutely observe from a photograph in the photovoice, and participants were either addressed by a number or as a group (Heggen, Guillemin and Kaiser 2012). For survey participants, data was collected anonymously, with the only identifying marker for their responses being the time and date they responded. Without further information, it is impossible to determine who any of the participants were. Therefore, confidentiality is automatically applied.

2.3.3 Informed Consent

All potential participants will be provided with detailed information on the scope of the study and how their information will be used. Through letters and consent forms, potential participants will be required to understand the what and why of this research as a primary factor. As Denzin and Lincoln state, "[s]urely there is more to respect

than informed consent–more, that is, than getting people to agree to be participants in a study. Respect involves caring for others, honouring them, and treating them with dignity. An informed consent form does not do this, and it does not confer respect on another person" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:37). This is why all participants will also be required to understand the scope of their participation fully. This includes how they will participate and for how long, how the information provided will be used, who may be reading this study, and how their confidentiality and anonymity will be kept but may not be guaranteed in certain circumstances.

3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research encapsulates the concepts and themes of (1) the historical and current trade and economic policies immediately post-apartheid that affect(ed) the South African fashion industry and economy, (2) the experiences of local independent South African contemporary fashion designers, how this has created a feedback loop, (3) and the concepts and policies that need to be adopted to break out of the cycle and create a more sustainable industry for local independent South African contemporary designers and maintain and support the cultural integrity of South Africa. The below is a visual representation of the conceptual framework.

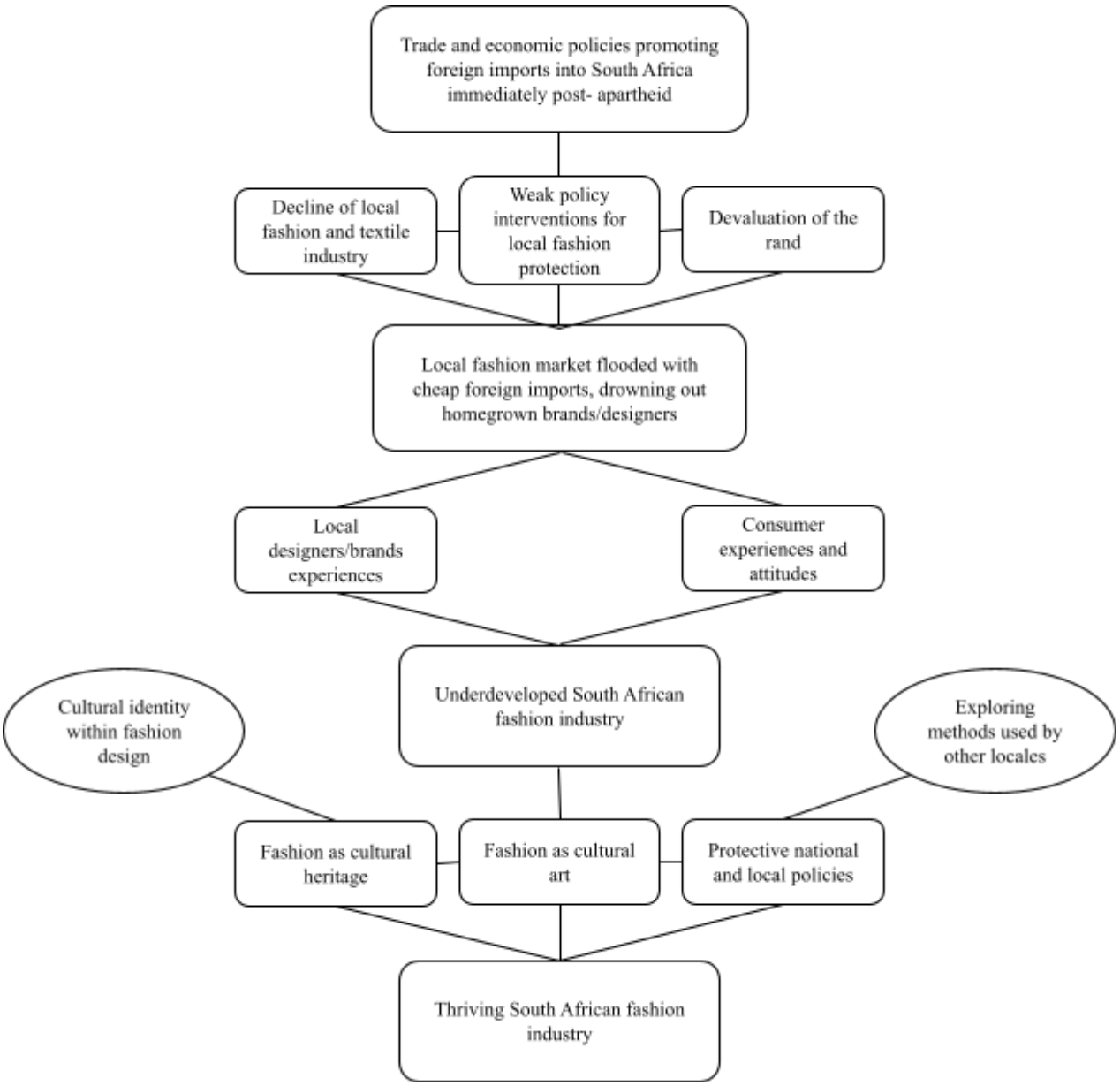


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Post-Apartheid Economic and Trade Policies

The trade and economic policies South Africa has established since the mid-1990s sit as the context and foundation for this research and the catalyst to the problem local independent South African contemporary designers face today. As a cultural industry, fashion works within the framework of economics and, therefore, is directly impacted by its policies (Cultural Strategy Group, 1998; Revision of the Department of Arts and Culture 1996 White Paper Fourth Draft, 2017). Many of these policies were directly related to the fashion industry and its health, originating from the South African government's lack of preparation and protection of their own fashion and manufacturing industry at the turn of the nation's

democratisation (Vlok, 2006). South Africa's democratisation was followed by trade incentives for foreign nations that led to the over-saturation of cheap fashion, thus pricing out the South African-designed and produced fashion (Vlok, 2006). These trade policies coupled with, and compounded, the decreasing value of the rand. This exacerbated the consumers' struggle to afford local fashion.

3.2 South Africa's Fashion Industry Flooded by Foreign Imports

At the turn of democracy with the end of apartheid, global trading was opened to South Africa again. At the same time, the country saw a decrease in the valuation of the rand. South African manufacturers took the opportunity to increase their revenue by focusing their efforts on exports. Fashion brands and stores in South Africa needed stock and with local manufacturers setting their sights aboard, the brands/stores looked to China to cheaply fulfil their orders (Morris and Einhorn, 2008). Once the rand's value increased again, South African manufacturers found they could not maintain the same exporting rates and tried to re-enter the local market. By then, the market was already entrenched with Chinese manufacturers and products. With many cheap foreign imports (stores selling new items and second-hand imports), the local market was flooded and led to the closing of South African-based manufacturers, producers, and brands (Vlok, 2006).

3.3 An Underdeveloped Local Fashion Industry

In the present day, the lack of manufacturers and producers of textiles and clothing has proved a barrier for local independent South African contemporary designers, or even larger brands, to establish themselves in the country. Without access to substantial local resources, designers face challenges such as lack of funding, access, skills, and materials creating significant barriers to entry. This has created a feedback loop of designers not being able to fully establish themselves successfully as they cannot compete through prices with the cheaper foreign imports and lack of customer or government support that then leads consumers to the cheaper foreign imports and away from local designers, who then are unable to receive proper support and the cycle feeds itself creating an underdeveloped local fashion industry.

3.4 Towards a Thriving Local Fashion Industry

The debate about fashion being art is contentious and ongoing. The opposing view of fashion not being art stems from the idea that it is a product first with an alternative value: to clothe one's body. The *Revision of the Department of Arts and Culture 1996 White Paper Fourth Draft* acknowledges that utilitarianism does not negate the value of art within a product, specifically mentioning "contemporary decorative and utilitarian objects" within the category of craft and "architecture, spatial design and planning, engineering, textiles, jewellery, clothing, furniture, typography,...packaging and a host of other household, consumer and utilitarian goods" under design, that has been designated as an art by the White Paper, all which serve utilitarian purposes and maintain their artistic value. This ideology of utilitarianism and art not cohabitating has barred fashion from obtaining the rich cultural and artistic value it is owed. The perspectives of art and culture are intrinsically tied. In the four previous drafts of the Department of Arts and Culture White Papers, the only accepted cultural products were those of dance, visual art, theatre, and music, those that did not hold any other purpose other than that of its art while being items of cultural value and history. This was the accepted mindset of the South African government until the 2017 white paper that acknowledged fashion as a cultural industry. The delay in perceiving fashion as a cultural industry has not only contributed to the state of the local South African fashion industry but has allowed it to become so. If the proper understanding of fashion as a cultural industry and product were embodied by the South African government in the original 1996 *White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage*, the fashion industry would likely have had significant policies in place to protect the local fashion industry of manufacturing, production, design, and entrepreneurship. To remedy this error, various policies to protect the local South African fashion industry must go into effect.

4. Literature review

4.1 History of the South African Fashion Industry: Transition into Democracy to Today

While there has been research on the degradation of the fashion industry in South Africa and its economic evaluation, there has yet to be any on its effects on local designers, the cultural value of South African contemporary fashion, or on methods to protect the industry from further collapse.

Etienne Vlok (2006) discusses the impacts of policy and economic decisions made during the democratisation transition years that created the incredible shrinkage, he further details the South African fashion industry. Pre-democratisation, the local South African clothing industry was very protected–predominantly due to trade embargoes placed against South Africa due to apartheid. This forced the country to focus on the domestic market. However, this focus led the country and industry to be unprepared for entrance into the international markets and caused a failure to launch competitively. In 1994, South Africa joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Additionally, there was a reduced tariff fee for South Africa and newly opened borders for international trade. Initially, these actions led to an increase in exports and a moderately competitive Textile and Clothing industry in South Africa (Vlok, 2006; Traub-Merz, 2005). The increase in international economic activity led to a slight appreciation in the rand's valuation. This negatively impacted the fashion industry. With open trade borders and a strong local currency, international competition from countries with cheaper products–namely China and other Asian countries–overtook the local South African fashion market. The increase in cheap imports drowned the industry and market, killing the export market South Africa created, causing a decline in the rand's strength and many designers and clothing and textile companies in disarray.

The rapid increase in imports and depreciated rand caused a 37% decrease in the South African Textile and Clothing industry's employment from 1996 to 2005 (Vlok, 2006). Globally, and in the case of South Africa, the fashion industry is predominantly composed of women employees, especially within the garment factories. Due to various factors such as economic, cultural, and historical, women–globally and within South Africa–are a vulnerable population. In the South African Textile and Clothing industries, women constitute 70% of the workforce (Fibre Processing & Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority, 2017). Further supporting the industry and its practitioners could not only boost a vulnerable class but raise the community and national economic levels by economically empowering women (IMF, 2018). While the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union attempted to mitigate the loss with multiple interventions, would actions by the larger South African government have helped more?

At first, while South Africa did not make specific policies surrounding limiting imports, trade agreements were already in place. The Multi-Fiber Agreement (MFA) was a previously

created policy that governed the clothing and textile industry from 1974, designed to help protect developed countries from cheap imports from Asia, primarily China. Its purpose was to limit import quantities into countries whose clothing and textile industries were under strain due to heavy importation. However, this policy did not mitigate or slow down Asia's rapid increase in global exports (Traub-Merz, 2005) (World Trade Organization, 2019). The MFA was actually in conflict with The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1947 (GATT). While GATT focused on fair relationships between all trade partners and customs tariffs, MFA's policies violated such terms of the international trade agreement. Due to the quota limitations, when certain countries' quotas were up, they would find other countries to import from; this led to the creation and development of textile and clothing production in Sub-Saharan African countries so that textile and clothing companies from China, Malaysia, and other prominent producers in Asia could invest in the new markets with unused quotas (Traub-Merz, 2005). In 1995, the WTO created the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing to take over for the MFA and to phase the industry into GATT which it did by 2005 (World Trade Organization, 2019). The end of the MFA did not assist in creating fairer global trade, and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) of 2002 was established. This act provided Sub-Saharan African countries with duty-free access to the US market, with stipulations, and did not require said countries to use textiles produced in either the US or in their region for clothing production–something that was required by Europe's Everything But Arms initiative for duty-free trade (Traub-Merz, 2005) (Morris and Einhorn, 2008). South Africa was not exempt from the production rule and was still required to use only textiles produced in its own country to qualify for the duty-free trade agreement under AGOA with the United States due to its robust textile industry that was supported under the apartheid government (Morris and Einhorn, 2008).

Chinese clothing entered the South African market around the turn of the century when the rand's value decreased by nearly 50% between 1999 and 2002. Due to the rand's devaluation, South African manufacturers looked towards exporting their goods to make a profit. Unable to keep up with the increased domestic demand due to the developing black middle class and their exports, Chinese clothing imports became an advantageous substitute for local South African retailers that needed stock (Morris and Einhorn, 2008). By 2004, the rand's valuation increased again to pre-1999 levels. This caused a great shift in South Africa's domestic manufacturers' ability to export as the South African government then showed disfavour in extending the Duty Credit Certificate Scheme, which aided in subsidising clothing exports

depending on your qualifications. South African manufacturers could then no longer fulfil their export obligations. Unfortunately, by this time, the local market was already saturated and dependent on the Chinese clothing market. In addition to the increased purchasing power of the South African market, local manufacturers found it increasingly difficult to be welcomed back home. By 2005, Chinese and Hong Kong imported clothing accounted for 78.8 per cent of all clothing imports into South Africa (Morris and Einhorn, 2008). Pressured by unions in the fashion industry, South Africa eventually entered a two-year quota restraint on Chinese imports in 2007 (Morris and Einhorn, 2008). This was not renewed and quota-free trading with China reopened in 2009.

The current economic status of the South African fashion industry rests in the international import market. Not only are a majority of shopping options in South Africa from internationally based brands, but even local brands are exporting their production. Consumers who look to purchase locally cannot guarantee a brand's claims of local production are true as many still import their products. An interviewee in the footwear business from the Fibre Processing & Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority (FPM SETA) Sector Skills Plan stated that around half of all claims of local production for shoes in South Africa are false. From a sample of 16 local independent designers, the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition and the South African Cotton Cluster found that only 7% of the designers were using locally produced textiles. Furthermore, 67% of the textiles were imported from Asian countries. Across the research on this topic, researchers such as Vlok, Kem Remdass, and David Kruger (who will be further discussed later in this review), and Traub-Merz and Jauch all found the Asia textile and clothing industry to be a major threat undercutting the local South African fashion industry due to their low prices being incredibly hard to compete against. Additionally, the lack of present skills in the manufacturing industry in South Africa has significantly decreased South Africa's manufacturing competitiveness. Practitioners, the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition, and the South African Cotton Cluster have specifically mentioned cheap imports from Pakistan and China being the biggest international threats. There is a need to further study what skills are needed in the South African textile and clothing industry and how to best develop them.

Despite its substantial decline since the mid- to late-1990s, the South African textile and clothing industry still contributes 3% to the South African GDP (Gross Domestic Product), the same as the agricultural sector (South African Cotton Cluster and Department of Trade,

Industry and Competition, 2020). However, the health of the rand has been wavering and in decline since 1988. This has inversely correlated with consumer willingness to spend money on clothing.

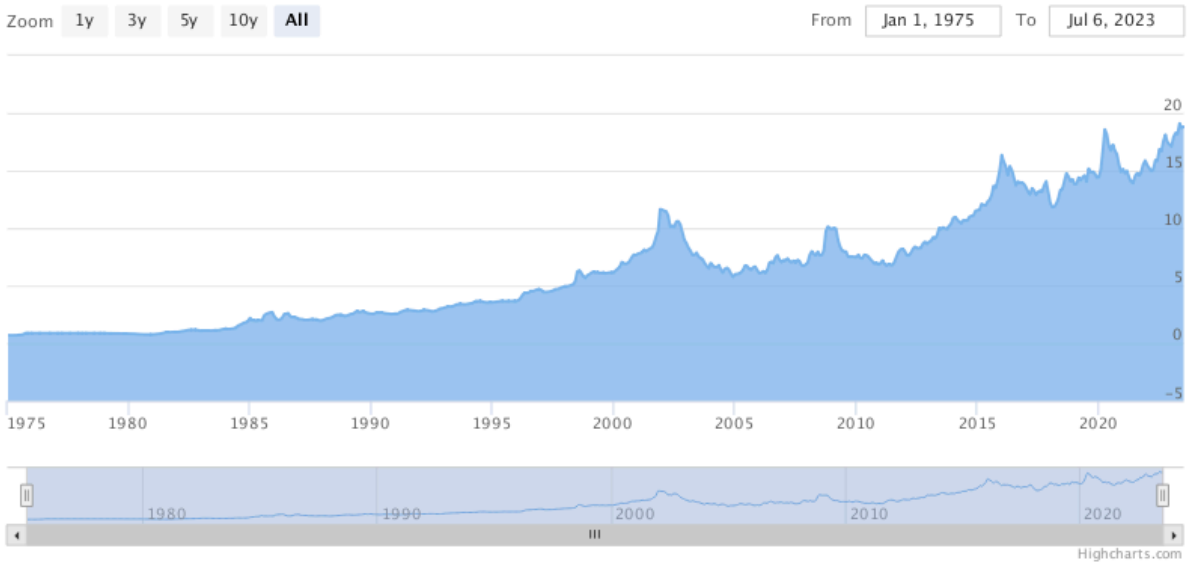


Figure 2: Chart showing the USD to ZAR rates from 1975 - 2003 according to Bank of England
Source: PoundSterlingLive

4.2 The Second-hand Market

In addition to imported fashion brands, a major threat to local fashion practitioners is the second-hand market. While consumers may not want to spend much on clothing, the cheap imported new clothing and second-hand clothing provide options at lower price ranges that locally designed and produced clothing cannot by being at a higher price point. Sarpong, Howard, and Osei-Ntiri (2011) discovered through their research into local independent designers in Ghana that 85% of their respondents were concerned over competition over cheap imported clothing–being both new imports and second-hand products. Their research lacks deeper reasoning and analysis on how this negatively affects the designers beyond the designers reporting that it does negatively affect their business.

The cheap imports (both new clothing[6] and second-hand) coupled with resourced brands[7] and their brand recognition create a power vacuum within the South African fashion industry that causes undo challenges for local independent contemporary designers and practitioners to succeed (Rogerson, 2006). A lack of data on the used clothing market (specifically, regarding illegal second-hand imports) makes it challenging to prove a direct economic correlation between a decline in the sale of local South African fashion and the second-hand market increasing, being that the second-hand market is much bigger and more prevalent than what is being reported. However, this issue is still an important aspect of the phenomenology of the South African local fashion economy[8]. Brooks and Simon (2012) found that other sub-Saharan countries, namely Mozambique, act as middlemen for South African second-hand clothing imports. Mass shipments of second-hand clothing from predominantly Western countries will be sent to Mozambique for second-hand traders from South Africa to gather some clothing in their luggage to bring back to sell in South Africa while evading regulations.

The issues of second-hand trade are supported by Western countries' (the United States and Europe mainly) over consumption habits. Unwanted clothing is donated to various charity organisations that ship the donations off to countries with lower economic statuses–typically in the Global South–when they are overburdened with donations. This practice is called 'dumping'. Dumping is not only a second-hand problem but companies such as H&M have been known to dump their stock overflow. Thebe Magugu's Spring/Summer 23 short film depicting his creation and design process, titled Discarded Theory, highlights the issues of dumping and how inundated the fashion scene in South Africa is by this practice. The designer comments on the interconnectivity of dumping into South African fashion:

> "I've been rummaging through a lot of discarded clothing at Dunusa - an area in downtown Johannesburg where America & Europe dump piles of second-hand, often

[6] As previously, due to the influx of predominantly Chinese-produced clothing, new clothing has become increasingly cheaper in the South African clothing market. This has created a psychological barrier for local independent South African contemporary designers to overcome as consumers have been primed and now accustomed to clothing costing very little. Local independent contemporary designers are unable to compete with these low prices due to factory and production costs for smaller brands and those within South Africa.

[7] Resourced brands being established and well-funded with ample resources (financial, networks, et cetera) to enter new markets with a high chance of success.

[8] This paper defines the local fashion economy as the collective actions of designers and creating and selling their products as well as the way consumers interact with fashion. Interactions include purchasing, styling, wearing, shopping habits, and consumer relationships to brands/designers.

> soiled garments. It got me thinking about globalisation's effect on national stylistic identity - it's not rare to see a local woman wearing a traditional shweshwe-fabric waxed wrap skirt, often reserved for special ceremonies, paired with a promotional VODAFONE or Manchester United polyester tee. This hybridity - an unintentional dialogue between 'The West & The Rest' - was the start point of this collection" (Magugu, Discarded Theory, 2022).

The fashion industry in South Africa holds economic importance to the country and communities. By protecting local fashion practitioners from cheap competitive imports, South Africa has an opportunity to bolster its people's and its nation's economies. After the early 2000s fall of the South African clothing and textile manufacturing industry, the national government focused primarily on the loss of formal employment, ignoring the effects that imports had on the manufacturers' competitive ability (Morris and Einhorn, 2008). Beyond the clear economic incentive, South Africa is losing the opportunity for artistic and cultural growth, let alone current artistic and cultural understandings through fashion. Magugu's comments in his aforementioned documentary highlight the loss of South African fashion due to foreign influence–specifically the second-hand market. Without the "promotional VODAFONE or Manchester United polyester tee", would this example woman wear a tee by a South African designer? By closing off opportunities to local independent contemporary designers by flooding the market with cheap imports, there is a stunting of artistic and cultural growth for both designers and the community at large as they have fewer interactions with culturally-based South African designs. Would protections for local independent contemporary designers, perhaps via limiting imports, increase their output and consumers purchasing and interacting with culturally South African designs and designers?

4.3 Value of the Cultural and Creative Industries in South Africa

South Africa, aptly nicknamed the Rainbow Nation, is immensely rich in diverse cultural heritage and art. The Economic Mapping of the Cultural and Creative Industries in South Africa 2022 (CCI Mapping Study 2022) reported that the cultural industries contributed to 3% of the nation's GDP. As shown in the figure below, the design and creative services comprise the majority of the CCIs[9] financial value at 32%, which was R51 billion in 2020.

[9] The accepted South African definition for the CCIs has been fluid over the years. According to the latest Arts and Cultural White Paper, the 2017 Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage

The design and creative services are defined as fashion design, graphic design, interior design, landscape design, architectural services, and advertising services (South African Cultural Observatory, 2022).

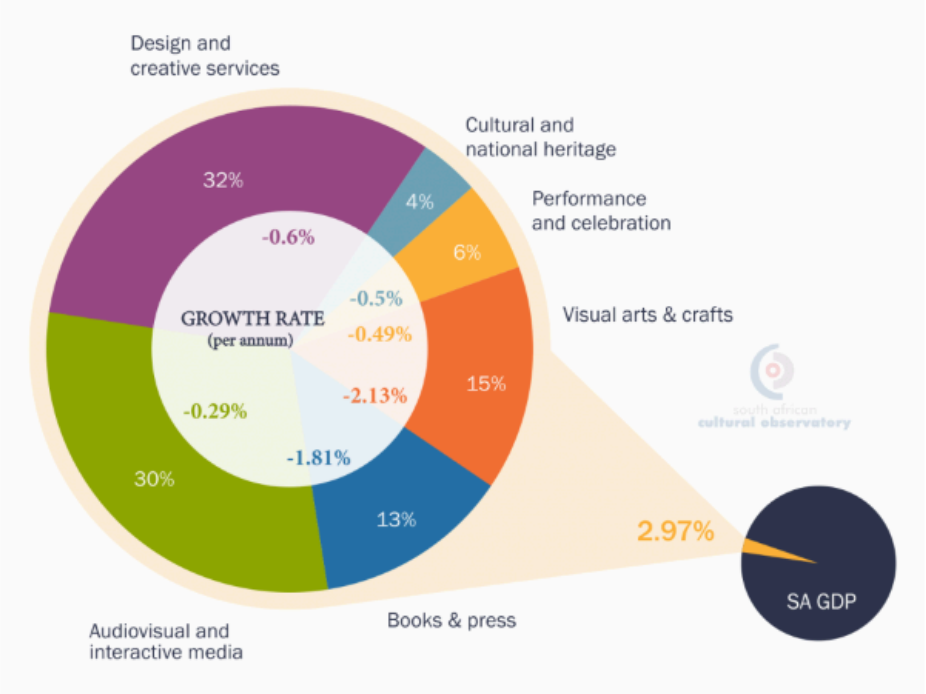


Figure 3: Individual cultural sector's Gross Value Added towards SA GDP
Source: South African Cultural Observatory, 2022

Despite lacking government support, fashion has still maintained its significant economic contributions. The South African Cultural Observatory calculated the GDP contributions through each sector's production values (South African Cultural Observatory, 2022). This is a primary measure of economic value, but it does not consider each sector's secondary measure of economic power through employment. According to the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU) which has 85 per cent union density at 99,967 members, the textile and clothing manufacturing industry employs 117,608 people in South Africa. Employment must be considered to holistically calculate the per cent of the GDP a sector contributes. Therefore, the individual contributions of the 117,608 people in the clothing and textile manufacturing business, plus those in creative occupations, sales, and administration in the local fashion industry, must be accounted for, too and would present a larger contribution.

Fourth Draft, the CCIs include: Music, visual arts, publishing, audio-visual, performing arts, multi-media, craft, cultural heritage, events technical and production, design, industrial design and fashion, and graphic arts.

Beyond their commercial value, which is measured economically, cultural goods and services have an immeasurable value of culture (Chilese and Paolo Russo, 2008). Understanding the value the cultural industries does and can have in South Africa was introduced in the Cultural Strategy Group's 1998 report, *Creative South Africa: A strategy for realising the potential of the Cultural Industries*, for the Department of the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. In this report, the Cultural Strategy Group argues that CCIs significance lies in economics, identity building and supporting, distinctiveness, image, innovation and creativity, tourism, and social impact. While cultural value is difficult to measure and has yet to be properly done, the visible representation of culture within fashion is measurable. This is seen through the relative ratio and imbalance of imported fashion to locally produced and designed fashion consumed within South Africa (Vlok, 2006; Traub-Merz, 2005). A local market, such as South Africa, overwhelmed with foreign imported fashion, imports other cultural values while watering down their own without regulation. South Africa is dressed in foreign clothes and products that neither hold nor represent the same cultures of its nation and people (identity building and supporting, distinctiveness, image, social impact, and innovation and creativity). The value in this aspect of cultural heritage has not received the academic attention it requires. Through the analysis of South Africa's economic impact from fashion, it is clear there is a market and opportunity for a robust cultural fashion market and economic incentives to do so as it would further increase GDP health.

Most local independent South African contemporary designers have brands based in one of South Africa's biggest cities: Cape Town and Johannesburg. As Scott (2000) and Chilese and Paolo Russo (2008) argue, cities are centres of economic and cultural identity as these factors shape the city itself. There becomes an interdependence on culture, place, and economy in the city as they are all influenced by one another. There is an innate connection to creativity that is then developed in these environments, which leads to many designers originating their brands in these locales. This brings a new business into the city (economics, image, social impact, tourism) and a creative spirit (tourism, innovation and creativity, image, distinctiveness, social impact) that, if properly protected and nurtured, would continually grow and add value to the city and nation.

4.4 South African Culture, Arts, and Heritage Policies and Lack Thereof

The 1996 *White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage* mentioned fashion design once as a subset of design, with no specific actions, information, or policies (White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage | Department of Sport, Arts and Culture). In 2019, the *Revision of the White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage Fourth Draft* was approved by both the Cabinet and Parliament. However, this latest white paper did not add much more in regard to fashion (Revision of the Department of Arts and Culture 1996 White Paper Fourth Draft, 2017). The current white paper maintains fashion as a design subsect while not elaborating on specific design policies or actions. The white paper goes further by acknowledging fashion as a cultural industry. Unfortunately, that is where any mentions of fashion end.

The 1998 report for the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology by The Cultural Strategy Group, *Creative South Africa: A strategy for realising the potential of the Cultural Industries*, was the first legislative document that referenced fashion as a cultural industry. The paper mentions seven important facets of the cultural industries: economic significance, identity, distinctiveness, image, innovation and creativity, tourism, and social impact. Fashion exemplifies each of these. The fashion industry in South Africa contributes 3% of the nation's GDP (Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition and the South African Cotton Cluster, 2020). An important characteristic of fashion is creating and communicating identity (individual and collective/cultural), distinctiveness, and image while being based on innovation and creativity. Paris, Milan, New York City, and London spur countless tourists during their respective fashion weeks as fashion capitals; however, fashion tourism is not limited to these weeks alone. "The link between tourism and shopping frequently makes the headlines in trade and general press accounts of the economic life" in New York City (World Tourism Organization, 2014). Tourists contributed $8 billion in New York City alone in 2012. With the distinctiveness and identity of independent South African contemporary fashion designers, South Africa stands to gain incredibly from fashion tourism. Historically and now, fashion creates social impact through culture, job creation, economic health, creativity, and burgeoning conversations. While fashion aptly displays the characteristics that The Cultural Strategy Group determined for cultural industries, only music, film and television, and publishing and craft sectors were researched for the study. This highlights the continued lack of proper awareness, research, and support fashion has and does receive as a cultural industry or art in South Africa.

Multiple reports and legislative documents have spawned from the *White Paper on Art, Culture and Heritage* 1996 and the 2017 fourth draft, as well as the *Creative South Africa: A strategy for realising the potential of the Cultural Industries*. The most recent is the National Theatre and Dance Policy, 2022, which is charged as "an essential guideline to effectively and efficiently mobilise resources, coordinate and regulate the theatre and dance sector in South Africa" (National Theatre and Dance Policy). The South African government has recognised the need for such a policy to reinvigorate the sector across the nation. The policy is written in support of the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, which is the report created by the African Union as a blueprint for transforming the continent into a global power. The policy mentions explicitly and quotes the fifth aspiration of Agenda 2063 in relation to the policy: "an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics" (African Union, 2015). In order to achieve this fifth aspiration as a well-rounded cultural nation, fashion must be considered.

While the country as a whole has not put forth specific policies to support the local South African fashion industry and its practitioners, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) attempted to put in place support systems for its designers. In 2009, as a response to the declining resources for local independent designers, KZN established the KZN Fashion Council (KZNFC). The KZNFC created various programs and incentives for designers to increase their skills and business development. One such initiative to support local independent designers was to provide easy access to other needed parts of the fashion value chain, such as beadwork, suppliers, textiles, et cetera (Pather, 2015). Another program, which eventually led to KZNFC's downfall, was putting on fashion shows for local independent designers. In an attempt to make Durban a fashion hub for South Africa and the world, KZNFC began to host fashion shows, attracting key players from across the globe. However, the frequency of these shows diluted their worth, and participation dwindled. Additionally, the lack of organisation between all the programs and the designers caused confusion and disarray, and the value of the programs declined (Pather, 2015).

4.5 Protection Policies by Foreign Governments

Currently, protective policies around the fashion sector are far and few between. Mauritius was an early adopter of this forward-thinking mentality of needing to protect their designers and producers. In the 1980's the Mauritius government strongly focused on supporting their exports by supplying investors with duty and tax-free stimulus. Additionally, Mauritius orientated their textile and clothing manufacturing sector to become a vertically integrated market from sourcing to weaving and spinning to (Ministry of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Industrial Development Division) and UNCTAD, 2020; (UNESCO, 2023).

Osei-Tutu (2021) explores the possibilities of using geographical indicators (GI) as a form of protection for "culturally identifiable fashion," referencing the wine industry, which is known for its geographical-based classifications–i.e. GIs such as Champagne can only be called Champagne if it comes from the Champagne region of France–, as an example of doing so. GIs are protected and recognised under both the World Trade Organisation and international law, possibly paving an easier way to protect cultural fashion. She elaborates that fashion could be under the umbrella of intangible cultural heritage, described as intergenerational culture, as it is duly noted as important to protect for cultural diversity's sake by the United Nations (Osei-Tutu, 2021). However, Osei-Tutu dives into examples of traditional clothing and accessories, leaving the question of whether this would work for contemporary fashion.

Other researchers like Naidoo (2019), Ruff (2017), and Yao Xiao (2010) all postulate using intellectual property (IP) laws to protect fashion and fashion designers. This is an action Mexico undertook in an amendment to its copyright law in 2020 that extended its jurisdiction to cultural heritage products and designs (Caponigri, 2021). American-based brand, Carolina Herrera, encountered challenges from this law against its Resort 2020 collection, which was stated to be inspired by Mexico and "takes on the playful and colourful mood of a Latin holiday," according to her website at the time (Mexican government accuses Carolina Herrera of cultural appropriation, 2019). Under the revised copyright law, third parties must credit and receive written permission from the communities that maintain cultural ownership of the artisanal practices, products, et cetera or Mexico's Secretary of Culture if said community cannot be found (Caponigri, 2021). Herrera did not comply, leading to the Secretary of Culture, Alejandra Frausto, sending a letter of complaint to Herrera and the Creative Director of the fashion house at the time, Wes Gordon, noting specific garments and their origins.

Emphasising the significance of these cultural arts, Frausto explains that "[i]n these embroideries is the history of the community itself, and each element has a personal, family and community meaning" (Mexican government accuses Carolina Herrera of cultural appropriation, 2019). Frausto specifically mentions the collection's use of embroidery from the Tenango de Doria community in Hidalgo, Isthmus in Tehuantepec, and a garment based on a sarape[10] from Saltillo (Mexican government accuses Carolina Herrera of cultural appropriation, 2019).

However, this is too narrow of scope for this research. While using an IP would benefit the protection of specific products or traditional fashion with certain parameters, contemporary fashion does not have such limitations and, therefore, would make it difficult to protect under IP. Additionally, this type of protection is less about designers' success and market opportunities and more about their designs being used for other brands and designers–typically larger brands. Amanda Smith and Angela Finn (2015) discuss the overreliance on British-influenced fashion in New Zealand and how the New Zealand fashion industry could become internationally competitive. They suggest the industry should lean into more traditional and more technologically advanced manufacturing methods while designers should emphasise traditional designs. While this presents a unique position for local independent contemporary designers, as each culture has its distinctions relative to its location, there would need to be some interventions to help move the social needle toward local independent contemporary designers and away from the British-influenced fashion in the country. There has yet to be research on policy interventions that would protect and support local independent contemporary fashion designers in an age of global fashion, specifically in non-western post-colonial countries that remain inundated with colonial and Western influences. This is the crux of where this research will sit.

4.6 Fashion as Cultural Heritage

There is an apparent intrinsic link between fashion and culture when looking at traditional garments. In many cases of traditional dress, the norms have ebbed with political and historical changes that would inherently affect what is being worn (Motubatse and Yende, 2023). This is explored in Jean Baudrillard's neo-Marxist theories on fashion and how it acts "on our relation to objects as a discursive system" and "presupposes dualism in which

[10] A traditional blanket or shawl.

appearances reflect reality, and clothes index social hierarchy" (Rocamora and Smelik, 2019:21). Reality is relative to one's location and cultural surroundings, of which these cultural surroundings and happenings are based on. Location and culture are deeply connected as they relate and reflect one another, creating and sustaining different cultural identities in different locales (Scott, 1997). The clothing that reflects reality would, and does, have measurable differences between regions. This highlights the cultural significance of clothing as it echoes the reality of the people in a certain period of history in distinct locations. Fashion is simultaneously built on culture and creativity as a creative product. "Creativity, like culture, is profoundly rooted both in time and in space. The culture of creativity, or its inherited capital, is inextricably linked to a place,...a community and its history" (Santagata, 2002:1).

Many cultures' traditional dress has been shaped and adjusted by political, economic—including resources and production innovations—, and historical happenings of their time and place. This theory is most apparent in South Africa's case when analysing traditional dress. Specifically looking at the Zulu culture of South Africa, according to early accounts, traditional dress of the 19th century and earlier consisted of animal skins/furs, bird feathers, grasses, and vegetable fibres. Glass beads were then introduced as a staple of traditional dress for women as they became more accessible with the rise of European settlers that brought them. However, glass beads were already an important facet of Zulu culture and dress before settlers' arrival. The beads represented more than a pretty ornament, as does most fashion; they were a mode of communication. Each bead colour represents its individual meaning, which is constructed together to form messages for others (Nkumane, 2001). The bead colours meanings are as follows:

> White beads (obumhlophe): Proclaims that a girl is a virgin.
> Pink (obumpofu): Even though you are poor, I still love you.
> Vaseline yellow (obuphuzi): She loves the boy like she loves sugar.
> Turquoise blue (obulwandle): This describes the intensity and purity of her love for him.
> The love is like the sea sand which is pure and clean.
> Green (Obuluhlaza okotshani): I am a young child but old enough to be courted.
> Black (obumnyama): She is ready to dress in her isidwaba (a woman's leather kilt) but he must first pay lobolo.

> Red (obubomvu): This represents the isicholo (coiffure), a married woman's headdress, and along with the black beads which represent the leather kilt are a sign that she is ready to marry.
> Royal blue (obuluhlaza okwesibhakabhaka): This blue represents a dove. She cries because she is not like the dove that can fly to his home to see him and peck crumbs from his doorway. (Nkumane, 2001:106)

Beyond beads, specific garments would reflect information about the wearer, such as the women's age, marital status, and motherhood status. As a reflection of the cultural times, Zulu traditional wear began adding more European garments during the era of colonialism and decreased daily wear as Western wear increasingly took over, as seen today (Motubatse and Yende, 2023). Today, there are local independent South African designers who create traditional wear for the modern, Western dresser. The jewellery brand, The Herd, uses traditional Nguni (Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele) beading techniques for their products. They state that "the core of our journey is a steadfast commitment to exploring and revitalising traditional techniques…which has been obscured over the years" (The Herd, n.d.).



Figure 4: The Herd's Handmade
Source: https://theherddesigns.com/



Figure 5: The Herd's An Ode to Zulu Love Letters collection
Source: https://theherddesigns.com/

For one of their products, wooden ear plugs, they pay respect to the traditional coming-of-age Zulu ceremony of ukuqhumbuza[11]. Footwear brand iFele is another designer focused on Zulu traditional dress. iFele reimagines the imbadada, a traditional vinyl-based shoe worn for ceremonies, to be worn for the every day using modern production methods and blending them with traditional Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, and Ndebele designs (Monte, 2022). These are direct examples of taking what was once traditional and bringing it into the modern foyer.

Another way in which independent South African contemporary designers call upon traditional fashion and culture is via inspiration that moves the designer to create modern wear that comments on the depth of South African culture. Designer Laduma Ngxokolo's brand MAXHOSA AFRICA calls upon his Xhosa culture for his designs. Originally, the brand was conceived "to explore knitwear design solutions suitable for amakrwala (Xhosa initiates)", according to the brand's website. MAXHOSA AFRICA was firmly established as Ngxokolo's vision expanded "to develop premium knitwear in celebration of traditional Xhosa aesthetics" that drew its designs from traditional beadwork, symbols, patterns, and colours used in the Xhosa culture (MAXHOSA AFRICA, n.d.).

[11] Ukuqhumbuza is a traditional ear piercing coming of age ceremony for Zulu children who "by piercing the ears, it was believed that the child's ears had now been opened and that he or she would be able to hear well and therefore be able to understand things better. With this came greater responsibilities and more onerous duties" as The Herd wrote in a now deleted instagram post that was reported on by twyg (Monte, 2022).

Arguably, South Africa's most notable and internationally acclaimed designer, Thebe Magugu, has built his namesake brand on the foundation of South African culture and his and his family's life experiences in the country. His most obvious nod to South African culture was his limited-edition Heritage Dress from winter of 2022. This capsule collection presented eight crepe Bohemia-style dresses with bishop sleeves and a foulard neckline, each individually representing and depicting the notable tribes of South Africa by prominently featuring paintings created by South African artist, Phathu Nembwili, of women from each tribe (Allaire, 2022; Thebe Magugu, 2022).

These dresses are direct representations of South African people and culture. For the collection, Magugu collaborated with South African photographer Aart Verrips, stylist Chloe Andrea Welgemoed, and writer Vuyolwethu Reoagile to communicate the artistic and cultural significance of the collection (Allaire, 2022). Magugu states in the Vogue article covering this capsule collection that he is " always focusing on stories that are quite niche, but run the risk of being forgotten." This highlights the deep understanding, connection, and desire designers have for their surrounding cultures and the need for protective policies to help support and maintain the cultures historically. This ideology underpins Magugu's design perspective for all of his work. His debut collection, Spring/Summer 2017 (SS17), entitled "GEOLOGY", takes inspiration from the colours of the Karoo. As Magugu progressed in his design work, his collections became more introspective and interactive with South African culture. His following Autumn/Winter 2018 (AW18) collection was "a reactionary comment on the expectations placed on women in current day South Africa," titled "HOME ECONOMICS". In this collection, he reflected on how women within the South African cultural context are perceived and treated. One of the pieces in his collection that highlighted the expectations of South African women was the Kitchentable Parka. Magugu took the print of what he says "[e]very kitchen in the township - without fail - had what I felt was the trashiest PVC table-cloth money could buy" and crafted a waterproof parka (Magugu, n.d.). Lifting the qualities of the tablecloth (print and waterproof) to bring South African women's experience and expectations of working and maintaining the house in the kitchen to the outside world showcased an often overlooked aspect of culture, the seemingly mundane.



Figure 6: Thebe Magugu model wearing Home Economics Kitchentable Parka in Kimberly
Source: Thebe Magugu site Faculty https://www.thebemagugu.com/faculty-press/view/kimberley-calling/

The following season SS19, "ART HISTORY", dealt with the ways in which South Africa has dealt with pain and trauma through art and "piecing together South Africa's contrasting cultural landscape." Like his other collections, Magugu called upon other South Africans to draw inspiration from naming artists Mary Sibande and Athi-Patra Ruga as key references for SS19. Having established Magugu's brand's foundation on a reflection of South Africa's people, history, and culture, we will further explore a few collections of note of his.

Thebe Magugu AW19 deeply explores the ideas of African culture, aptly named "AFRICAN STUDIES". As Magugu states, "'AFRICAN STUDIES' is an introspective collection inspired by motifs & references from my own culture, with visual cues I picked up growing up - revised & reworked…almost acting as an amalgamation of my environment & memories." In Magugu's zine, Faculty Press, published on his website to further discuss the topics he engages with in his collections, he comments on fashion's habitual practice of taking African (as a conglomerate, typically) references to inspire their collections from an exoticised point of view.

> [T]the world's global eye is always roaming – whether its exploring new markets, looking for even more visual cues to add to its referential rolodex or just the next big thing (for a few seasons at least). It has often paid a visit to Africa, always in passing though; picking up a print or a photograph for a mood-board then being on its merry way. But things have changed. The Eye™ is back, but its regard for Africa seems to have changed from a voyeuristic gawp of the exotic to the dazzling admiration of the new. Designers, photographers & artists are using their respective mediums to truly take charge of their own narratives as individuals & as Africans, communicating their unique cultural experience to create forward-looking, novel product & honest work. With this collection, I wanted to portray my Africa – not the Africa assumed through an auto-exotic gaze. (Thebe Magugu, n.d.)

Magugu's desire to capture the contemporary culture of South Africans appears as the foundation for his AW20 and SS22 collections. In the AW20 collection, "ANTHRO 1", Magugu takes an introspective look at where he grew up, Kimberly, South Africa. The spirit of Ubuntu and the township he grew up in, Ipopeng which translates to "to beautify yourself," underpins this collection that is cut through with the reality of the brutalism the township has and continues to experience. Magugu reimagines Ipopeng through the lens of fantasy but draws full inspiration from the people and place there. The Fluted Green and White Knitted Dress in Wool with Sisterhood Scarf, titled "Domestic Venus" as depicted below and photographed in his family's dining room, was inspired by what Magugu calls "Big Hole 1," a remnant of the mines.



Figure 7: Thebe Magugu's "Domestic Venus" AW20
Source: Thebe Magugu Instagram, 2020
https://www.instagram.com/p/B9HQ3stDVmG/?img_index=2



Figure 8: "Big Hole" in Ipopeng, South Africa
Source: Thebe Magugu Instagram, 2020
https://www.instagram.com/p/B9HQ3stDVmG/?img_index=2

In his SS22 collection, "GENEALOGY", Magugu reimagined the styles of his own family through their lives. By doing so, he interpreted the culture and style of their community and era to re-envision it in today's world and created a historical body of work. The collection drew inspiration from his "grandmothers masterfully pleated skirts and draped blouses from the 1950's, [his] mothers leg-of-mutton sleeves from the 1960's - and her subsequent rebellion in the 1970's with improbably short skirts" (Magugu, n.d.c). Analysing their fashion through these eras would provide evidence of the cultural shifts within their community and South Africa that would have correlated with their style changes. The direct cultural influences in his family member's style is mentioned when translating a style from his aunt: "In the 80's, my aunt Esther experimented with localised punk, inspired by the rising star of that time Brenda Fassie - who TIME Magazine had just named 'The Madonna of the Township'" (Magugu, n.d.c) The cultural influences of each period, and through the lens of each individual, shaped their style and provides a timestamp of what was relevant, acceptable, and of importance in that time for South Africans, "from 1990's Stealth Wealth to 1890's Devotion" (Magugu, n.d.c)

Magugu's AW21 was his interpretation and way of preserving and taking control of the narrative of African beliefs. AW21, "ALCHEMY", looks at African Spirituality from an African perspective. For this collection, Magugu worked with Noentla Khumalo, a traditional healer and stylist from Johannesburg who works with the medium of bones to communicate with the ancestors and spirits. Khumalo and Magugu created the key print of the collection by photographing Khumalo's divination work, where she threw sea shells, red dice cubes, goat knuckles, a pencil sharpener, and an old police whistle. Khumalo emphasises the personalisation that this brings each wearer, as spirituality is incredibly personal by its nature, as they interpret "the story these bones are telling, all stemming from the question: 'what's next'" (Khumalo, n.d.). Magugu's use of the print and various silhouettes that mimic and reimagine local traditional styling, such as draping and wrapping techniques, with more modern tailoring to bring the traditional to contemporary. Another print of the collection drew upon traditional printmaking and the plants of traditional healers. Magugu collaborated with South African print designer Larisa Don who used the technique of plant-pounding[12] using cannabis and imphepho, a plant used by traditional healers to communicate with ancestors by burning it, on merino wool. In this collection, Magugu offered his first shoe, the Sunday Best Boot, inspired by the shoes of downtown Johannesburg pastors that have an elongated silhouette. The collection was presented not traditionally with a runway show but with a short film directed and written by South African filmmaker Kristin-Lee Moolman. The film, entitled BANYOLOYI A BOSIGO (translated to Ultimate Midnite Angels), continued to explore the ideas of African spirituality through the story of two star-crossed lovers of rival tribes. Moolman's intent behind the project was to portray "'[i]n the same way the westerns romanticised and reclaimed that period of American history, [South Africans] too must form our own narratives and realities outside of 'perpetual victimhood'" (Magugu, n.d.).

While the aforementioned designers provide examples of local independent South African contemporary designers that display their South African connection and roots through the design analysis they present, this presentation of fashion as cultural heritage is not exclusive to them. As Magugu states about his AW20 "ANTHRO 1" collection that it was work he "wouldn't have been able to do had I come from anywhere else" (Magugu, n.d.). This sentiment rings true far beyond this one collection and this one designer. As exhibited

[12] Plant-pounding is a textile printing method of using a mechanical hammer to pound a plant into the fabric, transferring the natural plant dyes to the fabric and making an imprint of the plant (Harr and Kelsie, 2017).

through the works of Thebe Magugu, who writes about his process and the meaning of his collections for the general public, culture is deeply intertwined with fashion creation. South Africa as a place and its culture is what has shaped Magugu, Ngxokolo, and the collaborative effort at The Herd, such as it innately shapes any artist and designer by providing this experience and context in which to create their art (Chilese and Paolo Russo, 2008; Maramotti, 2000).

5. Findings

The research findings provided in this chapter serve the purpose of answering this paper's research question of discovering if methods of protecting fashion as a creative and cultural industry would benefit and support South African fashion practitioners and the sector. It will also act to demonstrate the cultural and artistic value of fashion, specifically in a South African context; South Africa's fashion industry's role in the national economy; how the current lack of policies and organisation has created the current climate in the South African fashion industry.

This research's methodology uses hermeneutic phenomenological approaches and therefore will focus on the experiences explained and depicted by the research participants. Three research points will be discussed. First, we will examine the various discussion points from the interviews with the five independent South African contemporary designers who participated to present their experiences in the industry. Despite multiple methods and trials of outreach, no one from the Department of Sports, Arts, and Culture was reachable for an interview. This will be followed by the findings in the one independent South African contemporary designer photovoice assignment. Lastly, we will examine the anonymous online survey results showing South African fashion consumer behaviours and attitudes. All quotes from participants were left in their original voice and grammar to maintain the authentic delivery and meaning of the data.

5.1 South African Designers' Experiences in the Industry and Cultural Perspective

Each of the interview research participants is a designer and owner of their own fashion brand for which they design. All independent brands by these designer's have been

established within the last decade. Approaching this research with brands that have been conceptualised within the last ten years and are either considered emerging, locally well-established, or even internationally known gives a timely insight into the current challenges of local independent South African contemporary designers. Designers of independent brands that have been historically well-established, would not provide the clarity needed on this issue as their challenges would not be properly indicative of the current state of affairs due to previous establishment with customers, CMTs (Cut, Make, Trim)[13] or other manufacturers. Looking at brands of local independent South African contemporary designers that have been established over ten years ago would allow for a greater picture of how the industry and its challenges have evolved. For the purpose of this study, the experiences of designers that have established their independent brands within the last ten years serve the objective of this research.

5.1.1 Participant 1

Participant 1 grew up knowing they wanted to work in fashion. With the support of their family, they entered fashion school at the Northwest School of Design right after matriculation and eventually transferred to FEDISA (Future Excellence Design Institute South Africa) in Cape Town. While in school, they began working at various fashion boutiques in Cape Town, such as MeMeMe and Mungu and Jemima, as well as internships at sock manufacturer, Glencarol, and retailer, Truworths. A job came from their internship at Truworths; however, they expressed that they “felt like creatively, I wasn't in a space that kind of highlighted my potential and kind of felt blocked” (Participant 1). This period of creative blockage happened during the COVID-19 lockdowns, which presented Participant 1 with a unique opportunity to take a risk from their perspective and start their own brand.

Their brand’s origin is closely tied to their cultural and familial upbringing. Culturally Zulu from their father’s side, Participant 1 named each collection using Zulu words. Their designs are created with the women in their life—mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother—and what they were and how they style those garments and “closing the gap between young and

[13] A CMT is a type of clothing manufacturer that sees the product from textile to final form. In many cases, each step—cut: cutting the pattern out of the textile, make: sewing the patterns together to make the garment, trim: finalising the garment with any buttons, zippers, embellishment, and assessing the garment for quality of finish—is done in separate factories. In a CMT manufacturing service, all the aforementioned steps are done under the same roof.

old". Beyond the familial, Participant 1 has been influenced by the general culture of South Africa as a whole, from music to turns of phrase and the sense of community that drives their inspiration. A prominent aspect of their, and other South African designers', as this participant points out, design ethos is storytelling:

> I think the biggest thing and it's not only me, something that I see with all other South African designers is that our storytelling is impeccable. Like we are able to tell stories unlike anyone else in the world. I think a lot of people forget how much culture has influencing the way we tell our stories. We have depth and prints and colour in choices of fabric is it linked back to the Shweshwe, which was like the first prints in South South Africa that women wore, is it linked to the colour of our food and how we felt but everything is linked always in a story and I think that is something that I personally use, but I think it's something that everyone else as young designers are great at. Those those are the examples I, Thebe, um MmusoMaxwell, Lukhanyo. The point is that we're able to tell a story even though well the thought process is always deeper than it just being a piece of clothing.

The biggest challenge facing Participant 1 for their brand is the lack of resources for designers and brands in South Africa and the current state of the manufacturing industry:

> At some point in South Africa, the textile industry was, you can know, kind of strong enough. It was in apartheid times, not post-apartheid and disappeared. And that was more of what you see in Cape Town in terms of manufacturing spaces, as well as CBD Johannesburg. But now finding resources to do things in a way that it's still ethically sourced as well as affordable and still make sense isn't something that exists I think, you buying fabric because we don't manufacture our own fabric we we don't have the skills of knitting as we used to we don't have the skills of weaving as we used to even like having wool and mohair and so on. We have these fields and it was something that we were so strong at, however manufacturing it from that to what we use in our design space now it's it's not, how do I say, a vertical line…We either all go to the same place or we hide where we go because you don't want it to be over fluctuated. All of our CMTs, which was the manufacturing spaces, have such high units or orders for like, you know, for corporates or like 700 units at a go, 500 units at a go. And for a small company. That doesn't make sense so you end up doing it

> yourself or having like three people help you but if you buying everything at retail price instead of at wholesale price, it really does affect how much you sell and have a business and move forward. So definitely resources.

As another aspect of resources, Participant 1 touches on people now lacking skills resources. “I also think youth has a problem with skills so it takes skills, hand skills, it's just something we really have to bring back”.

To build their brand, Participant 1 participated in various competitions to give them the necessary exposure. They credit much of their success to the exposure they received from participating in and winning competitions and events such as SA Fashion Week and All Sourcing Cape Town. The exposure, according to the participant, has provided them with various collaboration opportunities. Currently, they are redesigning the KFC uniforms for Southern Africa. The events and competitions they credit are all organised by privately held entities. While they did say they were a part of a government-sponsored showcase that took them to Nigeria and Singapore to present their designs, they do not believe this was helpful to their career:

> [T]o build a customer base or to build like buyers in line to order your things…you have to build up a reputation for them in order to trust you to see your work to see your style. Does your style, is it consistent enough over like three collections rather than one? I think when we go there we are unprepared enough or rather we aren't told or I don't know expectations aren't realistic. So you go then it becomes more of a holiday.

They suggest having the opportunity to build a longer relationship with these potential customer bases over the course of three or four years to establish a reputation and to do so in a market that aligns with the designer’s style.

Participant 1 faces the challenge of overcoming price barriers within the South African market. These barriers are present due to the imbalance of economic affluence in the international market to the South African market and trying to structure prices that make sense for both consumers. Participant 1 does not believe it is an issue when looking at

possible competition from foreign imported fashion as they are reaching different target demographics.

Regarding government support for designers and independent South African brands, Participant 1 is familiar with opportunities present for entrepreneurs that would provide some financial support; however, none are explicitly directed at creatives. They are familiar with more designer-specific support from the private sector and retailers such as Pick n Pay, Woolworths, Bash, and Superbalist, of which the latter two Participant 1 has been contacted by for collaborations. Suggestions for government support from Participant 1 focus on resource and skill building:

> [B]uilding the textile industry with the CMTs giving people places. And yeah, back to us to the tech skills, so hand skills, if they could have workshops on youth that aren't going to school with don't want to go to varsity just like they have, you know, for woodshop and whatever electricians and so on. The same for designers in order to build the textile industry.

5.1.2 Participant 2

Like Participant 1, Participant 2 grew up knowing they wanted to work in fashion as a designer and immediately went to fashion school, STADIO (formerly known as LISOF) and interned in styling and costume design. Their entrance and subsequent winning of their student Fashion Week gave them the opportunity to intern with South African designers, ERRE and Isabel De Villiers, where they learned the business side of fashion. Concurrently, they collaborated with Mr. Price, which provided them the finances to launch their own brand.

While they do not feel any particular connection to a specific culture, they do feel connected to and inspired by South Africa and South Africans as a whole, drawing on “the overarching personality of South Africans, which I find to be, you know, very colourful, and joyful and happy and playful”. Although they state that specific culture is not of influence, they do say that

> South Africans take pride in being South African, they love being South African. And you know, and I want my clothing specifically to reflect that, you know, if you, if you

> buy from me, I want you to look like a South African, I don't want you to look like you're, I don't know, in Italy or something, you know what I mean, it should be colourful, and it should be a celebration of who we are. And so I'm always inspired by trying to create a visual narrative that speaks to who South Africans are. And when, you know, no matter where you go in the world, people will recognize you as being from South Africa, you know, at least from Africa, then. But specifically, South Africa.

Participant 2, however, expresses how being South African has shaped their experience and work as a designer in two other distinct ways: access to resources and community. From the resource side of influence, they state how

> there's a lot of things about being African that that kind of influence us as designers, you know, so you start off with very basic things like even if you just talk about like fabrication, for instance, right? Yeah, it's very fast to find the fabrics that we really need. And South Africa doesn't have it. All sector, you know, something like that already just being in this specific country, not even speaking about Cultural people yet already has a profound influence on the way that we design, you know, our resources dictate what we can and can't do. That makes sense. So there's already when designing a list of boundaries that we need to consider, I think that that people especially, especially like in Europe, and those countries don't really understand.

They then express how South Africa's culture of community has extended to South Africa's designers and thus has moulded their brand in terms of access and resources. While the community of designers has helped designers "in terms of kind of feeling inspired and knowing where to go next", the lack of resources is Participant 2's greatest challenge as a South African designer.

> [W]e live in a country where we can't produce textiles, a lot of raw fibres, but you can't do anything with it, unless you like to hand knit it. So we don't really make fabrics, we export a lot of our raw fibres, and then it needs to get made into fabric overseas, and then it needs to come back and obviously, like all of the customs, and there is a huge cost that comes with that. So most of the things that we I mean, we try our best, but a lot of the things that you find just like generally are imported from

> China, and then not necessarily the best quality. And I mean, it seems right, because we are we as South African people are an economy, that's not great.

They follow this sentiment by expressing how the wealth disparity in South Africa additionally presents a challenge.

> And there's a huge kind of wealth gap. So we can't like even if we were to import the most expensive fabrics, like who's going to be able to afford that is the question, right? Like, it's still even we act in a luxury space, there's also a limit to how much we can really ask for certain garments. Just considering, like, who the market is and what they're gonna buy. So I would say like, the two biggest challenges are kind of resource and then I would say probably the access to wealth in the country. And then kind of all the difficulties that come with that, right. I mean, resources, if you speak about just exporting, like just the duties and taxes and shipping to get anything out of South Africa is astronomical.

To reach a customer base, they are not concerned with marketing “to the masses" due to their self-described niche product. Rather, they utilise their online store and social media presence to attract current customers to return in addition to their personal customer service features. Their physical locations in Cape Town’s V&A Waterfront and Johannesburg’s Sandton City are their resources for new customers. Participant 2 does see the extensive influx of foreign imported fashion as a threat to gaining new customers despite the majority of the foreign imported fashion being of a different price point, it has shifted the general consumer mindset to be a possible threat.

> [F]irst of all, it creates a perception and in the mind of the consumer that things should be cheap. You know what I mean? And that's a very difficult perception to compete with…I think it's a very difficult machine to compete with, because it just keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And people kind of feel like, well, why would I buy a sequin dress from you, if I can get a sequin dress from SHEIN for half the price, and it's here in a day, you know what I mean? And most, most consumers don't care if things fall apart, because they wear things only once or twice anyway. And then it just sits in a pile, while donated or handed down, or something. So, you know, even saying that we do high quality products is not always enough of a of a

> driver to convince people to buy from you. Because they're like, Well, I wear it once and it falls apart. And who cares? You know what I mean? So yes, it has a very big impact on our business, it's very difficult to convince the consumer…I just think that we could have grown quicker if it wasn't for that.

Participant 2 is not aware of any government programs outside of hearing of possible grants but has received help in the form of mentorship and development programs through Fashion Week and their internships. To further support designers, they do believe that policies around exporting their goods and to encourage and support local production and manufacturing would be most beneficial. Participant 2 does produce their garments as locally as they can, while importing trims such as zippers and their labels, but due to the lack of skills available and the manufacturers' requirements of large orders, they produce all of their clothing in-house.

5.1.3 Participant 3

Despite knowing they wanted to go into fashion, Participant 3 decided to study fashion from a business perspective through university and postgraduate degrees, one of which was where they created a brand incubator that later became their brand that stands today. To establish the brand, they worked with a mentor who guided them on actioning their concepts and getting samples into production. The brand's aesthetic focuses mostly on functionality and the designer's personal aesthetics rather than culture. However, they say that the South African culture of resilience has been a pillar in her brand's journey. They reference a lack of resources, in general and of good quality, being their biggest challenge and leading to this resiliency.

> I think South Africa in general, lacks access to resources…it makes it so much harder because you have to like import things and then, you know, so I just feel like we don't have the access that other designers have to better options. And I think that's probably the most challenging thing is just like, um, once again, trying to have an have, like have to figure things out and make the best out of our situation, I think specifically as a small brand…because of like, physically being so far away from, um, textile conferences and supply, and all of that stuff like even the other day I was speaking to

> someone about like end of roll which I don't really believe in because the end of roll that's available to us is like 100 rolls of like polyester orange fabric that Truworths has over ordered you know, and is that really end of roll is it really like dead stock or is it just bad planning from like a big company that's now being like made our responsibility you know?

They further elaborate on the lack of available resources as a challenge as a brand that produces only within South Africa.

> [W]e produce completely locally. And the biggest challenge in South Africa is finding locally produced fabrics though, because most of the mills have closed down. So we do have one or two suppliers that knit fabric locally. But most of the fabric suppliers that we use actually import so that has been like challenging just because once again, there's there's like a handful of people who still make fabric locally the rest is (inaudible). We just don't have access.

As a designer who focuses on sustainability, Participant 3 discussed the lack of recycling and upcycling resources available, such as decent vintage garments, deadstock fabrics, end-of-roll[14], and technology. The lack of appropriate sustainable resources, according to the participant, has led them to suggest a national policy that removes taxes or "import duty on sustainable alternatives to fabric" as it "doesn't make sense to tax us on trying to find a better alternative to like a bad fabric". Additionally, Participant 3 suggests an accelerator or mentorship program to assist new brand entrepreneurs in how to scale their business, provide a network, and supplier information. They describe their idea as "an incubator for people who have access to industry experts who can essentially connect you and and help you find solutions to the problems that that you're facing without you having to like, literally like trial and error".

> [I]n terms of a program is like some sort of accelerate accelerator program or like mentorship program to help in like the scaling section. So you know, like how to grow a brand like how to get it from kind of where you are when you're like a one man person with like, outsource help. To, you know, like a next level, which obviously,

[14] End of roll is a term used to describe the last bit of fabric left remaining after a specific order was placed by a brand or company and all needed fabric for that order was used.

> includes funding. It also includes like, contacts and includes supplier information. I think a lot of the time you know, there are actually better options but like, we like how do you find those options? It's very like notorious in the clothing industry, like you can't Google like "supplier of cotton" and then it pops up. (Participant 3)

They stated they have only “heard whispers” of any government assistance programs and did look themself for their brand yet was faced with hard to find information.

> [I]t's funny because I've like a while ago, like I was on a mission to like, see if I could get funding and yeah, it's so difficult. There's like no one place to go and look for like, what is available and kind of what is what do we have access to. So I think that's kind of the challenge. Like I kind of gave up, like, Where do I even go look for this, you know?

Participant 3 found that through trial and error, their biggest success in attaining new customers was through social media and paid advertising. This presented a challenge for a burgeoning small business as they “didn't have the budget to put the money behind the ads to be able to reach the people we needed to reach”. They additionally joined markets and various pop-up events to get their product into physical spaces for people to see. Although they see the cornered market by foreign imported fashion as a threat to their brand, not only from a customer acquisition point of view but also its ramifications on manufacturing and the available resources in South Africa.

> I think that's like the whole reason also why like I think so many mills and like, original businesses closed down because in the in the back in the day, like the South African clothing industry was known to be like booming. And I think what happened, you know, in China, like China came up with like, all these cheap manufacturing options, all the like, you know, all the solutions that essentially people wanted a better price and I think that's kind of when it started. And then obviously, over time, like the big fashion houses like H&M and Zaras and everything arrived, so I think naturally, you know, as people we always look for what we're looking for at the best price. So I think that's like people's natural instinct, so it wouldn't, it wouldn't make sense to say that it doesn't impact us. I think it really does.

5.1.4 Participant 4

Participant 4 states that they have “always sort of designed stuff that I just wasn't conscious of that I just didn't label as designed work…[I]t came from a point of survival, but also from a point of needing to express” themself. Their career began more formally in fashion as designers from high school, where they sold upcycled suits for soccer players, people going to weddings, and people who needed to work. This was followed by formal fashion school and various positions for brands from stylist to Creative Director. They created their own brand in 2018 as a full-time designer.

Participant 4 grew up with deep connections to their Zulu roots from their father’s side. Their mother was Sotho and they grew up in Johannesburg. They express that the culture and subcultures of the city were “as culturally significant as what was happening within the household, which was very much a spiritual experience, whereas what was happening to me in the streets was a very conscious experience”. At home, they learned about their lineage and lived a very culture-forward life regarding foods and traditional attire worn for ceremonies. Comparatively, the subcultures of Johannesburg that they chose to participate in, such as dance, poetry, and fashion as a form of expression, were equally culturally significant. This connection to culture has been brought through their design work.

> [I]f you sort of look at first proper collection I consider I did which was Black Renaissance. In 2020/2021. It looked at sort of like my Zulu culture, like wearing a shoe mixed with shirts, which is, I guess, like that mixture between tradition and colonisation and globalisation, and what globalisation does to traditional cultures and traditional practice…So I draw a lot from those parallels between traditional two traditional aspects and sort of the relationship they have with modernism. And yeah, it's a key conversation for me because I think in order to, especially especially in South Africa, or maybe even within the continent, but I find in South Africa, there is such complex and nuanced things we experienced…such things that why, within the church, their uniforms that still reflect the aspects of colonisation, like uniforms that look like British Army uniforms, but within the church, which is such a spiritual place of worship, which is a traditional place for people to go find their gods, and things of that of that nature. And that's the sort of thing that I try to unpack in my work and sort of speak about, like these conversations of tradition, and modernism, what does this

> mean? Where does it come from? Why is it not changing? Why we're not having the conversation about it? What does this have to reflect about the society we live in? And in the same way, I also looked at, then the other sort of cultures being the street cultures and sort of subcultures…It is like this, this idea of being being from the township and them feeling like the township is because there's no tree in the township, it's just dust and brown, iron, grey iron fence, no, no green grass, no green trees, feeling like the environment was so grey that they had to dress themselves in colour, to be able to express themselves in a place where they felt was so dull, and so brown and how those cultures or how that feeling, then impacts how they dress and forming subculture around colour and expressing yourselves in patterns, colour, maximalism if you'd like to call. So all the all these sort of nuanced, street street culture aspects also influenced my attitudes, the conversations I want to have using fashion as a tool to have these conversations and truly unpacking, maybe even sometimes on a psychological level what, what this means and what this reflects about the times we live in, so yeah, to answer your question 100%. In my work traditional cultures with conscious subconscious influence my work quite quite a lot.

Their connection to South Africa and being South African is something they say they "use as a power within fashion to sort of tell the stories I'm trying to tell". Being a designer in South Africa, Participant 4 has faced the challenge of the country being "an emerging economy" while being in an economy not congruent with ambitious designers. Some of the issues they list are funding, an economic environment that doesn't allow for swift progression, accessibility, access to good facilities, manufacturing and production, and an audience that may not be ready to fully engage. These are all issues they describe as "emerging brand struggles" and clarifies them as specifically "emerging African brand struggles" where there is a lack of investors and department stores to support a brand's growth. The participant did apply for funding assistance in the past, however never received the funding nor any feedback and continued to seek out self-funding through their consulting work with other brands. They describe their last application experience which caused them to stop seeking assistance:

> I have kind of sort of given up on sort of like the institutional way of government funding because you know, like, the last time I applied for funding and I met the lady from Arts and Culture at the time, and she was like, 'Hey, sorry, we haven't seen your

> application because Arts and Culture Department is backlogged by like, at least three years, so we still trying to find people from 2019' and it's just like, there's no way I'm ever gonna get there…it's like conversations I've had quite a long time ago with people just saying like, ah fashion doesn't work. They can't find fashion as much because it doesn't garner the same kind of public public support as what sports or music does…So could I alter my application to have a musical or sports or a different kind of approach because then they could substantiate the application better, but it's like my my application my dream is fashion specific. So it's always where to find now needs to lie or what's the word? Compromise, compromise my dream to fit in these things that I don't need fitted into it?

From their experience, they have never seen any of their fellow designers receive any backing from the government or a corporation to sustainably run their business. This type of support they have only seen through angel investments and the private sector.

5.1.5 Participant 5

Participant 5 entered their fashion career during university at the Durban University of Technology; however, their background of coming from a rural village in South KwaZulu-Natal and deep cultural Zulu roots proved a challenging path into the arts. Due to their background, the arts were not seen as an appropriate career path for stability. However, the participant said "calling is calling sometimes you just take a decision and you go with it" for their decision to switch courses to fashion design. They maintain their cultural closeness when designing their clothes, specifically through heritage and values. However, they challenge some cultural norms in their designs by making them unisex and commenting on gender norms in their culture.

> It's very like a unisex Yes. So in a way like dressing those male models, keeping them the dresses or caftan shirts, which in my culture and men wearing a dress, it's something like a taboo something that is so totally opposite, but looking to edit traditional attire, which is called ibheshu so it's sort of like a skirt. So if you can look at it on its silhouette, in a way I see or interpreted as like, as skirts as something that is like unisex or similar to a women's traditional attire eh scrub. So that's why I decided

> to blur those lines between male or female to create one piece that can be able to accommodate both genders.

As a designer who sees sustainability as one of their pillars, Participant 5 finds the lack of textile resources in South Africa being their biggest challenge. They elaborate on the lack of quality and innovation in South Africa for textiles currently, and look back on when there was an industry for textile production.

> Textile it's one of the main issue for I would say for all South African designers because where I'm based right now in Durban, I remember back in the days we used to have like textile mills and factories around the who were producing fabrics, but it's no more so all the fabrics that you have, what the stuff that we have all imports from China and in terms of quality, it's not so good and it's really like a disappointment and if you want 100% cottons you need to go to Cape Town Cape Wool SA and the prices are not favourable for like, upcoming or or emerging designers. Oh, that's the main content for for for textiles, textiles, and it's such a disgrace for such for for our country. If you look into Kenya, looking to Senegal, looking to these other countries, they still developing their own fabrics then why are we not developing our own fabrics also like we importing from China.

The challenge of foreign imported clothing, both second-hand clothing and that of fast fashion brands as their second greatest challenge. They state that this has created an access barrier to entry for emerging designers like themself due to the cheap prices of the imports and has led to a decline in skill and craft.

> So there is a huge flooding of of these clothes, the second-hand second-hand clothing, being distributed all over the Africa that are selling in the streets, but now we've also got like shops that are selling like second hands from Europe or from America. It's really like killing the business. It's really killing like the craft African craft because it's taking away our customers are seeking the attention away from our taking the attention away from the locally produced products to buying those cheap clothes from Zara's from H&M with like, like nothing. It's really like killing us.

Another challenge Participant 5 has experienced is a general lack of support from a financial perspective. They explain that the requirements needed to obtain funding from organisations are quite high due to the amount of paperwork, documentation, and targets to meet. They ask "So how are we going to sustain our business? How are we going to scale up the production or hire more team members for our companies?" They have previously tried to work with SEDA (Small Enterprise Development Agency); however, in their experience, they found there was "too much of corruption in these teams". Currently, they are working with NYDA (National Youth Development Agency), but do not see their experience positively.

> It's very slow. You need to be go into their offices now. And then you know, you need to do like follow up each and every day. It's only the emails but honestly speaking it's all these government organisations or government support for businesses. They are not working. The only thing that they do is these seminars and workshops and presentations telling you to apply then you apply send mails, no one is responding. No one is reply. Then the next thing they are also like again, and again and again and again, workshops and workshops and workshops. So it's really exhausting, then it's something different when you go to Absa bank or FNB or or one of these private institutions they're really fast. For for for these public support entities it's it's, I don't know like, I haven't had anyone who who's a beneficiary from this entity.

In contrast, Participant 5 explains how international programs like that of the United Nations (UN), one of which they participated in, provided skill and financial support, whereas South African programs only provide the financials without guidance.

5.2 Fashion as a Cultural Heritage

Whether explicitly entrenched in or inspired by culture, people are innately shaped by the culture around them. Below are photographs and accompanying text provided by a local independent South African contemporary designer who inspired some of their work. Three participants were originally a part of this research; however, two were unable to provide the necessary work within the timeline. The below photographs' subtle surface-level relation to culture will be explored deeper in the discussions section following the findings to reveal its grander connection.



While exploring the tufting technique used in our Extra-terrestrialism range we started by investigating various yarn types we can use. I visited a local knitting store and purchased a bunch of yarn samples that I gravited towards. We used these yarns to tuft various samples on a base cloth and this is an image of the results. The image has become an important reference point for me in thinking about how we can visually expand on this tehnique in future collections using the different qualities we tested.

Figure 9: Yarn tuft samples



While exploring different printing techniques I discovered a supplier in Cape Town who utilises roller printing. Upon visiting their factory they showed me their roller archives. I was really inspired by the way they designed these and took so many pictures of their archives which I often reference when deciding on the direction for new collections. This specific roller is the one used within our latest Extraterres-trialism range

Figure 10: Archived roller printer



This is an image of an artificial flower that my partner creat-ed for the set of our Extraterrestrialism shoot. The idea of an otherwordly flower devloped on from this set piece which inspired all the accessories we subsequently created for the range.

Figure 11: Artificial flower craft



I am always looking for interesting ways of using our signature motifs in updated and refreshing ways, the polka dot being one of those motifs, This is an image of a cocktail cup that I was served with in a bar in Cape Town. It really inspired me to elevate our polka dot motif through the introduction of texture which we applied in our Extraterrestrialism range using tufting techniques.

Figure 12: Natural clay polka dot cup

As philosophers John Locke and Jean Jacques-Rousseau have declared, people are products of their environment and therefore irrevocably connected to the culture of our place. With location and culture being interconnected, the fashion that one would make and be inspired to make there would originate from being shaped by their culture and location's culture and by their experiences there. Within the artistic or seemingly mundane, influences of culture are in it all.

5.3 Consumers' Relationship to the South African Fashion Industry

84 anonymous participants were surveyed via an online Google Forms survey that was disseminated by various digital sources such as email and Instagram stories. Of the 84 participants, two responded negatively to the first question of whether they lived in South Africa. Since this research's parameters are held within the confines of South Africa's borders, culture, and fashion industry, these two participants' answers have been discarded from the rest of the findings, with the exception of one answer from one of the participants, which will be addressed later in the report. Therefore, the following data will be from 82 participants unless otherwise mentioned.

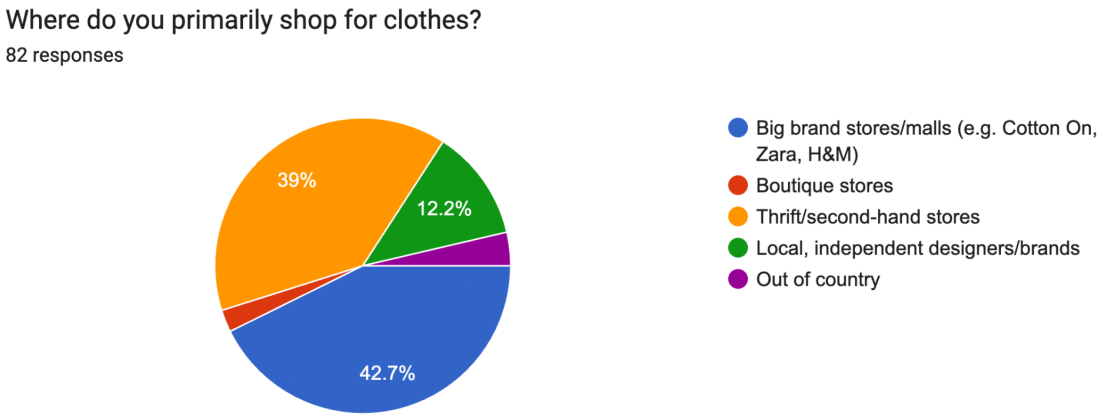


Figure 13: Pie chart survey results where participants primarily shop

When asked where the survey participants "primarily shop for clothes," the majority answered either "Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)" (42.7%, 35 respondents) or "Thrift/second-hand stores" (39%, 32 respondents). The third most common answer was "Local, independent designers/brands" with 12.2% (10). 3.7% (3) said they shop primarily "Out of country" and 2.4% (2) from "Boutique stores".

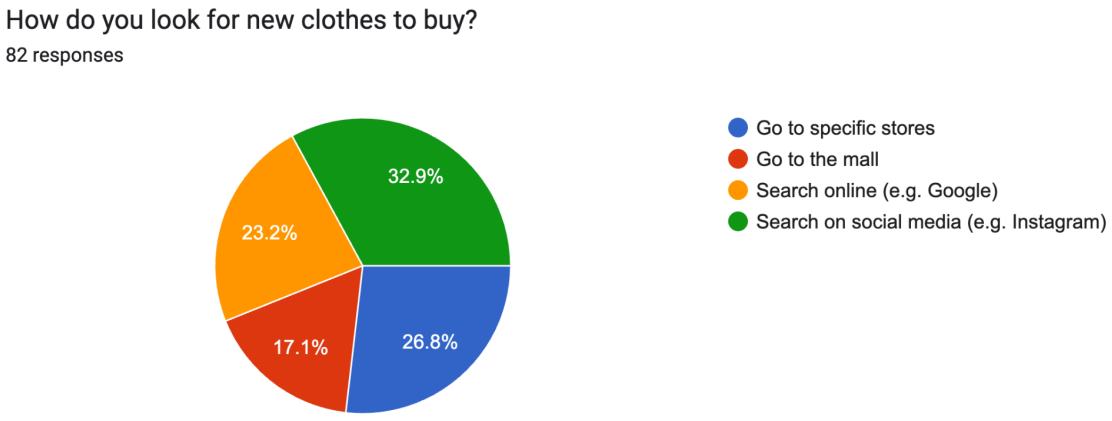


Figure 14: Pie chart survey results how participants look for new clothes

Where South African consumers primarily shop, according to this survey, is nearly evenly distributed. The most common place for the survey respondents "to look for new clothes to buy" was searching on social media, such as Instagram (32.9%, 27 respondents). This means that these consumers will search for either brands, designers, or specific clothing items on the

social media platform to find what to buy next or come across brands, designers, or specific clothing items that are tagged in posts or ads they see on the platforms. 26.8% (22 respondents) go to specific stores to shop while 23.2% (19 respondents) shop online and 17.1% (14 respondents) will go to a mall.

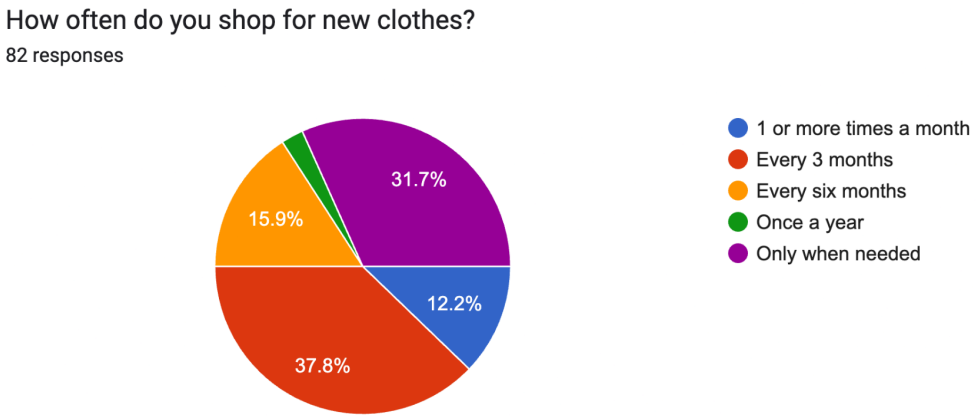


Figure 15: Pie chart survey results how often participants shop for new clothes

Most (37.8%, 31 respondents) shop for new clothing every three months on average and very closely followed by those (31.7%, 26 respondents) that only shop "when needed." There is a considerable response decrease for those that shop either more or less than every three months. 15.9% (13) of respondents shop every six months and 12.2% (10) shop one or more times a month. 2.4% (2 respondents) shop only once a year.

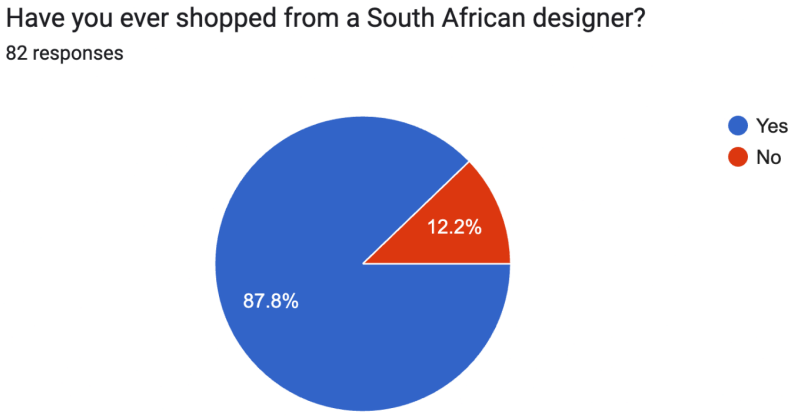


Figure 16: Pie chart survey results if participants have shopped from a South African designer

A majority of respondents at 87.8% (72) have shopped from a South African designer previously. 12.2% (10) have not. Of those 10, the following question asked respondents how often they buy from a South African designer. One of the participants who responded to the previous question that they have not shopped from a South African designer previously, then answered affirmatively that they have bought from a South African designer "Once in a while." These are contradictory answers and they must be disregarded.

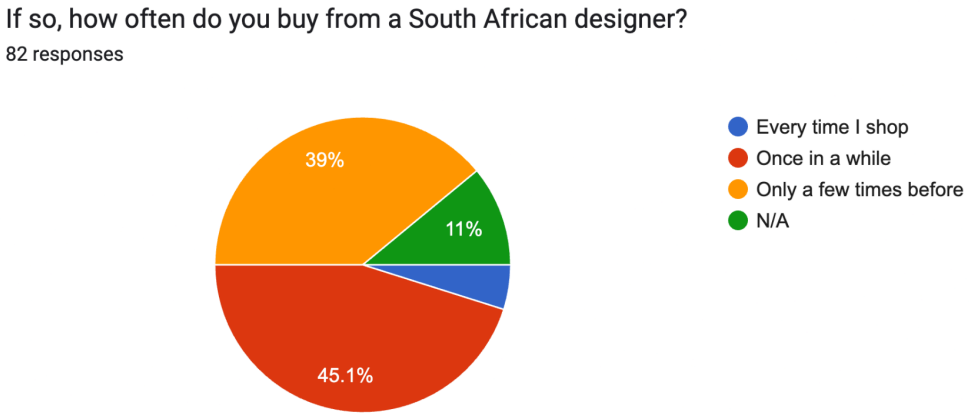


Figure 17: Pie chart survey results how often participants shop from a South African designer

The majority of respondents who have purchased something from a South African designer have done so "Once in a while" at 45.1% (37 respondents). The next most frequent answer was buying from South African designers "Only a few times before" at 39% (32 respondents). 4.9% (4 respondents) answered that they buy from South African designers every time they shop. 11% (9 respondents) answered "N/A," or not applicable, as they previously answered that they have never bought something from a South African designer.

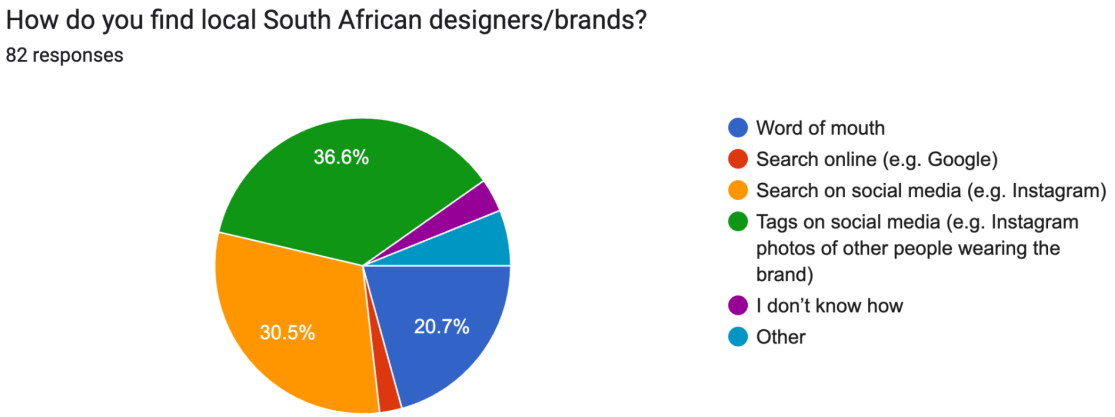


Figure 18: Pie chart survey results how participants find local South African designers/brands

When asked how the respondents "find local South African designers/brands," 67.1% reported using social media whether that be other people posting and tagging a brand/designer item they are wearing (36.6%, 30 respondents) or through searching through social media as a search engine for finding designers/brands from South Africa (30.5%, 25 respondents). 20.7% (17 respondents) reported that they find local designers and brands by "word of mouth." 6.1% (5 respondents) reported "other," 3.7% (3 respondents) said they are not sure how to find local South African brands/designers, and 2.4% (2 respondents) said they use a traditional search engine such as Google. The five participants that responded "other" elaborated as follows: two respondents said they use all of the aforementioned methods from social media to word of mouth; two respondents said in person markets; the last respondent said sponsored advertising posts on Instagram.

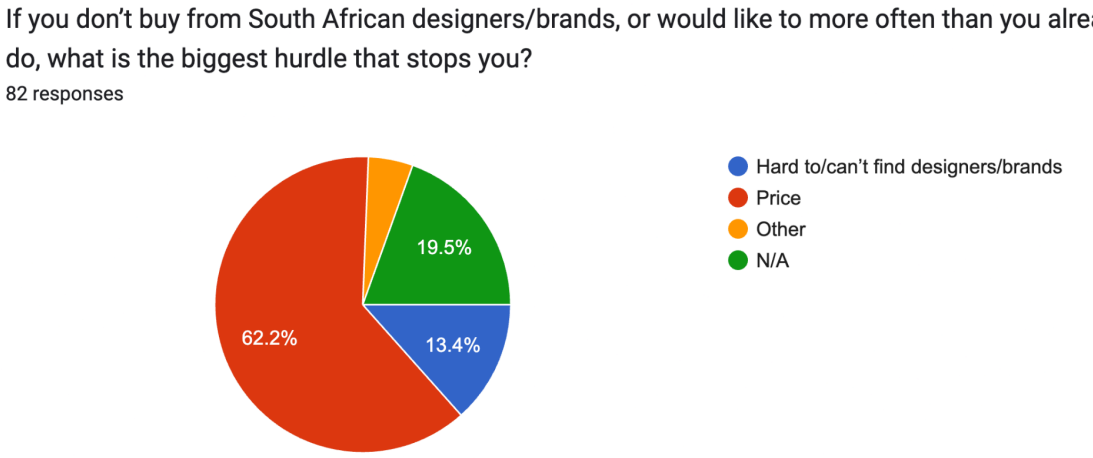


Figure 19: Pie chart survey results if not, why participants don't shop from local South African designers/brands

Respondents noted price as being their biggest barrier to buying more from local South African designers/brands at 62.2% (respondents). 13.4% (respondents) said their barrier is having difficulty finding local South African designers/brands. 4.9% (4 respondents) said "other" and 19.5% (respondents) said this question was not applicable. Of the four that said "other," their reasonings are as follows: 2 said sizing and fit concerns; one said they "try not to buy stuff I don't need, and generally only get something when it's a deal, like at a second hand store;" and one responded saying "Finding things in my size that are quality and also

my style. I also like to keep up with fashion trends as much as I can and slow fashion can sometimes be slow in terms of having trendy pieces."

As previously mentioned, two respondents' answers were voided from this survey due to them answering that they do not live in South Africa and this research being localised to the borders of South Africa. However, one of these respondents has previously purchased items from South African designers/brands and stated the reason they have not purchased more from local South African designers/brands is due to shipping costs. This is an important note as this barrier appears multiple times throughout the research's findings.

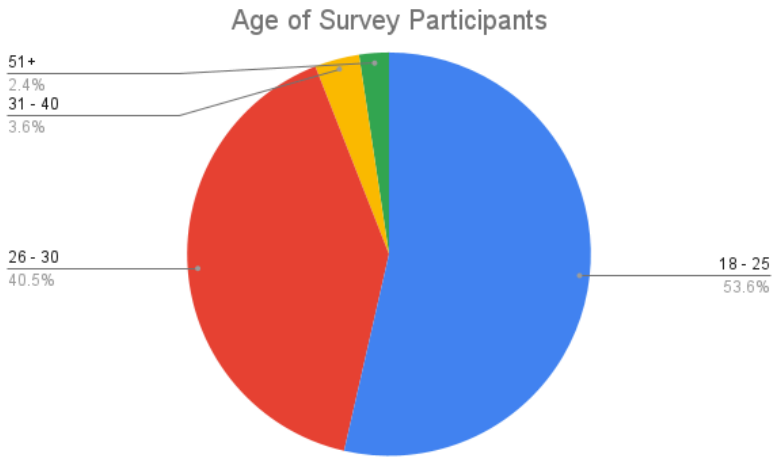


Figure 20: Pie chart survey results showing participants age

The first survey question recorded the age of the participants to determine if there was a statistical significance in response by age. Most participants were ages 18 - 30 (94.1%) with only 6% of participants 31+. Due to this variance, any statistical significance due to age is undefinable.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to uncover the lived experiences of local independent South African contemporary fashion designers and consumers to dissect the state of the South African fashion industry. By doing so, we are able to discover the challenges, potential remedies, and the current state of affairs in the fashion industry and for its key players. The findings will be analysed in the following themes: (1) fashion as cultural

heritage; (2) the impact of foreign imports on independent brand owners, consumers, and their relationship; (3) lack of resources; (4) designers' call for support. As per the findings section, all quotes have been left in the participants original voice and grammar to preserve data authenticity.

6.1 Fashion as Cultural Heritage

In society, there are overt cultural aspects, such as traditional practices, clothing, and food, and covert cultural attributes, such as mannerisms, perceptions, and slang. Even when we may think we are not influenced by culture, we are shaped by that around us. When analysing the interview participants' answers and the photovoice participant's photography, the cultural aspects would present themselves through certain participants as more covert than overt. While Participants 1, 4, and 5 all explicitly mention their connection to culture as a pillar of their design ethos, it was specifically missing from Participants 2 and 3's explanations. However, culture was still distinctly a part of their designs, whether intentionally or not. Participant 3 approaches their design methodology from a place of function and aesthetics. Both of these are relative. Function can be attributed quite well to cultural norms and values. When discussing function, and in this case, the function of fashion, we must ask ourselves who and what is the function for. The answers will be shaped by the society in which these questions are framed and its values, systems, and structures. Participant 2 references culture in their designs, but culture in the sense of values.

> South Africans take pride in being South African, they love being South African. And you know, and I want my clothing specifically to reflect that, you know, if you, if you buy from me, I want you to look like a South African…it should be colourful, and it should be a celebration of who we are…no matter where you go in the world, people will recognise you as being from South Africa. (Participant 2)

This design perspective on culture takes the general spirit and personality of the South African people and transforms it into a tangible depiction. The spirit of a people within a culture is its essence, from which many other cultural aspects fall from it. This represents an essential example of being influenced by culture. As Chilese and Paolo Russo (2008) state, there is a reciprocal relationship between a place and culture. Participant 2's objective of

designing uniquely South African clothing places them as a designer as a storyteller of the South African spirit and, therefore, as an analyst of the culture of the time. Cultural heritage is defined by various items and artefacts that show a "diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance" (Pessoa, Deloumeaux and Ellis, 2009:25).

This perspective is seen in the photovoice participant's work. The photographs themselves are not overt displays of culture, but in the way that Participant 3's design ideology comes from subtle influences but still holds cultural narratives within them. A prominent cultural aspect of Cape Town as a city is its relation to nature. In Figure 12 below, the participant is inspired by the cup to explore their brand's polka dot motif in a new way. The cup holds the city of Cape Town's value of nature in its unfinished clay work that presents a very natural feel. This shows how even in the possibly mundane, there are cultural influences and influencers all around us.



Figure 12: Natural clay polka dot cup



Figure 10: Archived roller printer

In Figure 10 above, the designer shows the roller printer they chose for a pattern for one of their collections. This roller was a part of this supplier's archive. This insinuates its previous use by another artist and creation by another artist. The participant designer acknowledged that the various archived roller prints provided them with ample inspiration. This shows the continual referential cycle of art where a piece created by one artist will inspire another, and as products of our society's culture, it becomes a continued interpretation of past artistic cultural influences in art compared to current interpretations of it.

Participants 1, 4, and 5 design from a cultural perspective consciously. Participant 1 speaks of the depth, importance, and natural storytelling ability that innately comes to South African designers. They use the example of Thebe Magugu, who was mentioned above in Section 4.6 as a cultural storyteller.

> We have depth and prints and colour in choices of fabric is it linked back to the Shweshwe, which was like the first prints in South South Africa that women wore, is it linked to the colour of our food and how we felt but everything is linked always in a story and I think that is something that I personally use. (Participant 1)

They go on to say how culture has influenced their storytelling and bring the story into a piece of clothing, therefore, breathing a life and deeper meaning into it. This idea of cultural storytelling is deeply embedded in Participant 4's design methodology.

> I try to unpack in my work and sort of speak about, like these conversations of tradition, and modernism, what does this mean? Where does it come from? Why is it not changing? Why we're not having the conversation about it? What does this have to reflect about the society we live in? (Participant 4)

Participant 4's line of inquiry follows the sentiments shared by Participant 1, where there is a deeper meaning and cultural significance to anything we pay attention to. Fashion is an appropriate art form to express this culture and cultural heritage. Clothes can be perceived as mundane and, at worst, shallow to those who do not look deeper or for context clues. By truly experiencing culture, the designers are also truly experiencing their clothes and having a deeper understanding of culture (Santagata, 2002). Both participants see fashion as a tool to explore and discuss culture. Participant 5 sees it as a way to push the boundaries of progressive culture.

Hailing from a traditional Zulu background, Participant 5's unisex designs are seen as contentious. They play with the concepts of traditional garments, such as the men's ibheshu as a unisex skirt. This type of boundary-pushing design in culture acts as a lens to read the current climate of the relevant culture–whether the designs are accepted or not into society,

and what conversations they create. It serves as a bookmark into history to refer to the state of cultural affairs and a means of cultural progression (Rocamora and Smelik, 2019).

6.2 The Impact of Foreign Imports on Independent Brand Owners, Consumers, and Their Relationship

South Africa's economic and trade policies at the turn of the century and into democracy had created a ripe opportunity for foreign trade. This, however, came with the sacrifice of its own production, manufacturing, and general garment industry (Vlok, 2006; Traub-Merz, 2005). Lacking the protections and policies they needed, the South African fashion industry was vulnerable to the new import economy (Morris and Einhorn, 2008). This led to a decline in textile mills, garment production and manufacturing and the skills needed for them as well. Designers are acutely aware of this problem.

Participants 2, 3, 4, and 5 shared similar sentiments about the negative impacts that foreign imports have had on their independent brands, whether as a threat to customers or resources. While all participants saw the difference in the consumer who would shop for primarily imported fashion and their target demographic's identity not overlapping, many still feel the negative effects of the scene.

Participants 2 and 5 both expressed how the extreme low prices of and easy, fast access to the imported fashion–both second-hand and brands–has altered the consumers mindset and perception of value. Participant 2 highlights the ever present throw-away culture that has blossomed with the rise of consumption and easy access. No longer are claims of long-lasting quality good enough to lure clients over since "most consumers don't care if things fall apart, because they wear things only once or twice anyway" (Participant 2). Participant 5 echoes this sentiment stating how it is "really killing like the craft African craft because it's taking away our customers are seeking the attention away from our taking the attention away from the locally produced products to buying those cheap clothes from Zara's from H&M with like, like nothing. It's really like killing us." Whether you are in a city or a rural village, it is apparent that these statements ring true. Malls are filled with foreign brands and its residents are dressed in them all. In the rural communities, many of their streets are lined with women selling piles of discarded clothing sent from Europe and North America. None of these

options have a cultural connection to South Africa. This highlights the decline in fashion as a cultural heritage. It has created a norm of foreign-influenced dress and a mismatched value system when analysing clothing costs. Participants 2 and 5 mention their pricing systems based on ethical labour costs, quality fabrics, and other production costs. Although as Participant 2 revealed their experience of consumer attitudes where “people kind of feel like, well, why would I buy a sequin dress from you if I can get a sequin dress from SHEIN for half the price” (Participant 2). They also mention that South Africa's wealth disparity is another dynamic layer to this. While there has been conditioning of thought by fast fashion brands to see clothes as cheap and ignore the labour that went into them, many South African consumers are unreachable at the luxury, ethical price points. This was also shared by Participant 1.

Participant 3 goes as far as to say, “it wouldn't make sense to say that it doesn't impact us” (Participant 3). It is clear that these foreign imports have an absolute impact on consumers’ attitudes. When asked where they primarily shop, only 12% said from local, independent designers/brands while 81% of respondents said “Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)” or “Thrift/second-hand stores”, i.e. they are purchasing foreign imported fashion the most and price being the biggest barrier for the consumer to purchase more from local designers/brands with 62% of respondents agreeing. This confirms the interviewed participants' belief of imported fashion causing a specific perspective towards clothing.

6.3 Lack of Resources

Experiencing a lack of resources, both in support and in business management, was a theme each interviewed designer expressed as their greatest challenge as a South African designer. The resources discussed fall into two categories: production resources and business management resources. First, we will look at production resources.

Due to the choice in trade and economic policies in the late 1990s and early 2000s as South Africa was re-entering the globally connected world but left its own manufacturing industries to flounder as they welcomed in the flow of imports (Vlok, 2006; Traub-Merz, 2005). Cheap garment imports from China reshaped the fashion industry as manufacturers, textile mills, and producers shuttered, and the general population became accustomed to cheap clothing

(Morris and Einhorn, 2008). Some of the interview participants mentioned the former strength of the manufacturing industry, which is full of skills and resources, as something inspirational before contrasting it to the issues of today (South African Cotton Cluster and Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2020).

> [W]e live in a country where we can't produce textiles, a lot of raw fibres, but you can't do anything with it, unless you like to hand knit it. So we don't really make fabrics, we export a lot of our raw fibres, and then it needs to get made into fabric overseas, and then it needs to come back and obviously, like all of the customs, and there is a huge cost that comes with that. So most of the things that we I mean, we try our best, but a lot of the things that you find just like generally are imported from China, and then not necessarily the best quality. (Participant 2).

Participant 3 mentions how the lack of resources causes a secondary issue of imports. To source certain materials, like sustainable fabrics, or in Participant 2's case, the trimmings (buttons, zippers, tag labels) the designers are forced to look outside of South Africa as the manufacturing industry has become so barren. Having to constantly import puts designers, especially emerging designers, in a financial bind as the cost soars up. This was even addressed by consumers in their survey response to what blocks them from purchasing from local South African designers more due to this respondent not living in South Africa. Participant 4, however, expresses their disappointment in importing materials for, in addition to the financial burden, the lack of quality.

The designers also expressed South Africa’s lack of business support resources in their interviews. Participants 5 and 4 have had experience with trying to work with government and other organisational support to help fund their brands and provide mentorship. Participant 5 previously worked with SEDA but found internal SEDA issues that sullied their experience. Currently, they are working with NYDA but remain frustrated with the slow pace waiting for any assistance or responses. Where Participant 5 can see these programs working well was through their experience with the UN, which provided not only financial support, like that of South African programs but additionally mentorship. Participant 4’s experience highlights the government’s lack of understanding of the fashion industry and its investment potential for the country’s GDP, job creation, and heritage preservation. Their last attempt at applying for institutional support, after all unsuccessful applications, an official of the DSAC admitted that

not only did they not believe fashion “garner(s) the same kind of public public support as what sports or music does” and then to alter the application to support music or sports instead, but that the organisation is backed up with applications at least three years back leading to a nearly impossible acceptance. Participant 5 has now declared they have “ given up on sort of like the institutional way of government funding” (Participant 5).

Participant 3 tried to search for resourced support, but the process of even finding applications was so convoluted that they gave up. Including the other remaining interviewers, no one even knew of any government assistance programs for their work.

The lack of resources creates a difficult path for success for emerging designers (Fibre Processing & Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority, 2018; Pather, 2015). From a consumer perspective, this is seen through lack of knowledge in local brands or the local fashion scene. From my own experience, it takes both marketing and local scene knowledge in order to find new brands or designer you connect with and primarily on social media, or you have to know the few stores to shop at that carry local independent contemporary designers such as Merchants on Long and Africa Rise. 67% of the survey respondents also replied that they find local South African designers/brands through social media. While this is a low barrier to entry as a free resource for brands to use, it can alienate entire demographics of potential customers if there is no supplemental marketing or outreach.

6.4 Designers’ Call for Support

When asked what policies or programs could help them and their brands, each participant addressed the lack of resources. The lack of proper manufacturing and materials available within the borders of South Africa has had significant negative impacts to designers and the local fashion industry as a whole. The designers are calling for rebuilding the textile industry and focusing on teaching the technical skills needed to produce the garments and textiles. Participant 1 succinctly summarises the repeating beliefs amongst the interviewed designers.

> [B]uilding the textile industry with the CMTs giving people places. And yeah, back to us to the tech skills, so hand skills, if they could have workshops on youth that aren't going to school with don't want to go to varsity just like they have, you know, for

> woodshop and whatever electricians and so on. The same for designers in order to build the textile industry. (Participant 1)

Participant 2 further discusses skills development, but geared towards the designers.

> [I]n terms of a program is like some sort of…mentorship program to help in like the scaling section. So you know, like how to grow a brand like how to get it from kind of where you are when you're like a one man person with like, outsource help. To, you know, like a next level, which obviously, includes funding. It also includes like, contacts and includes supplier information. I think a lot of the time you know, there are actually better options but like, we like how do you find those options? It's very like notorious in the clothing industry, like you can't Google like "supplier of cotton" and then it pops up. (Participant 3)

Additionally, Participants 2 and 3 shed light on the need for more supportive export and import taxes and duties for expanding their brands to international customers and for importing in sustainable materials.

7. Recommendations

Protecting contemporary fashion provides a more complicated solution than protecting traditional fashion requires. Traditional fashion does not change; contemporary fashion constantly evolves with society. Therefore, where policies such as GI protections (Osei-Tutu, 2021) or IP laws (Naidoo, 2019; Ruff, 2017; Yao Xiao, 2010) that require specifically defining the characteristics of the garments, contemporary fashion as a whole has less definition as each aspect of culture is interpreted differently depending on the designer; however can birthed from the same culture nonetheless. Taking a position of contemporary fashion as cultural heritage can allow contemporary fashion to exist in a broader definition. Through this a new White Paper on Art and Culture would need to be issued to formally establish contemporary fashion as cultural heritage. This also allows the government more flexibility in determining how to protect it through different policies. This can be done in ways that would support the growth and success of local independent South African contemporary designers and brands. To support their growth, South Africa must take strong policy positions limiting foreign fashion imports–new and second-hand–and brands from

entering the market. Increasing import fees, duties and taxes, and operational fees for non-South African fashion businesses will deter foreign fashion businesses from overwhelming the South African market. Interventions to rebuild the textile and clothing industry are necessary too to provide the needed quality resources locally. Having locally accessible quality resources will decrease operational costs for local designers, making it easier for them to establish their business. Declaring contemporary South African fashion as a cultural heritage provides the opportunity and reasoning to take the necessary steps through policy to allow the industry and South Africa's culture, economy, and people to thrive.

The following will address what additional research is needed to support the goals of this paper. To further explore this narrative, there needs to be a larger study of photovoice and semi-structured interviews with a greater participant population at various career and brand development stages to further establish the innate connection between creation (designing fashion, in this case) and cultural heritage. Exploring the impacts of foreign imported fashion on local independent South African contemporary fashion designers through the lens of the consumer would add rich data in economic and social value. A widespread randomised survey would provide general data; however, splitting answer analysis by demographic questions (age, gender, socioeconomic background, education) would allow for a more thorough analysis to see any developing patterns. This would also provide designers with greater detail about their consumer connections. The recommended next step would be expanding the scope of interviews to include more designers, CMTs, manufacturers, SACTWU members, agricultural textile farmers, and textile and clothing producers. This would provide a holistic view of the current resources available, their lack, and how these other aspects of the industry have been affected. Semi-structured interviews with employees of DSAC would enrich the data to shed light on what government support is available, the reality of receiving it, and why it is in its current state.

8. Conclusion

The South African fashion industry is an untapped economic and cultural renaissance resource. South Africa once had a strong and fruitful fashion and manufacturing industry. However, this was due to the world closing its doors to the country and forcing South Africa to provide for itself. This did give ample opportunities for local businesses and industries to grow, such as the manufacturing and textile businesses (Vlok, 2006). As South Africa entered

democracy and re-socialised with the world, it lacked preparation for the influx of imports and left its fashion and manufacturing industries vulnerable to being overpowered by foreign imports. China's cheap fashion production and imports at the time of a weakening rand created a circumstance that led to the shrinkage of South Africa's fashion industry and manufacturing (Morris and Einhorn, 2008). This has left South Africa's people dressing in culturally incongruent fashion and threatens to leave South Africa's contemporary culture drowning in foreign imports. Few local designers who have found success have found their footing in distinctly cultural aesthetics, proving the desire from both designers and consumers for this cultural expression.

UNESCO's African fashion report overview analysis of its weaknesses is representative of South Africa's shortcomings according to the historical data and the reported lived experiences of designers and consumers. The issues of note are lack of education and training in skills for fashion production and business management, challenges of market and environment, lack of structured investment opportunities and support, and lack of thorough policies in place (UNESCO, 2023). Due to this state of affairs, South Africa has created an unwelcome environment for its burgeoning fashion creatives and entrepreneurs. The results of this study have shown that local independent South African contemporary designers are forced to look outside South Africa's borders for resources and support to succeed within South Africa. As revealed through semi-structured interviews with local independent South African contemporary designers, policy and program support to rebuild the manufacturing and textile industries, skills development for people in those industries, and import and export duty and fee rates that help support business growth are desperately needed and wanted. This lack of support and influx of foreign clothing has drawn a chasm between the local independent South African contemporary designers, their brands, and the consumer, with 87.8% of consumer survey respondents saying they primarily do not shop from local South African brands or designers and 12.2% saying they have never shopped from a local brand or designer. The results also revealed the deep interconnectedness between fashion design and culture as something innate.

Some scholars have suggested implementing IP laws to protect fashion designers, whereas others have proposed and taken on, such as Mexico, GI protections (Caponigri, 2021; Naidoo, 2019; Osei-Tutu, 2021; Ruff, 2017; Yao Xiao, 2010). There is no direct comparison of what current policies in other countries exist to support contemporary design as cultural

heritage. Policies that would support contemporary fashion as cultural heritage would be a formal declaration of contemporary fashion as cultural heritage through an updated white paper on arts and culture, programs to build skills for the manufacturing and textile industry, renewed investments in rebuilding the manufacturing and textile industry, policies limiting foreign imports and higher tax rates on foreign imports and fashion businesses, lower exporting and importing fees for local South African designers, and acceleration programs for emerging designers. Protecting contemporary designers through cultural heritage protections provides the easiest and most logical solution. This research shows that policy intervention and innovation are necessary for South African designers, culture, and economy to flourish.

9. Limitations

This study is subject to various limitations. The field of study of protection policy around fashion, and specifically contemporary fashion, is a very new discipline that has few available and published research. This created a challenge of trying to compare how policies of this nature may or may not work. For this reason, further research on contemporary fashion as cultural heritage and how to protect it are needed.

Addressing survey bias, 95.1% of survey respondents were 18 - 25 (40.2%) and 26 - 30 (54.9%) years old. This is not wholly reflective of the South African population. Additionally, the survey was distributed via social media stories and email to reach as many people as possible. However, this demographic would also not appropriately reflect the South African population. A larger sample size using a specific target population would be most appropriate to mitigate this issue for further research.

When retrieving research, I was unable to get a hold of any party at DSAC that worked in the arts department and would provide a quick interview. Additionally, there were barriers to having commitments from participants willing to do photovoice and who provided the correct material. Of the three original photovoice participants, only one could provide the proper materials in the time allotted. To solve this problem in further research, showing people visual examples of photovoice could help communicate the idea better.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Interviews

Participant 1

Kendall Atkinson
Hi (Participant 1), how are you?

Participant 1
Hi.

Kendall Atkinson
Hi, how are you?

Participant 1
I'm good. How are you?

Kendall Atkinson
Good. Thank you so much again for taking time to do this. I can see you're, you're outside you're really busy so I really appreciate it.

Participant 1
No, it's okay, it's okay. I just hope you can hear me.

Kendall Atkinson
Yeah, totally fine.

Participant 1
I'm trying to find a quiet. Okay, cool.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay, so if you don't have any questions, I'll just jump kind of right into it. That works. Cool. So, first, I am recording this just for transcription purposes and to keep accuracy and then you'll see there's like the third member the Otter pilot, that's also to help with transcription

just so you know. Um, so first what is your background in the design sector and when did you begin your career in fashion?

Participant 1
Um, so design sector, I basically went straight into fashion school from high school, I had a supportive family so they were okay with the creative thing. Um, I ended up going to Northwest School of Design at first it was closest to me besides (inaudible) and I didn't want to go where everyone was going and then I ended up transferring and went to FEDISA in Cape Town just so I could be able to work do internships as well as you know, study at the same time because fashion school is so expensive. I think I ended up graduating at FEDISA in 2019. Um, at that time, I was already working in terms of fashion in smaller fashion boutiques like MeMeMe, Mungu and Jemima in Cape Town, um, I was doing internships as well as like being a designer for Glencarol which is like a sock manufacturing company in my spare time. And then also did internships with Truworths which was like related to the school. You know, I ended up graduating I wouldn't say top of my class academically but top of my class creatively so got a few awards for that night academically.

Kendall Atkinson
Congratulations, that's still amazing.

Participant 1
Yeah, and then ended up getting offered a job from Truworths. So then I became a trainee to junior buyer. For kids were under Ltd boys. Yeah, Ltd boys and maxamia which was under a brand under Truworths to kiddies brands. I mean, after a year and a half I, it it was also COVID like it was just everything was going wrong. I just felt like creatively, I wasn't in a space that kind of highlighted my potential and kind of felt blocked. So I kind of thought to myself, let me just bank on myself. I'm quite young if anything were to go wrong corporate literally will always be there. So if I have less to lose when you're young and don't have kids and so on then you you kind of can take risks. So that's what I ended up doing and ended up starting my brand which has been doing quite well.

Kendall Atkinson

Amazing. Um okay, and then switching gears into them on the cultural side. Did you grow up connected to any specific culture and were you taught either formally or informally about any specific African, South African culture?

Participant 1
Well, I'm Zulu, but I'm Zulu because of my dad. But my dad hasn't been in my life. But like in South Africa, you take the father's um culture, so it doesn't matter if your mom's Sotho or anything, you take the dad. My granddad was also Zulu, but my granny was Sotho. So the house is mixed with Sotho and Zulu and I think just being in South Africa and also coming from Orlando, which is in Soweto, this culture that kind of just mix, it's just like, what it is you switch between languages without realising you have a sense of community without realising you, kind of also do I know there's like cultural things that we do in terms of marriage or funerals or you know, getting all that but I think South Africa has so much of culture in the sense of just being South African and how we do things and how we speak and our lingo and what we like and the music we listen to. So I think that's always had quite a big influence in my work. All of my collections have always been named after Zulu words are kind of linked to how I grew up, and the whole concept of MUNKUS is based off me, my mom, my grandmother, my great grandmother and kind of joining in that intergenerational link and making sure that whatever I wear, she can still wear it because the whole concept came about of me stealing clothes out of their closets, you know, but how was I able to make my own? Yeah, so I'm able to steal clothes out of their clothes, it means I'm finding my own style within that and with the same piece. So I think it was always closing the gap between young and old and finding a space and that's how MUNKUS came about.

Kendall Atkinson
Amazing. Um okay, and then that kind of answers my next question then really well. Awesome. Yeah, it's just talking about, you know, connection to-

Participant 1
You can go question by question. It's okay.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay. Um, I guess if you want to elaborate any further than on feeling any connection to South African culture and your design ethos.

Participant 1
Yeah so a lot of the silhouettes that I use are silhouettes that look good on South African women or African women as a general. We've have a lot of circular skirts. We have pleating. This is stuff that my great grandmother used to always wear this is stuff that my grandmother still wears today. Um, a lot of broad shoulders, a lot of like structural in a sense, but slow flowy I think we like having smaller waves and wider hips or movements in a sense when we walk in so you can kind of see the music within the clothing as well which sounds crazy, but it's something that is there.

Kendall Atkinson
It's beautiful.

Participant 1
So, a lot of my my clothing. silhouettes are based off what South Africans used to wear back in the day between the 70s all the way to the 90s. And yeah, it's really it is like South African styles. And I think that's why a lot of women here still love and look good in it.

Kendall Atkinson
Yeah

Participant 1
But not for everyone trying to make one but

Kendall Atkinson
You'll never like make everyone happy, so might as well do what you love. Okay, then okay. So kind of on the same field, how does being South African and your life experiences so possibly, you know, growing up in Orlando and then with your granny and your mom influence your approach to design and drawing inspiration-

Participant 1
Oh sorry

Kendall Atkinson

No no you're fine

Participant 1
I think the biggest thing and it's not only me something that I see with all other South African designers is that our storytelling is impeccable. Like we are able to tell stories unlike anyone else in the world. I think a lot of people forget how much culture has influencing the way we tell our stories. We have depth and prints and colour in choices of fabric is it linked back to the Shweshwe, which was like the first prints in South South Africa that women wore, is it linked to the colour of our food and how we felt but everything is linked always in a story and I think that is something that I personally use, but I think it's something that everyone else as young designers are great at. Those those are the examples I Thebe, um MmusoMaxwell, Lukhanyo. The point is that we able to tell a story even though well the thought process is always deeper than it just being a piece of clothing

Kendall Atkinson
100% I--yeah. I fully agree. And that's what I love about the past and current designers so much. It's not just clothes, it's so much more. So what are your some of your biggest challenges as a fashion designer in South Africa?

Speaker 1
The biggest is resources. At some point in South Africa, the textile industry was you can know kind of strong enough. It was in apartheid times, not post-apartheid and disappeared. And that was more of what you see in Cape Town in terms of manufacturing spaces, as well as CBD Johannesburg. But now finding resources to do things in a way that it's still ethically sourced as well as affordable and still make sense isn't something that exists I think, you buying fabric because we don't manufacture our own fabric we we don't have the skills of knitting as we used to we don't have the skills of weaving as we used to even like having wool and mohair and so on. We have these fields and it was something that we were so strong at however manufacturing it from that to what we use in our design space now it's it's not, how do I say, a vertical line. It's not nested closer. So I think the problem is price, its resources not knowing where to go. We either all go to the same place or we hide where we go because you don't want it to be over fluctuated. All of our CMTs, which was the manufacturing spaces have such high units or orders for like, you know, for corporates or like 700 units at a go, 500 units at a go. And for a small company. That doesn't make sense so you

end up doing it yourself or having like three people help you but if you buying everything at retail price instead of at wholesale price, it really does affect how much you sell and have a business and move forward. So definitely resources. I also think youth has a problem with skills so it takes skills, hand skills, it's just something we really have to bring back.

Kendall Atkinson
Mhm okay, and, um, how do you like how can people purchase your designs how can they find you?

Speaker 1
So we will be under Merchants on Long which is it has a brick and mortar store as well as e-commerce. We're also going to be a we are here and there on Plain Tiger which is also an e-commerce store and then we have our e-commerce. The reason we why I personally don't like physical stores is that I don't want to get too deep, but you get trapped in this lifestyle of you make clothes you go drop them off at a store, boutique and that's your life, that's the back and forth.

Kendall Atkinson
Ah, okay.

Participant 1
And I feel having a brand and thinking of a brand bigger than that if that's what you want. That's okay. But if you think you have a brand bigger or ahead of its time, the sad reality is you don't make money for a while. But you putting so much effort into marketing into the brand and how the brand is seen and to the story of the brand until you get collaborations or deals that kind of make sense, but align in that. But you get what I mean so yeah,

Kendall Atkinson
Yeah, no all good. I want to hear it all. No worries. This is all good stuff. Okay, and then how long did it take you to develop a customer base? And how did you do that? Um, or I guess continually doing?

Participant 1

Um, for me, it's only been, I wanna say three years but honestly, it's been two or two and a half years at most. I first started in competitions, which is, I think, if I were to give advice to any other young designer would be the best way because it allows you to get onto a platform with an audience that already exists that has interest in the competition to a point where if you when you tag along with those people, I think in the industry if you are a new brand and let's say you showcasing I'd say fashion week or whatever, people aren't buying tickets or going there because they know you so to trust you you happen show about three or four times or five times for them to kind of see what you about and feel. It's like you know, they want to be behind you. But competitions do have a space where it's just an audience and people there's hype around that there's people who have this interest and it's like a world or global lens looking at you because of that particular competition. I started off with All Sourcing Cape Town. So that was in 2020. I think I can't remember but I won that and then was 2021 Sorry, I'm not sure I can't remember at the time.

Kendall Atkinson
That's okay, that entire time was blurred so.

Participant 1
And then I ended up doing SA Fashion Week and won that as well. And then I ended up doing collabs after that which was opened by the platform of SA Fashion Week with Pick n Pay. Right now I'm collaborating with KFC to redesign the uniforms for the country and neighbouring countries and like my style, and yeah it's cool

Kendall Atkinson
That's incredible

Participant 1
A lot of cool projects actually come out from exposure and people don't think they're worth it. Do you know what I mean? I think they all think it's like a traditional sense of I went on a runway, and I was seen and scouted and got myself to Italy and that's not the case. Yeah,

Kendall Atkinson
Yeah. How nice. Um, I also saw you just you're doing one with Dove now so congrats on that too.

Participant 1
Thank you.

Kendall Atkinson
Um, the so SA Fashion Week and um the you said it was All Sourcing that what you said the one in Cape Town?

Participant 1
All Sourcing, yeah.

Kendall Atkinson
All Sourcing, okay. those from what I believe SAF SA Fashion Week is private, like private company, privately held organisation. Is that that the same for the one in Cape Town too?

Participant 1
Yeah, yeah.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay.

Participant 1
They are privately owned, but I think everything in the fashion industry is privately owned. The only thing that wouldn't be like if we talking about a government influence and the government like I went to Nigeria and Singapore as well to showcase that the government would interact with a fashion week to take designers or select the designers that they want and then they'll pay for accommodation for all fees and everything else and you go basically represent the country. So I think that's the only way they kind of link into supporting fashion but through private sectors.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay. Do you feel that that being sent from the government for SA fashion week to Nigeria in Singapore, do you think that helped you in any way for your brand or for maybe you personally have a designer?

Participant 1
Um, look, I the honest truth is no.

Yeah be honest

The honest answer is no. Because when we aren't ready for that market, and I think South African departments or officials kind of just pick based on who you are now and you're gonna just take a bunch of clothes and go there but to build a customer base or to build like buyers in line to order your things. That you going a few times, just like the thing in South Africa is finding a new designer, you have to build up a reputation for them in order to trust you to see your work to see your style. Does your style is it consistent enough over like three collections rather than one I think when we go there we are unprepared enough or rather we aren't told or I don't know expectations aren't realistic. So you go then it becomes more of a holiday. And you showcasing rather than work coming out of it. I think if it were programs that were maybe three or four years of you continuously going into the market that you want to go into if it's the Middle East, and that's your style and color and body and fit, that's where you would go and kind of see the same buyers three or four times and then build up a reputation in that sense, but honestly, don't get out of it but media with a social media. Yeah.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay. All right.

Participant 1
Sorry, not sorry, someone was passing.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay. So what are the challenges have you faced or are facing now with building your customer base?

Participant 1
Um, I think the biggest thing is pricing. You based in South Africa, where the price structure is completely different but you trying to also have a international just a global brand. We have access to the internet, we have access to a reach that we never had before. So I think problem

is always pricing in the sense that it makes sense to protect yourself and then to cover all costs and to be international. Your pricing would be to you like we'd be about 6000 to 10,000 That's like an entry level prize. In rands. But yeah, that's that's like hectic. You know who's going to spend the salary because the average salary in South Africa doesn't even make sense. So you're trying to build your brand and you're trying to also have a brand that doesn't seem wishy washy in the sense that you pay certain things here, but then you're also changing the price. Yeah, like you want to have a solid brand that's represented and stays in the level that you've picked it to be with the same target market and all ends however, it's just really difficult just coming from an African country with that sense.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Um, so are you aware of any organisations or government assistant programs for South African designers?

Participant 1
Um, I wouldn't say designers as the word however, in my sense, I know that being black, young as in youth under the age of 35, and female, a lot of people are willing to support us just that what we lack is that we think that because we have a portfolio and our work and pictures, that that's that people have to have proposals, you have to kind of go looking for it for it to come to you and not just wait and expect it to come to you. I think with how everything is structured in South Africa. Now they are trying to revise since apartheid like it being post-apartheid you know, supporting Black and Coloured and Indian so called groups. However, I don't think we know how to navigate that because we think because we aren't in a traditional sector that they won't support us, but I think it's always just convincing and that's what I found. Fake it till you make it in a sense, but don't just, you know, having proper protocols or having a proposal pitching your idea and then moving forward with that, rather than being waited to, I don't know, be scouted or something like that. So I think those are there. They just aren't labelled creative. Or designer, but they are there in other sectors and if we could just look into them then you can get in. I think that Departments of Arts and Culture is trying but let's have to remember they have their own narrative. They also have, you know, margins that they have to meet and certain people they have to speak to so you are just a number and so you make something out of that connection or that network, but I'm trying to think what is there? No, I think the retailer's corporate retailers are trying to support emerging

designers or young designers however to them it's a money scheme. They need to make money

Kendall Atkinson
Oh yeah?

Participant 1
So they're using your creativity with your name in order to make money so we see this with Mr. Price having collaborated on collections Pick n Pay and Woolworths used to have with Thebe and so on. They haven't had one recently. But that's what all the corporate giants are doing. This is even online. So Bash, I'm working with Bash now. And then Superbalist has also tried to reach out so they all doing it. And it seems like they supporting you so you can get something out of that. However, in terms of how much you make and the contract, that doesn't actually seem like it's supporting the designers and I don't know if I'm making sense.

Kendall Atkinson
No, you're totally making sense. Yeah, I totally follow Okay. Um, so. So the organisation or the programs I guess that you have found have been more about like identity stuff rather than like your sector?

Participant 1
Most of them are based off intellectual property.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay.

Participant 1
Sorry, most of them are based off and sorry, someone is walking past. Most of them are based off intellectual property. And yeah, just your creative ideas, not necessarily actual support. I think corporate tries to have like training programs and so on, but the contracts with that like if you look at Truworths, if you go under training program, a trip they give you about five months to see if it's for you, which isn't enough time to even get you to the job as a buyer or so on and if you stay longer, you now owe them money, even though you are an employee. And you're working so people have been leaving with debt of 200,000 or so on. That's

literally everyone. Not me, luckily. But everyone so I think people will say it's initiatives to kind of help you after you know, you're graduating and so on. However, the reality of it is that they had the best interests at heart they want you to stay they'll train you but you have to stay with them. And you have to stay with them for about five years for to make any sense. So I don't know. I just don't trust it. I think a lot can be done more like a lot more can be done. Sorry. But yeah, yeah.

Kendall Atkinson
Oh my gosh, that's horrible.

Participant 1
That's why I say competitions. You're safe bet because you do the work.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay.

Participant 1
You get exposure and you can actually win and move on. And I think it's big. So if it's, if it's South Africa, it would be like the new talent or AFI fast track or whatever it might be All Sourcing, but internationally, then you have the LVMH prize, you have a Amiri you have so on. Those are bigger prize pools where you don't lose anything out of entering this is based off the work that already exists that you have in your portfolio. So interesting if you make if you don't, you don't if you do you do. Yeah.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay, okay. Cool um, and then, are you aware of any organisations or programs from government assistance that helps South African suppliers and manufacturers?

Participant 1
(Inaudible), the, okay, there's like a, an a hierarchy that happens in our South African system. So there's manufacturing but there's manufacturing of textiles. So then so on, so if you are a manufacturer, you'll be supported, but you have to be compliant. So you have to be under tax regulations. You have to be under SACTWU like, SACTWU own everything. That's the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union. Yeah. They can shut you down or bring

you up or whatever, but you just have to be compliant with them and then you'll be able to get everything else in terms of support in the industry as well. (Inaudible), but they are if you answer directors, designers as individuals, aren't seen in the the this hierarchy its like you disappear, like you aren't listed so when you trying to find catalogues to be supported in this you won't find yourself because you either fall under a company or you fall under the manufacturer you fall under that so actual freelancers or entrepreneurs aren't represented.

Kendall Atkinson
Wow. Okay. And then do you believe there are any impacts on your brand due to foreign imported fashion? So for example, like you know, Zara H&M, things like that being so big here.

Participant 1
Um, it depends who your target market is. And I feel like a lot of designers that don't understand they placements on the access. So in terms of newness, price, points, quality, whatever it is, you kind of have to patients out there, comparing yourself to competitive and if you are going to compete with let's say, Mr. Price, and should your price points I mean wise, if you tell him that for you try and do 200 grand or whatever. They're always going to pick the one that's the easiest to get to the cheapest to get, you know, whatever it might be. So, it's kind of just structuring where you want your brand to be. That's why most brands end up being a little higher than Zara so you aren't in the same, same pool because if you aren't in the same pool, don't disrupt your your workspace or anything. People need casual clothing, people need they staple pieces, that's the reality of it and you can't produce fast enough to do that. But if you are going to try to do that those will be your competitors and they'll definitely have you know, an impact on your business. But me being me they aren't my competitors. Yeah.

Kendall Atkinson
Um and then last question. Um, do you think that the government could create any certain policies or programs that you could see benefit you as a designer?

Participant 1
Um, I do think so. If not, as a designer as an entrepreneur, definitely. That falls under the clothing. Yeah, the clothing sector. Um, what those would be, I don't know, but I do know it

has to do with resources. So if they could implement things like for manufacturing, if you fall under certain bracket in terms of how many employees you have, like, if you fall under small business, let me just use terms that exists. Then, if you're working or trying to work together with the CMT, they are able to give you units at smaller runs or wherever things could just be connected. That could make more sense in order to build our own sector, if not, then giving you funding to create your own CMT that, you know, they give you machinery they give you everything that you need for you to also have smaller runs and have your own kind of schedule and kind of have a way of managing that. Or keeping track of that that could also work. So the overall is just I guess, building the textile industry with the CMTs giving people places. And yeah, back to us to the tech skills, so hand skills, if they could have workshops on youth that aren't going to school with don't want to go to varsity just like they have, you know, for woodshop and whatever electricians and so on. The same for designers in order to build the textile industry.

Kendall Atkinson
Okay, amazing. Thank you. That's all I have. So thank you so much again.

Participant 1
No problem.

Appendix B

Survey Questions

Survey Questions and Consent

(This survey was conducted via Google Forms. The below statement serves as the consent and participation form. The below paragraphs will be provided immediately when opening the survey)

MUST READ BEFORE CONTINUING: The purpose of this survey is to support a research study about exploring different methods to protect local South African contemporary fashion designers as a creative class to support and protect their unique cultural and creative points of view. The study title is “Protecting local contemporary fashion: an exploration of different methods of protecting fashion as a class of art to boost the local South African fashion designers and economy”.

This survey should take approximately 4 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is voluntary and at any point, you may exit the survey before submitting and your answers will not be recorded and there will be no consequences. If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study. By participating in this survey and confirming by pressing the 'submit' button at the end, you are agreeing to this data being collected for use in the aforementioned study. Your answers will be confidential and all data is collected anonymously.

1. How old are you?

o 18 – 25

o 26 – 30

o 31 – 40

o 41 – 50

o 51+

2. Where do you primarily shop for clothes?
- o Big brand stores (mall)
- o Boutique stores
- o Thrift/second-hand stores
- o Local, independent designers/stores
- o Out of country

3. How do you look for new clothes to buy?
- o Go to specific stores
- o Go to the mall
- o Search online (e.g. Google)
- o Search on social media (e.g. Instagram)

4. How often do you shop for new clothes?
- o 1 or more times a month
- o Every 3 months
- o Every six months
- o Once a year
- o Only when needed

5. Have you ever shopped from a South African designer?
- o Yes
- o No

6. If so, how often do you buy from a South African designer?
- o Every time I shop
- o Once in a while
- o Only a few times before
- o N/A

7. How do you find local South African designers/brands?
- o Word of mouth
- o Search online (e.g. Google)

- o Search on social media (e.g. Instagram)
- o Tags on social media (e.g. Instagram photos of other people wearing the brand)
- o Other
- o I don't know how

8. If you answered "Other" above, please elaborate:

(open answer)

9. If you don't buy from South African designers/brands, or would like to more often than you already do, what is the biggest hurdle that stops you?

- o Hard to/can't find designers/brands
- o Price
- o Other
- o N/A

10. If you answered "Other" above, please elaborate:

(open answer)

Appendix C

Survey Responses

Participant timestamp	Do you live in South Africa?	How old are you?	Where do you primarily shop for clothes?	How do you look for new clothes to buy?	How often do you shop for new clothes?	Have you ever shopped from a South African designer?	If so, how often do you buy from a South African designer?	How do you find local South African designers/brands?	If you answered 'Other' above, please elaborate:	If you don't buy from South African designers/brands, or would like to more often than you already do, what is the biggest hurdle that stops you?	If you answered 'Other' above, please elaborate:
10/27/2023 6:02:54	Yes	26 - 30	Out of country	Go to specific stores	Once a year	Yes	Only a few times before	Word of mouth		Price	
10/27/2023 6:04:54	Yes	26 - 30	Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)	Search online (e.g. Goog	Only when needed	No	N/A	Tags on social media (e.g. Instagram photos of other people wearing the brand)		Hard to/can't find designers/brands	
10/27/2023 6:09:20	Yes	26 - 30	Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)	Go to the mall	Only when needed	Yes	Once in a while	I don't know how		N/A	
10/27/2023 6:10:22	Yes	26 - 30	Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)	Search online (e.g. Goog	Every 3 months	No	Once in a while	Word of mouth		Hard to/can't find designers/brands	
10/27/2023 6:29:30	Yes	26 - 30	Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)	Go to specific stores	Every 3 months	Yes	Once in a while	Word of mouth		N/A	
10/27/2023 6:31:04	Yes	26 - 30	Local, independent designers/brands	Search on social media (	Every 3 months	Yes	Every time I shop	Other	I would like to tick all of the above. I find local brands through friends sharing, research and instagram especially others tagging new brands	Price	
10/27/2023 6:36:51	Yes	18 - 25	Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)	Go to specific stores	Only when needed	Yes	Only a few times before	Word of mouth		Price	
10/27/2023 6:52:39	Yes	26 - 30	Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)	Go to the mall	Every 3 months	Yes	Only a few times before	Word of mouth		Price	
10/27/2023 7:02:30	Yes	26 - 30	Boutique stores	Go to the mall	Only when needed	No	N/A	I don't know how		N/A	
10/27/2023 7:11:50	Yes	26 - 30	Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)	Go to the mall	Every six months	No	N/A	Word of mouth		Hard to/can't find designers/brands	
10/27/2023 7:15:32	Yes	18 - 25	Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)	Search online (e.g. Goog	Only when needed	Yes	Only a few times before	Word of mouth		Price	
10/27/2023 7:57:43	Yes	18 - 25	Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)	Go to the mall	Only when needed	Yes	Once in a while	Word of mouth		Price	
10/27/2023 8:19:54	Yes	18 - 25	Local, independent designers/brands	Search online (e.g. Goog	Only when needed	Yes	Once in a while	Tags on social media (e.g. Instagram photos of other people wearing the brand)		Price	
10/27/2023 9:05:57	Yes	18 - 25	Thrift/second-hand stores	Search on social media (	1 or more times a month	Yes	Once in a while	Search on social media (e.g. Instagram)		N/A	
10/27/2023 10:33:44	Yes	26 - 30	Out of country	Search on social media (	Every 3 months	Yes	Once in a while	Word of mouth		N/A	
10/27/2023 12:36:51	Yes	26 - 30	Boutique stores	Go to specific stores	Only when needed	Yes	Once in a while	Search on social media (e.g. Instagram)		N/A	
10/27/2023 13:19:42	Yes	26 - 30	Thrift/second-hand stores	Go to specific stores	Every 3 months	No	N/A	Search on social media (e.g. Instagram)		Hard to/can't find designers/brands	
10/27/2023 17:56:52	Yes	18 - 25	Big brand stores/malls (e.g. Cotton On, Zara, H&M)	Search on social media (	1 or more times a month	Yes	Once in a while	Word of mouth		Price	

Appendix D - Consent Forms

Consent Form – Fashion Designers Photovoice

Protecting local contemporary fashion: an exploration of different methods of protecting fashion as a class of art to boost the local South African fashion designers and economy

Researcher: Kendall Lee Atkinson

I, …….., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle or bold the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the photos I provide may be used in the research report	YES	NO
I agree that the analysis of the photos I provide may be used in the research report	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my photovoice analysis may be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO
I agree that the photos and analysis, including direct quotes, I provide may be used in an exhibit for this research	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report or exhibition)	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my photo analysis and photos (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

…… (signature)

…… (printed name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher/person seeking consent)
…… (date)

Consent Form – Fashion Designer Interview

Protecting local contemporary fashion: an exploration of different methods of protecting fashion as a class of art to boost the local South African fashion designers and economy

Researcher: Kendall Lee Atkinson

I, …….., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle or **bold** the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.		YES NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study		YES NO
I agree that the interview may be audio and/or video recorded		YES NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report		YES NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report)		YES NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on		YES NO

…… (signature)
…… (printed name)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher/person seeking consent)
…… (date)

Consent Form – Consumer Survey

Protecting local contemporary fashion: an exploration of different methods of protecting fashion as a class of art to boost the local South African fashion designers and economy

Researcher: Kendall Lee Atkinson

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle or **bold** the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.		YES NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study		YES NO
I agree that direct quotations from my survey answers may be used by the researcher in their research report		YES NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be recorded by the researcher in their research report)		YES NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my survey (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) and no personal information will be recorded or passed on		YES NO

…… (signature)
…… (printed name)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher/person seeking consent)
…… (date)

Appendix E - Participant Information Forms

Participant Information Sheet – Fashion Designers

Dear (insert participant's name),

My name is Kendall Lee Atkinson. I am a master's student in Cultural Policy and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Marcus Tebogo Desando, Director of the Prince Claus Fund. I am conducting a research study about exploring different methods to protect local South African contemporary designers as a creative class to support and protect their unique cultural and creative points of view. The study title is "Protecting local contemporary fashion: an exploration of different methods of protecting fashion as a class of art to boost the local South African fashion designers and economy".

I am inviting you to take part in an interview to support this research. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last approximately 30 minutes. The interview will take place at a mutually agreed-upon time and place. Due to location constraints, the interview may take place virtually via Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview if in person and video record the interview if virtual. Video is only being used due to the technical constraints of the virtual meeting applications not having an audio-only recording option. The audio from the video recording will be the only data used and collected for transcription. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and deleted after the final submission of this research report—approximately 6 months after your participation. Only I will have access to the data.

During the research activity, I will need to ask for some personal information about you, including if you grew up in South Africa and details about your cultural connections to South Africa. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and deleted after the final submission of this research report—approximately 6 months after your participation. Only I will have access to the data.

The interview will be confidential and you will have the choice to be anonymous—this option will be provided in the consent form. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you if you choose to be anonymous. Due to being either a public figure or behind a public brand, there may be a chance that your identity could be recognised through certain job, brand, or design descriptions even with using the vaguest descriptors this research can allow.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study. The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life. If

any questions cause you to feel uncomfortable, sad, etc., I will stop the interview and continue another time.

This research study will be written up as a research report. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Kendall

Researcher:
Kendall Lee Atkinson, Wits email, (061) 804-2758

Supervisor:
Marcus Tebogo Desando, mardesa1@gmail.com

Participant Information Sheet – Fashion Designers Photovoice

Dear (insert participant's name),

My name is Kendall Lee Atkinson. I am a master's student in Cultural Policy and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Marcus Tebogo Desando, Director of the Prince Claus Fund. I am conducting a research study about exploring different methods to protect local South African contemporary designers as a creative class to support and protect their unique cultural and creative points of view. The study title is "Protecting local contemporary fashion: an exploration of different methods of protecting fashion as a class of art to boost the local South African fashion designers and economy".

I am inviting you to take part in a photovoice project to support this research. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last approximately 2 weeks. You will be asked to take photos of things (items, places, people, etc.) that inspire your fashion creativity over the course of these 2 weeks. If you have photos in your archive you have used as inspiration for previous collections, you may submit those and will not need to take any additional photos. You will also be asked to provide short descriptions/analyses of how these images inspired you. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and deleted after the final submission of this research report—approximately 6 months after your participation. Only I will have access to the data.

The project will be confidential you will have the choice to be anonymous—this option will be provided in the consent form. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you if you choose to be anonymous. Due to being either a public figure or behind a public brand, there may be a chance that your identity could be recognised through certain job, brand, design descriptions, or photos even with using the vaguest descriptors this research can allow. If you provide photos that you have or will share publicly on your own platforms, this will increase the likelihood of your identity being recognised through this study.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to share any images you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life.

This research study will be written up as a research report. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. With your permission, these photos along with descriptions and/or quotes may be used in an exhibition for this research specifically. You do not have to give your consent to your photos or descriptions being used in the exhibition. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to have your photos displayed at an exhibition for the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join.

Taking part in the research study's exhibition will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study's exhibition. If you would like to view this exhibition, details will be provided to you if one is created.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Kendall

Researcher:
Kendall Lee Atkinson, Wits email, (061) 804-2758

Supervisor:
Marcus Tebogo Desando, mardesa1@gmail.com

Participant Information Sheet – Consumers

Dear (insert participant's name),

My name is Kendall Lee Atkinson. I am a master's student in Cultural Policy and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Marcus Tebogo Desando, Director of the Prince Claus Fund. I am conducting a research study about exploring different methods to protect local South African contemporary designers as a creative class to support and protect their unique cultural and creative points of view. The study title is "Protecting local contemporary fashion: an exploration of different methods of protecting fashion as a class of art to boost the local South African fashion designers and economy".

I am inviting you to take part in a survey to support this research. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last approximately 5 - 10 minutes. The survey will take place online and be anonymous.

The data from this survey will be stored on my password-protected computer and deleted after the final submission of this research report—approximately 6 months after your participation. Only I will have access to the data.

Your data will be analysed as a group of all who took the survey. When I share the results of the research study, your data will be addressed as a part of the group that will be referred to as "Consumers".

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study. The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life. If any questions cause you to feel uncomfortable, sad, etc., I will stop the interview and continue another time.

This research study will be written up as a research report. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Kendall

Researcher:

Kendall Lee Atkinson, Wits email, (061) 804-2758

Supervisor:
Marcus Tebogo Desando, mardesa1@gmail.com

Appendix F - Ethics Clearance Form

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF ARTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE **PROTOCOL NUMBER: WSOA20231002-16**

PROJECT TITLE

Protecting local contemporary fashion: an exploration of different methods of protecting fashion as a class of art to boost the local South African fashion designers and economy.

INVESTIGATOR	Ms. Kendall Atkinson (2632033)
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	WSOA – MA Cultural Policy
DATE CONSIDERED	23 October 2023
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	MINIMAL RISK
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the project Research Report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 23 October 2023 **CHAIRPERSON** _____
(Professor Brett Pyper)
(Dr Sibongile Bhebhe)

cc: Marcus Desando

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the above mentioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the

Committee.



_____ **_____/_____/_____**

Signature **Date**