

Unpacking the Wardrobe: Discourses around Sustainability in the
Local South African Fashion Industry



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ABSTRACT

The fashion business is a major economic force with far-reaching consequences for individuals, societies, and the environment. Traditional fashion techniques, on the other hand, have been linked to worker exploitation, waste generation, and environmental deterioration, among other issues. This study is interested in understanding how sustainability and sustainable fashion is practised and discussed within the local, South African fashion industry. The findings resulted in the proposal of sustainable fashion as a new field within the larger field of fashion. A new field that is able to challenge the standards, norms, and values of the traditional fashion industry, while creating new opportunities for agents to establish themselves as legitimate players in the fashion industry and gain access to new forms of capital that emerge from environmentally and socially responsible practices. The research data was collected through in-depth phenomenological interviews with eight participants all employed by VIVIERS Studio. In addition, participant-observation was applied to provide rich ethnographic detail and data on the inner workings and practice of sustainability within the sustainable luxury studio. This resulted in the identification of numerous sustainability-centred garment production practices. These include practices such as sourcing deadstock fabrics, instilling a circular approach to waste sorting and disposal during garment production by recycling waste and reusing fabric cut-offs in new collections. In addition, the research identifies individuals such as the *influential eco-kin* who form part of the new field as established and newcomer agents and practices such as *lifestyle change* that display the relations and values within the field of sustainable fashion. Ultimately, the research's suggestion of a new field of sustainable fashion provides future researchers with the opportunity to investigate the implications of migration, class, and gender exploitation in areas such as pay, sustainable garment affordability and career advancement within the field.

Keywords: Field of sustainable fashion, sustainability, influential eco-kin, lifestyle change, circular approach, practice, values

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The fashion business is a major economic force with far-reaching consequences for individuals, societies, and the environment. Traditional fashion techniques, on the other hand, have been linked to worker exploitation, waste generation, and environmental deterioration, among other issues. As a result, sustainable fashion has developed as a potential answer to these problems, providing an alternative set of principles and practices that stress environmental and social responsibility, ethical production, and innovative design. Anthropology, as a discipline of study, can contribute to sustainable fashion by investigating its social, cultural, and political components, as well as its consequences for fashion production and consumption. The purpose of this research is to explore sustainable fashion through an anthropological lens in order to propose it as a new field within the larger field of fashion. A new field that is able to challenge the traditional norms and values of the fashion industry while creating new opportunities for actors to establish themselves as legitimate players in the fashion industry and gain access to new forms of capital that emerge from environmentally and socially responsible practices.

Fast fashion, long-lasting impact

In 2021 the total revenue of the global apparel market was calculated to amount about 1.5 trillion U.S dollars and has been predicted to increase to approximately 2 trillion dollars by 2026 (Smith 2022). This market and its industries are made up of a collection of related sectors from footwear to garments, cosmetics, fragrance, and accessories and has been credited as the most pervasive and internationalized industry in the world (Anguelov 2015).

The fashion industry is known for emitting 10% of all human carbon emissions and being the world's second-largest consumer of fresh water (Morgan 2020). Having earned the title of being the second largest polluter industry in the world, just after the oil industry (Charpali 2017) the

fashion and textile industry has left a deep environmental scar on many countries and communities in the Global South. Most of these communities have been left to rebuild and create some form of a sustainable life while still grappling with the consequences of the fashion industry's environmental crimes. Downplaying the industry's negative impact on the environment for the sake of aesthetics or a new pair of cheap platforms will not help us in the long run.

Fast fashion can be seen as globalisation's golden child. The production model can be defined as a "manufacturing approach that emphasises making clothes quickly and cheaply, usually in response to the latest popular fashion trend" (Hugh 2019). Such an approach's negative impact on aquatic and social life should be understood as an unacceptable by-product of the industry's actions rather than a means to an aesthetically endorsed end.

Microfiber pollution, non-biodegradable garment waste in local landfills, the use of toxic chemicals, greenhouse gas emissions, and soil deterioration are all examples of behaviours that have actively harmed local and global ecosystems. Water pollution from untreated toxic wastewater poured directly into rivers by textile factories, or damaging water consumption practices, have an impact on underdeveloped communities, as seen in the desertification of the Aral Sea, where cotton production has completely drained the water source (Charpali 2017).

Looking specifically at the human aspect of the fashion and textile industries, global fashion brands such as Nike, H&M, SHEIN, and Zara (Assoune 2022) have given a silent endorsement to inhumane working conditions in the garment industry. This is due to the desire to have a faster production process while spending the least amount of money on labour costs, which results in low living wages, long working hours, and unacceptable hazardous health and safety conditions (Charpali 2017). The collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013 is a prime example of what can happen when people work in sweatshop conditions in poorly managed buildings. The Clean

Clothes Campaign has labelled the Rana Plaza disaster as the worst industrial incident to hit the garment industry, with 1134 garment workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh losing their lives (Goodwin 2021), revealing to the world the true cost of fashion.

Sustainable Fashion, luxury, and a New South Africa

Sustainable fashion has been heralded as the solution to the fast fashion crisis. This holistic approach to the industry is defined and understood as "local sourcing and production, transparency across the supply chain, traceability of work processes and raw materials, environmentally friendly raw materials, safe working conditions, and fair wages" (Alves 2022). Adopting such an approach and applying its knowledge to all aspects of the fashion industry's design, production, distribution, and consumption processes can have a positive impact on how the industry can better improve its social, environmental, and economic impact on global communities.

South Africa has had a long history in garment production, with informal clothing manufacturing dating back to the 1800s in the Cape and Durban. The first clothing factory in South Africa was registered in 1907 in the Cape. After the Second World War, the country was also crowned as the fourth-largest clothing industry within the manufacturing sector (Netshitombeni 1996). The industry saw a decline during the 1990s due to trade liberalisation and the removal of tariff barriers (Black, Craig and Dunne 2016). Lewis (2001) found that this shift towards trade liberalisation and the opening of South Africa's markets to international forces "induced a structural change in production towards capital-intensive sector". He credits the lack of job creation within the garment and manufacturing sectors in the country with the fact that "South Africa's exports utilize more skilled labourers than unskilled, and the fact that the greatest growth in exports took place in capital-intensive subsectors" (Lewis 2001) (Black, Craig and Dunne 2016).

In Post-apartheid and contemporary South Africa, the fashion industry has focused on embracing the authenticity it has to offer the global market through design rather than reclaiming its former status as a manufacturing giant. With the establishment of "South African Fashion Week" in 1994, the local industry saw an increase in young South African designers such as Stoned Cherrie, Loxion Kulca, and Sun Goddess, who drew inspiration for their collections from both traditional and contemporary sources (Ndlovu 2021). Today, many local fashion designers, including Lukhanyo Mdingi, Tshepo Jeans, Daise Jo, and VIVIERS Studio, have not only followed in the footsteps of earlier South African designers but have also prioritised sustainability in their brands and collections.

Sustainable fashion reflects a growing concern for environmental and social justice, challenging the fashion industry's conventional standards and principles. Sustainable fashion threatens the cultural and social capital of major actors in the Field of Fashion who have historically been indifferent to these problems by bringing ecological and ethical considerations into the manufacturing and consumption of fashion. In this research report, I argue that sustainable fashion and its players (new and existing) have the potential to challenge the status quo in the Field of Fashion. As a new field, its growth presents new prospects for symbolic resource struggles that have the potential to reshape the Field of Fashion in the future.

The research's main research questions are all structured in such a way that they allow for detailed ethnographic engagement and analysis. Although the study does not seek to determine whether a particular fashion practise is good or bad, it is interested in the values and knowledge used by actors such as fashion interns, social media managers, tailors and seamstresses when creating and enforcing sustainable fashion practises and a culture of sustainability at home and in a sustainable luxury studio. This was accomplished through participant observation and in-depth phenomenological interviews at VIVIERS Studio in Westcliff, Johannesburg.

Research question and sub-questions

1. How is sustainability and sustainable fashion discussed and practised in the local South African fashion industry?

Research sub-questions

2. How has media (including social media) and other external environments of knowledge production such as institutions of learning in South Africa influenced and impacted individual conceptualisation and performance of sustainability with regard to fashion practice?
3. How has the fashion industry's response to the sustainability movement impacted the practise of identification and the performance of self, by its consumers?
4. What does this impact tell us about 'ethics' as a framework or discourse in contemporary South African fashion?

METHODOLOGY

Conducting research at a small-sized fashion brand proved to be harder than I had initially thought. During the proposal writing phase for my research, I planned to conduct structured interviews with more than ten participants who either worked in the fashion industry or were consumers of sustainable luxury fashion. I had also set out to conduct auto-ethnography with the use of the social media application, Instagram which would have functioned as a digital diary. Unfortunately, it did not happen that way. As the ethnographic chapters will show, my arrival at the studio coincided with a fashion show that the studio team was preparing for. It was bad timing for structured interviews but the perfect environment for participant observation.

The research was conducted among eight participants all of whom work at VIVIERS Studio. This consisted of six women ranging between the ages of 20 and 55, one male participant in his early forties and a non-binary participant in their early twenties. This sample of participants (male, female and non-binary) interviewed were interns (three women), a wardrobe stylist (the non-binary participant), a tailor (male), beadwork specialists (two females) and managers (two females) who work for the brand. This was to try and determine the brand's working environment, organisational culture and lived experiences that occur when employed in a sustainable luxury studio. This diverse group of participants were essential, as the data collected through ethnography allowed for a holistic understanding of the division of labour and garment production rules and practices adopted at VIVIERS Studio.

In-Depth Phenomenological Interviews

I conducted a total of ten in-depth phenomenological interviews, which were structured as three series of open-ended questions that allowed for participants to ask clarifying questions while providing input (Seidman 2006). The interviews conducted were characterised by a flexible

approach where I would sit down with each participant in environments that were comfortable enough for them to talk while still working. For example, the interviews with participants who worked mainly on the production floor were conducted while research participants were either sewing a garment, doing fine work beading on a wedding dress or conducting quality checks on jumpsuits. This resulted in answers that were delivered in the form of long and short narratives about the participants' personal histories and experiences as garment workers. This created space for participants to omit from answering or asking clarifying questions where needed (Kothrati 2004, 98).

The adoption of Seidman's (2006) in-depth phenomenological interview model followed his suggestion of having three separate interviews with each participant. Four of the eight research participants wore two hats of identification during my time in the field. During the first round of interviews, participants were interviewed as employees of VIVIERS Studio, and then as young individuals who are consumers of both fast fashion and sustainable fashion. Finally, the last two rounds of interviews were conducted during, before or just after kitchen-table-talks. This was done as a means to recognise the agency of each participant not only as employees of a fashion studio but as individuals with life histories, who make important decisions about how they choose to dress, where and how often they choose to shop and how they take part in sustainable fashion practices in their everyday lives. Quoting Patton (1989) Seidman explains that "people's behaviour becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them. Without context there is little possibility of exploring the meaning of an experience" (Seidman 2006, 17). This method of interviewing opened the interview to run more like a series of conversations, which allowed me to further explore the lived experience of the participants while still being able to thoughtfully guide the participants in the direction of the research.

Participant-observation

As a two-story mansion where employees work Monday to Friday from 8 am to 5 pm, VIVIERS Studio was a prime location to conduct participant observation. Applying Clifford Geertz ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973) as shown in the chapter titled ‘*The Sustainable Fashion Studio and How to get in: The Glasshouse, Tailored Spaces, and Becoming a Stylist*’ allowed me as a researcher to enhance the art of “critical observation” while learning to “faithfully record the minutia of daily life” (Ghodsee 2016).

Adopting participant observation during my time in the field provided me with the opportunity to not only see sustainable practices applied in the everyday working of the luxury fashion studio. This methodological approach was able to place me directly within the field. Physically interacting with objects, structures and conversations that shape and inform the idea, culture, and practice of sustainability during the process of garment production. When understanding this methodological approach, Paul Atkinson, and Martyn Hammersley (1998) place emphasis on the fact that all social research is in fact a form of participant observation because we cannot study the social world without being part of it. They highlight the role and function of the researcher here. Explaining that “participant observation is not a particular research technique but a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers” (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998, 249).

From this, my time spent in the field as a researcher can be characterised and described as being a “complete observer” (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998). During my time at the studio, I was introduced to and known as a researcher who would be conducting observations on the practices within the studio. I was an outsider looking in. All the activities that I took part in were in an information collection manner.

Data Analysis

Mindfulness and awareness are crucial when unpacking the process of data analysis for qualitative researchers. Sally Thorne explains that for a researcher to “generate findings that transform raw data into new knowledge” the “qualitative researcher must engage in active and demanding analytic processes throughout all phases of the research” (Thorne 2000). As a researcher, it was important to be cognisant of this. The analysis and interpretation of data is not and cannot be done in isolation. The analytical processes that influenced my data collection and interpretation were determined by the thinking behind what I characterised as crucial and relevant data and the theoretical framework I used to collect my data. Phenomenological analysis, narrative and discourse analysis and ethnographic analysis were all used as analytical tools for the purpose of this research report.

Phenomenological analysis is a process whereby researchers avoid cross-comparisons. Rather, this process places emphasis on depth and detail that can be appreciated only through an exhaustive, systematic, and reflective study of experiences as they are lived (Thorne 2000, 69). Whereas narrative analysis is a process whereby human experience is shaped, transformed, and understood through linguistic representation (Thorne 2000, 69). Both analytical tools played off of one another during my time in the field.

As stated in the *‘In-Depth Phenomenological Interviews’* subsection, the majority of participants were interviewed three times. This approach allows “the interviewer and participant to plumb the experience and place it into context” (Seidman 2006, 17). The data collected during these interviews was sorted to place emphasis on the lived experiences and narratives shared by each participant, while also reflecting on the in-depth detail provided through storytelling which allowed for a richer description of the essential structures that underlie the human experience of being an intern, garment maker, a fashion student and fashion

consumer. Each interview was then put into writing as a means to better understand the data shared by each participant. Through narrative analysis, the stories shared were understood and recognised as verbal and written data that was able to provide key social, economic, and environmental insights on the lived experiences of each participant.

Ethnographic analysis is an “iterative process where cultural ideas that arise during active involvement in the field are transformed, translated or represented in a written document” (Thorne 2000, 69). Being intentional with the form and function of each room located in The Glasshouse allowed for thick description and detailed representation of cultural ideas around sustainable practice at VIVIERS Studio. This was achieved through sifting and sorting detailed and descriptive pieces of data collected in the form of field notes and images. This allowed me to interpret thematic categorisations and reach conclusions about what happens in the brands’ studio and why.

Ethics

Prior to conducting research at VIVIERS Studio, ethical clearance was approved and received from the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the university. To familiarise myself with what is ethically required of me as an ethnographic researcher, I made use of the guideline set out by Anthropology Southern African (ASnA) and the Wits Code of Ethics.

Although I had made my research methods, aim and objectives clear when I initially approached the sustainable luxury brand, this was only done with Lezanne Viviers, the brand's owner. This process was repeated with each participant that was open to taking part in the project. In the beginning stages of my time in the field, participants were provided with a consent form that detailed out requirements of participation, agreement to auto-recording and

the capturing of images while at the studio. Additionally, participants were offered the opportunity to use a pseudonym. To create a space of comfort and trust I was intentional with communicating that their participation in the research project would not interfere with their work and/or personal commitments. Through this, they were informed that they were not obliged in any way to accept or continue with the process of being interviewed and could withdraw at any moment of their choosing. I was intentional in communicating that this would not lead to any negative consequences on their part as employees at the studio nor would it impact the outcome of my final research report.

CHAPTER 2
Theoretical framework
The Field, Capital, and Culture: A Theoretical Framework for a Field of
Sustainable Fashion

Fashion studies has undergone significant interdisciplinary advancements, drawing upon diverse disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, art history, and design. The field has interested scholars due to its universal nature and ever-evolving characteristics within human culture, offering insights into the intricate dynamics between individual expression, social norms, and the global flow of influences. In the field of anthropology, cultural phenomena is often driven by the need to understand the complex dynamics and structures that shape human behaviour and social practices. Pierre Bourdieu's field theory and theory of cultural production (1993) are two significant theoretical frameworks that have gained importance in this area. Bourdieu's theories provide a useful lens for analysing and comprehending the complex interplay of social actors, institutions, and symbolic power in numerous realms of human activity (Costa 2013).

As a well-known sociologist and anthropologist, Bourdieu developed these theories to provide a comprehensive framework that offers insight into the dynamics of social fields, capital, habitus (Johnson and Bourdieu 1993), and symbolic power (P. Bourdieu 1979). The idea that social activity is organised into various fields, each with its own set of norms, hierarchies, and power dynamics, is central to his field theory. According to Bourdieu, individuals and groups struggle for resources, recognition, and positions of authority within various fields (P. Bourdieu 2020), impacted by their acquired forms of capital (economic, social, symbolic, and cultural) (Rocamora 2016).

Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory of cultural production sheds light on how cultural practises, such as art, literature, and fashion manufacturing, are affected by the dynamics of these social

spheres. He investigates the contradictions between cultural producers' autonomy and market constraints, as well as the symbolic struggles for recognition and legitimacy (P. Bourdieu 2020, 48-49) within the area of cultural production. Bourdieu also proposes the concept of cultural intermediaries or people who bridge the gap between the sphere of cultural production and the larger social field.

This theoretical framework holds significant potential for helping us comprehend the emerging field of sustainable fashion. As people become more conscious of the environmental and social implications of the fashion industry, sustainable fashion seeks to address these concerns by supporting environmentally and socially responsible practises. Researchers can gain deeper insights into the dynamics and challenges faced by actors in the field of sustainable fashion by applying Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, capital, and symbolic power.

This section of the chapter seeks to provide a thorough overview of Bourdieu's field theory and theory of cultural production, explaining its application to the study of sustainable fashion. It will look at how these theories might be used to analyse practises, power relations, and struggles in the field of sustainable fashion, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the industry's possibilities and limitations.

Overall, this theoretical framework section provides a basis for the following literature review, basing the analysis on Bourdieu's significant theories while providing a lens through which to evaluate the findings and discussions on sustainable fashion.

Field theory

Bourdieu's field theory (1993) provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of social life and the interplay of power, hierarchy, and symbolic capital across various realms of human activity. The concept of the field refers to a distinct social space characterised by

specific rules, practises, and power relations (Bourdieu 2020, 47-48). These fields can include everything from academia to art, and in the case of this research report, sustainable fashion.

Within each field, social agents such as designers, activists, customers, and industry professionals, struggle for legitimacy, resources, and positions of authority (Bourdieu 2020, 47-48). According to Bourdieu, these struggles are shaped by the accumulation and deployment of various forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986). Within the field, individuals can obtain power and influence by using economic capital (Bourdieu 1986, 24), such as financial resources and investments. Access to valuable information, opportunities, and assistance is provided by social capital (Bourdieu 1986, 21-22), which is obtained via social networks and relationships. Cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986, 17-21), which consists of knowledge, skills, and cultural preferences, is critical in establishing one's legitimacy and prestige in the field.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's field theory emphasises the function of habitus, which refers to the embodied dispositions, habits, and tastes acquired through socialisation (Costa 2013, 5). An individual's perceptions, tastes, and practises are all shaped by habitus, which also influences their position and actions within a specific field. Habitus can impact how actors perceive and engage with sustainability in the context of sustainable fashion, influencing their consumption patterns and garment care practices.

Understanding the field of sustainable fashion through Bourdieu's framework allows for a more in-depth examination of power relations, struggles for legitimacy, and resource distribution within the field. Researchers are able to gain deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by actors working towards sustainable practises and transformations by researching the specific norms, positions, and forms of capital that function within sustainable fashion. Bourdieu's field theory provides a lens for investigating how social actors negotiate

and challenge norms, values, and practises within the traditional field of fashion. Ultimately shaping the emergence and development of sustainable fashion as a distinct field.

Researchers can shed insight into the intricacies and dynamics inherent in this emerging field by incorporating Bourdieu's field theory into the study of sustainable fashion. The following section will go deeper into Bourdieu's theory of cultural production, expanding our understanding of the relationships between cultural producers, institutions, and the market in the context of sustainable fashion.

Theory of cultural production

Bourdieu's theory of cultural production provides a useful framework for analysing the interactions between cultural producers, institutions, and the market in the context of sustainable fashion. This theory emphasises how cultural goods (Johnson and Bourdieu 1993), like fashion garments, are produced, circulated, and consumed, while also considering the underlying power dynamics and symbolic value at work.

The concept of symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2013) is central to Bourdieu's theory of cultural production. Symbolic capital can be understood as the recognition, prestige, and social value associated with cultural products (Entwistle and Rocamora 2006). In the field of sustainable fashion, symbolic capital can be created from ecologically friendly practises, ethical sourcing fabrics, and the promotion of social justice. Cultural producers, such as sustainable fashion designers, activists, and influencers, strategically obtain and use symbolic capital in order to create credibility and obtain a competitive advantage in the field.

In addition, Bourdieu emphasises the role of cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu 1987) in affecting the reception and interpretation of cultural products, such as fashion critics, journalists, and trendsetters. These middlemen act as gatekeepers, shaping public perceptions and taste in sustainable fashion. Their decisions and assessments can have a large impact on

the success or failure of sustainable fashion efforts, impacting consumer demand and market dynamics.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory of cultural production highlights the conflict between artistic freedom and market influences. Designers in the field of sustainable fashion frequently face the difficulty of matching their ethical commitments with business viability. The market enforces pressures that may favour profit-driven practises over sustainable principles, thereby jeopardising sustainable fashion's revolutionary potential.

Researchers can investigate how cultural producers manage these complicated dynamics by using Bourdieu's theory of cultural production in the study of sustainable fashion. They can investigate how symbolic capital is created and contested, how cultural intermediaries influence the reception of sustainable fashion, and how market dynamics influence sustainable practises. Understanding these processes is critical for developing strategies for promoting and sustaining the growth of sustainable fashion as a field, while also challenging and transforming the dominant attitudes and practises of the broader fashion industry.

Application into the Field of Sustainable Fashion

Applying Bourdieu's field theory and theory of cultural production to the field of sustainable fashion provides a detailed understanding of the dynamics at work and highlights the industry's potential for transformative change. Researchers can identify key challenges and opportunities in promoting sustainable fashion practises by analysing the interactions between cultural producers, institutions, and the market.

One important application of Bourdieu's theories is the study of power dynamics in the field of sustainable fashion. Sustainable fashion designers and activists are often called upon to challenge norms and practises that prioritise profit over labour and resources. Researchers can analyse how sustainable fashion actors navigate these power dynamics and push for alternative

approaches by understanding the field as a social space characterised by competing interests and struggles for symbolic capital.

Bourdieu's theory of cultural production also allows us to investigate the role and influence of cultural intermediaries in affecting the perception and consumption of sustainable fashion. Fashion critics, influencers, and the media all play important roles in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours and framing sustainable fashion. Understanding their influence and the methods through which they promote or obstruct sustainable fashion can help develop strategies for interacting with these intermediaries and effectively spread sustainable fashion practises.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's theories shed light on the relationship in sustainable fashion between artistic autonomy and commercial forces. The push for sustainability frequently requires designers challenging standard production methods and incorporate creative practises that may contradict market expectations. Researchers can find techniques for fostering sustainable innovation and boosting market acceptance by investigating how sustainable fashion designers handle this contradiction and create spaces for creative and sustainable expression.

In conclusion, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play and develop methods for promoting sustainable practises within the fashion industry by applying Bourdieu's theories to the field of sustainable fashion. This allows for a critical analysis of the power relations, the role of cultural intermediaries, and the difficulties of balancing artistic liberty with financial sustainability. Ultimately, this can help to establish a more sustainable and ethical fashion industry by challenging existing standards and supporting revolutionary change.

Literature Review

Fashion Anthropology and its necessary path of development

Fashion, as a powerful expression of identity and culture, has been the subject of extensive exploration by anthropologists and sociologists throughout history. Anthropological studies have examined the interplay between traditional and imported dress styles, while sociological research has focused on fashion's association with social status and collective identity. Contemporary studies have expanded the scope, recognizing fashion as a vehicle for cultural expression and challenging conventional perspectives. Fashion Anthropology, a growing field, has emerged from anthropological investigations with a global perspective beyond Western contexts.

Additionally, sustainable fashion has gained momentum as a cultural movement, addressing environmental, social, and economic dimensions in the fashion industry. Scholars have analysed its complexities and the challenges of integrating sustainable practices into the fashion supply chain. Post-colonial fashion discourse, on the other hand, investigates the lasting impact of colonialism on fashion practices globally, advocating for diverse non-Western viewpoints and challenging Eurocentric biases.

This literature review aims to synthesize the evolving understanding of fashion, ranging from early anthropological and sociological explorations to contemporary investigations of sustainable fashion and post-colonial perspectives. By examining these interconnected themes, this review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of fashion's role in shaping society, culture, and identity, while also exploring its potential to foster sustainability and inclusivity in the modern fashion world.

Understanding Fashion: Early Anthropology and Sociology

Anthropologists have long recognised the social significance of dress and investigated the relationship between traditional dress and newly imported market styles. However, this link has been described as one of "contamination" rather than as a culturally constitutive process (Miller 1995). Anthropologists such as Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood have argued that consumption decisions are linked to collective values and the social use of material assets, challenging standard conceptions of consumerism (1996). This has resulted in the legitimization of the study of consumer goods as material culture and the inclusion of dress in cultural and societal conceptualizations (Douglas and Isherwood 1996). Anthropologists have also investigated the complex implications of dress in modern Islamic cultures (Hass and Lutek 2019), blending anthropology's empirical rigour with cultural studies' political and theoretical reflexivity.

Joanne Eicher identifies four major contributions of anthropology to the study of dress namely holism, culture, fieldwork, and women's involvement (2000). Holism examines clothing within the context of society, beginning with a population's culture, way of life, and relationship to clothing. According to Eicher, fieldwork is an effective qualitative methodological approach for understanding the meanings associated with clothing because it allows the researcher to become fully immersed in the environment while creating detailed descriptions and analysis (Eicher 2000). Participant observation as a methodological approach can be useful when fashion anthropologists are looking to fully immerse themselves within an organisation or society in order to better understand their culture and reasoning when adopting sustainable practices. Eicher also credits women's participation in clothing research for increasing the number of female anthropologists writing about dress and raising awareness of gender issues and the significance of gender in dress (Eicher 2000).

Sociology has made important contributions to the study of fashion. Early sociological studies, such as those by Gabriel de Tarde, Thorstein Veblen, and Georg Simmel, focused on the

relationship between fashion and social status, with a particular emphasis on the lower class imitating upper-class trends (Godart 2012, 20-23). During this period, fashion was considered a type of conspicuous consumption, a means of expressing economic status and a means to challenge social or cultural boundaries (Godart 2012, 23-25).

More contemporary sociological and anthropological studies, on the other hand, have questioned this viewpoint and investigated the social dynamics and meanings of fashion in a larger framework (Thomas 2020). Fashion studies have emphasised that fashion is a means of collective identity and cultural expression, not only a manifestation of the marketplace or social stratification. These studies have demonstrated how fashion can be a potent vehicle for conveying ideals (Barnard 2020), social practises (Davis 2020), and opposition to societal norms (Polhemus and Proctor 2020). Fashion sociological study has also looked at the dynamics of fashion creation and diffusion, recognising that fashion trends can emerge from a variety of sources and spread through complicated social processes (Atik and Firat 2013).

Fashion Anthropology: Learning from Beyond the West

Anthropological research in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries led to a holistic understanding of fashion practice (Schnieder 1987), (Sylvanus 2007) and Karen Tranberg Hansen and D Soyini Madison's (2013). Fashion Anthropology, with a global perspective, investigates fashion's social, economic, and political implications beyond Western contexts (H. Hendrickson 1996), (Olwig and Hastrup 1997). Karen Tranberg Hansen (2004) emphasized the varying cultural values placed on clothing worldwide through an analysis of anthropological studies, such as those by C. Hendrickson (1995), Moran (1996), El Guindi (1999), and Palmer and Clark (2004), which deviated from the Western fashion canon. Hansen (2004) delved into similar and different manifestations of fashion processes in different regions like Latin America, Africa, South, East, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. She identified four

transversal themes—second-hand clothing, production issues, the veil, and beauty pageants—each deserving its own literature and engagement.

Recent works exploring these transversal themes and serving as starting points for fashion anthropologists researching sustainable fashion in the Global South include studies by Hasan Ashraf and Rebecca Prentice's (2019) who explore the relationship between labour unions and labour precarity within Bangladesh's garment industry. Karen Transberg Hansen and Jennifer Le Zotte's (2022) book *Global Perspectives on Changing Secondhand Economies* or Karen Transberg Hansen's *The second-hand clothing market in Africa and its influence on local fashions* (2014). In the 2014 study, Hansen explores what happens to the West's discarded garments once they are appropriated into everyday life in Africa, particularly within the nation of Zambia.

The study of post-colonial fashion is a crucial component of Fashion Anthropology, as it addresses the enduring effects of colonialism on contemporary fashion practices in various parts of the world (Gaugele and Tilton 2019). Colonialism left deep imprints on cultures, economies, and identities, shaping the ways fashion is produced, consumed, and perceived in post-colonial societies (Jennings 2019).

Post-colonial fashion discourse seeks to shed light on the power dynamics and cultural appropriations that have occurred in the history of fashion. It challenges the dominance of Western fashion norms and uncovers the agency and creativity of non-Western communities in fashion design and expression (Elsmann 2019). Post-colonial fashion researchers often delve into the complexities of cultural hybridity, where local and indigenous aesthetics intermingle with global influences, leading to unique and diverse sartorial expressions (Dogramaci 2019).

Additionally, post-colonial fashion discourse acknowledges the need to challenge Eurocentric and ethnocentric biases within the field (Sircar 2019). It emphasizes the importance of allowing

non-Western voices and experiences to shape the narratives and theoretical frameworks used to study fashion. By doing so, Fashion Anthropology can contribute to decolonizing fashion studies and ensuring a more inclusive and diverse representation of fashion practices across the globe.

By considering post-colonial perspectives, Fashion Anthropology can offer a more nuanced understanding of fashion's interplay with identity, tradition, and globalization. Scholars, such as Angela Jansen (2015) and Karen Tranberg Hansen (2014) (2022), have explored the impact of post-colonial histories on fashion consumption patterns, second-hand clothing markets, and labour practices within the fashion industry.

To redefine Fashion Anthropology, it is crucial to acknowledge the need for research outside Western, Eurocentric settings. Angela Jansen's (2015) presentation emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural and holistic perspectives with ethnographic participant observation research methods. She defines Fashion Anthropology as "the study of the diversity of fashion systems and their relation to culture" (Jansen, 2015, 3) and calls for the reconstruction of knowledge creation, recognizing the value of non-Western viewpoints in the field.

In that she acknowledges that language reconstruction that is free of polarisation and hegemonic discourse is necessary for the task of contestation within the field of fashion studies. A theoretical framework that supports this could prove to be beneficial and develop decolonial thought in fashion studies. Such a framework is intrigued by investigations and stories about the history of fashion outside of Europe, which necessitates understanding fashion outside of Europe or as a result of globalisation and the emergence of a new middle class (Jansen, 2015).

To truly move beyond Eurocentrism, decolonial theory and decolonization practices are essential in fashion studies (Jansen, 2020). Decolonial fashion discourse aims to restore and respect genealogies, interconnectivities, and aesthetics that modern fashion discourse may have

overlooked or erased (Jansen, 2020, 18). Sustainability, a global and industrial goal within the fashion industry, aligns with the objectives of decolonial fashion discourse, prompting a more mindful approach to design, production, distribution, and consumption processes, and enhancing contemporary fashion discourse's interconnectivities and aesthetics.

Sustainable fashion

The business of “sustainable” fashion has interested a number of academics over the last two centuries. Although not beginning with a focus or emphasis on the term ‘sustainable’ or ‘sustainability’, social researchers and commentators have had an interest in discourses around the ethics of fashion (Hobbs 1999) (Freedman 1994) (Winstanley, Clark and Leeson 2002) (A. Ross 1997) (R. Ross 2010) (Powell 2014), power dynamics in the field of fashion (Brydges, Hracs and Lavanga 2018) (Balsiger 2016) and the motivations around the changes in taste and aesthetics (Ozdamar Ertekin and Atik 2015) (McQuarrie, Miller and Phillips 2013) (Tatarkiewicz 2006).

From the Hippie Movement in the 60s to current conversations and critiques on the fashion industry, the rise and evolution of the business of Sustainable Fashion has been an interesting space to watch. Sustainable fashion as a cultural movement has increasingly become a hot topic for all to participate in. From fashion activists (Amaro, Miguel and Lucas 2014) and well-known luxury brands like Vivienne Westwood to eco-friendly campaigns run by global fast fashion brands such as H&M (Karlsson and Ramasar 2020) or the cosy feeling of nostalgia (Babb n.d.) we get from online thrift stores on Instagram, Viral Tiktok videos of thrift flips and second-hand fashion marketplaces like Depop (Parisi 2022). Sustainability within fashion has become more than a heated topic of discussion between disgruntled eco-friendly consumers and fashion stakeholders but rather a global goal and ideal that society has begun to champion.

Over the last two centuries the fashion industry has seen its consumers and other industry stakeholders such as designers, suppliers, and pressure groups (Niinimäki, Peters, et al. 2020) from across the globe, become more vocal about their expectations of the fashion industry in doing better when adopting environmentally and socially responsible practices throughout the industry's supply chain. Joy, et al capture the essence of the term “sustainability” when they defined it as a social construct that “involves complex and changing environmental dynamics that affect human livelihoods and well-being, with intersecting ecological, economic, and socio-political dimensions, both globally and locally” (Joy, et al. 2012, 274).

From this definition, ‘sustainable fashion’ as a cultural movement and growing trend within the fashion industry can be understood in relation to the three domains of sustainability i.e., environmental, social and economic sustainability. It is also important that when understanding and defining sustainable fashion, Fashion Anthropologists should make the differentiation between the production and consumption of fashion and include the practice of circular fashion (Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber 2020, 3-4).

Such a definition encompasses how within the practice of sustainable fashion the fashion industry is made aware that the practice is not only concerned with the environmental impact of fashion production and consumption but also the social and economic impact of the fashion industry on everyday human life. Ultimately, how the industry can implement a circular approach that holistically addresses the ideals of sustainability in all its processes of manufacturing, distribution, and consumption.

How can Fashion Anthropologists use/apply Theoretical frameworks to conduct informative research on sustainable fashion in the Global South?

This section of the literature review seeks to compare different theoretical frameworks and approaches used by fashion researchers when investigating sustainable fashion. The intention

here is to compare the theories applied by academics as a means to better identify approaches that can be adopted by future fashion anthropologists who are interested in sustainable fashion in the Global South.

In “*#sustainablefashion: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Fashion Discourse on Twitter*” Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber (2020) express their dissatisfaction with the current inconsistency that exists in sustainable fashion research when conceptualising sustainable fashion. In their article, the authors are determined to fill this research gap by addressing two key areas. Firstly, how researchers can better conceptualise sustainable fashion and how they can better address how mass media, social media platforms, or people discuss the topic (Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber 2020). They do this by applying E.M Rogers diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, Singhal, and Quinlan 2014) on Twitter discourses on sustainable fashion. Through this effort, the authors were able to propose a logical framework of sustainable fashion “by dividing sustainable fashion into the three components of production, consumption and diffusion” (Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber 2020, 15). Their inclusion of diffusion in this division process was aimed at highlighting the link that is created between “fashion production and its consumption which identifies a circular process” (Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber 2020, 14).

The theory of diffusion innovations “originated in communication to explain how, over time, an idea or product gains momentum and diffuses (or spreads) through a specific population or social system” (LaMorte 2022). This results in members of the said social system adopting a new idea, behaviour, or product. In this context, sustainable fashion is the innovation or idea.

In the Global South fashion anthropologists will first have to understand and contextualise how both fashion and sustainable fashion is understood by factoring historical, social, economic, and environmental contexts see (Smal 2016) and (Koch 2021). This is done before making

observations on how and why such an idea does or does not diffuse in a particular social system. Currently we see the idea of sustainable fashion diffusing/spreading through opinion leaders and industry stakeholders (Mohr, Fuxman and Mahmoud 2022) and the information or initiatives they are promoting (McBee-Black and Zhao 2022) or advancing through word of mouth (Salem and Bahagat 2021).

During their time in the field, Fashion Anthropologists working in societies in the Global South would identify diffusion as the moment/s when discourse on sustainable fashion arises between stakeholders. It is the moment or journey of communicating or sharing knowledge between thought leaders and members of society on the subject that the circular process occurs. As fashion anthropologists, we can think of this as the moment when the closing line of the circle is drawn. The connection between fashion producers like H&M creating and marketing a sustainable line of garments, which consumers are enticed to buy through marketing, diffusion happens here. Stakeholders or opinion leaders are able to use their influence on social media platforms, the classroom or in their homes to educate and create spaces of learning led by an intention of promoting sustainable fashion (Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber 2020, 13). Here members of society (consumers) are educated on dishonest practices such as greenwashing (Bowen and Aragon-Correa 2014) and provided opportunities to join revolutionary movements like #WhoMadeMyClothers (McBee-Black and Zhao 2022).

The authors explain how the most noteworthy component of the theory of diffusion is its “processual character and the role communication plays in the process” (Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber 2020, 5). Fashion Anthropologists should take note of this and the important role communication plays. They elaborate on this point, explaining that it is “only through communication [that] members of a social system [are] able to create ideas, share information, and persuade each other to adopt an innovation” (Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber 2020, 5).

Through an analysis of their data Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber (2020) note that due to an incoherent narrative about sustainable fashion caused by the fragmented discourse on the topic where relevant terms are not distinguished clearly enough, the diffusion of sustainable fashion and significant changes in consumer behaviour seems unlikely. With that in mind they suggest that “sustainable fashion needs to be communicated as one entity to create a more accessible and actionable concept that supports consumers in their behaviour, scientists in their research and the fashion industry in their business” (Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber 2020, 14).

From Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber (2020) we see the potential and influential role opinion leaders play in educating consumers about sustainable fashion. When commenting on opinion leaders and their reach the authors note how “the type of information and the limited discourse that reaches the wider public could explain why some people still have limited knowledge about sustainable fashion and why consumers that are more aware do not show any changes in their behaviour” (Ominski, Tandoc and Detenber 2020, 15).

In their article *Taking sustainable fashion mainstream: social media and the institutional celebrity entrepreneur* Carolyn McKeown and Linda Shearer apply institutional theory to identify opinion leaders particularly, celebrity institutional entrepreneurs as having the power to influence how consumers perceive the idea of sustainable fashion (2019). This is done with the intention of “contributing new insight relevant to sustainable fashion consumption behaviour” (McKeown and Shearer 2019).

Throughout the course of their exploratory study McKeown and Shearer adopted a mixed methodology approach that included netographic methodology. The authors collected archival data from UN Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson’s @the_press_tour Instagram account and then conducted qualitative interviews with self-identified ‘mainstream followers’ (McKeown and Shearer 2019, 409). Netographic methodology can be understood as a “qualitative research

methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through electronic networks" (Kozinets 2012, 62).

Although the selection and application of institutional theory and netographic methodology was able to provide the researchers with insight on how an influential Instagram account was able to attract engagement through likes and comments. The authors note that even with such engagement the account did not change the overall consumption behaviours of consumers. They highlight how the study was able to further show how consumers perceive sustainable fashion to be more expensive than mainstream offerings (McKeown and Shearer 2019). Through these findings they recommend that researchers engage in work that examines the impact of including more accessible and affordable sustainable fashion items in similar social media accounts (McKeown and Shearer 2019).

Conclusion

This literature review offers a thorough examination of the study of fashion from both an anthropological and sociological standpoint. Anthropologists have long recognized the social significance of dress and its relationship to collective values and the social use of material assets. Fashion Anthropology has evolved to encompass a global perspective, investigating fashion's implications beyond Western contexts, and emphasizing the importance of non-Western viewpoints in understanding diverse fashion practices worldwide. Furthermore, post-colonial fashion discourse has emerged as a crucial component in this field, shedding light on the enduring effects of colonialism on contemporary fashion practices in various regions.

In the context of sustainable fashion, the focus shifts to the integration of environmental, social, and economic sustainability within the fashion industry. Researchers have explored the complexities of sustainable fashion discourse on platforms like Twitter and Instagram, examining the role of opinion leaders and celebrity institutional entrepreneurs in influencing

consumer perceptions and behaviours. However, there remains a need for more coherent and accessible communication about sustainable fashion to drive significant changes in consumer behaviour.

For future fashion anthropologists interested in sustainable fashion in the Global South, a theoretical framework such as the diffusion of innovations theory offers valuable insights into the communication process and the role of opinion leaders in influencing sustainable fashion practices. By identifying diffusion as a moment of connecting stakeholders and consumers through communication, fashion anthropologists can better understand the circular process of sustainable fashion adoption and consumption.

Overall, this literature review highlights the evolving nature of fashion studies, from early anthropological and sociological investigations to the contemporary exploration of sustainable fashion and post-colonial fashion discourse. By combining these perspectives and theoretical frameworks, Fashion Anthropologists can conduct and contribute informative research that considers the global nature of fashion, challenge Eurocentric biases, and contributes to more sustainable and inclusive fashion practices in the modern world.

CHAPTER 3

The Sustainable Fashion Studio and How to get in: The Glasshouse, Tailored Spaces, and Becoming a Stylist

This ethnographic chapter acts as an introduction to my research field site. The chapter begins with my first encounter with the sustainable luxury brand, VIVIERS Studio. Most of the chapter has been written in a descriptive nature with the aid of academic literature, providing the reader with a more detailed walkthrough of The Glasshouse, VIVIERS Studio's current production and showroom space. I do this to highlight what sustainable practice looks like in a luxury brand from South Africa. Adding new knowledge on how ethnographic methodology can draw insight from an environment that intentionally practices sustainable luxury garment manufacturing. The purpose of this chapter is that of laying a foundation for the main argument made by this research report, that sustainable fashion, with its own values, knowledge and aesthetics represents a new field within the broader field of fashion. By unpacking the daily inner workings, the architecture of the luxury studio and its sustainability-centred values and practices this chapter provides tangible and intangible examples of all three of Pierre Bourdieu's Forms of Capital (Bourdieu 1986). Honing in on the economic, social and cultural capital that exists within the studio, allows for a more intricate understanding of the multiple threads of cotton that are necessary for the weaving together of a field of sustainable fashion.

VIVIERS Studio is a high-end, sustainable luxury concept brand, founded in April 2019 by Lezanne Viviers. The by-appointment luxury brand is located within the green hills of Westcliff, Johannesburg in close proximity to Netcare Milpark Hospital. The Glasshouse is a modular, crystal glass structure that was co-designed by Roelof van Wyk and Thomasshof and partners (VIVIERS 2022). With the help of JANG design duo, The Glasshouse has become the flagship store, bespoke atelier, and creative studio of VIVIERS Studio (VIVIERS 2022). This is where I spent the majority of my autumn and winter break in 2022 conducting fieldwork.

I have chosen to lead with a detailed description of both the old and new studio spaces, in an effort to better situate the sustainable luxury studio as a living text and source for commentary on the methods of fashion practice and production in a historically elite and environmentally destructive industry. As a sustainable luxury brand operating in contemporary South Africa and the international luxury fashion market, placing emphasis on the brand's production practice and the physical location of its studio with its unique features and functions is key. This places the brand in a unique position for ethnographic enquiry into the possibility of what sustainable fashion production could be, not only in the Global South but also throughout the international luxury fashion market.

The location of both studios, the interior and exterior designs and features, production spaces, collections produced, clientele, the individuals who make up the VIVIERS team and the technologies used can all be read and interpreted as noteworthy symbols that make up and socialise within an elite fashion industry (Polhemus 2011). To provide a more personal view on how I came to conduct ethnography at VIVIERS Studio the subsection titled *My Journey through the Studio: Becoming a Stylist, Finding Viviers and Pan-handle Mansions* provides better insight on how I came to know about the sustainable luxury brand.

My Journey through the Studio: Becoming a Stylist, Finding Viviers and Pan-handle Mansions

I arrived at VIVIERS Studio on a chilly Thursday morning in early July 2022. Treading as carefully as I could, I made my way down the black metal stairs that led straight into a patchy welcome garden and the large still pond of the new studio. Warmly dressed in a long black trapeze dress with a lime green Polo turtleneck peeping through the neck and arm cuts, a thrifted Prada side-bag hung tightly across my chest storing my iPhone 11, a new notebook, and a borrowed black pen. I was ready to enter the field, as long as the field was indoors and warm.

On that day, I was not met with the warm welcome I received when I first negotiated the opportunity to have my fieldwork done at VIVIERS. On that chilly Thursday morning the studio was in a tense work mode. They had just started getting ready for the September fashion show. With only two months left before the show, I had to be strategic with how I would begin my time in the field. I could not be too distracting or too inquisitive, but I also needed to make observations. So, my journey began with an unpacking of the entire new studio space. Exploring each and every workspace and archive in the two-story mansion while following the daily conversations of its inhabitants like a fly on the wall.

This was my first time at The Glasshouse. A great opportunity to take it all in and investigate without a guide.

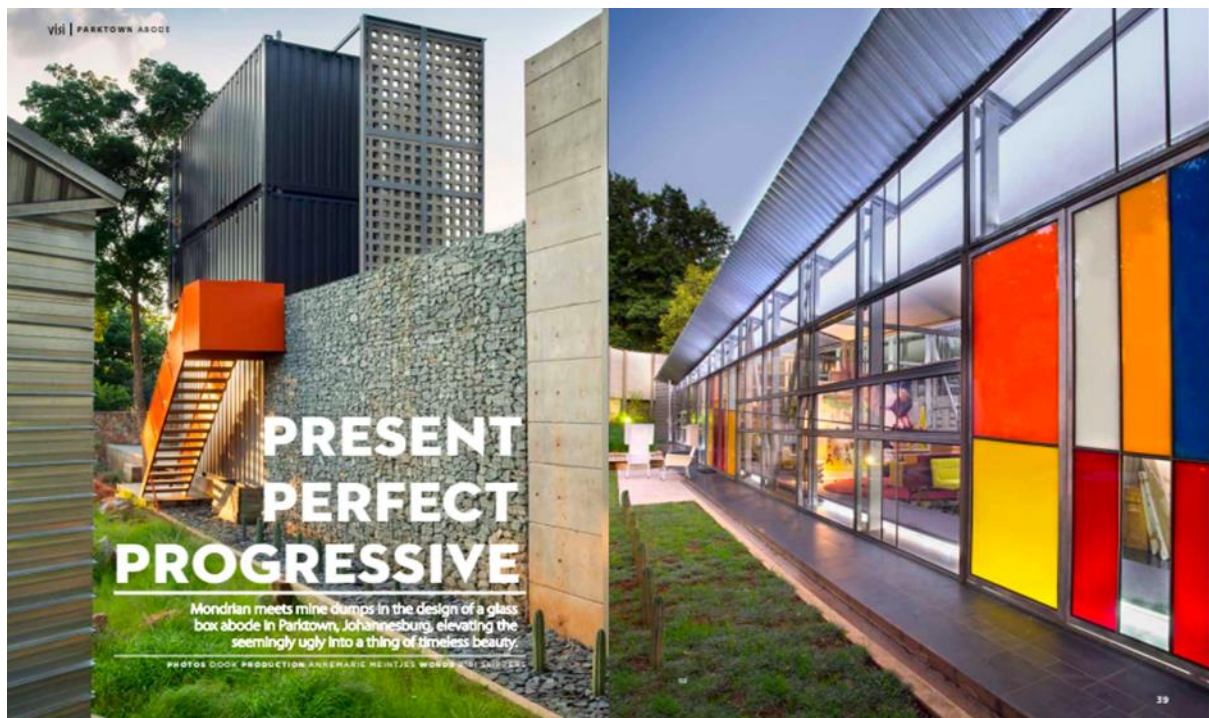


Figure 1: The Glasshouse stair entrance and front view of the mansion with colour film on some of the panels of the façade as seen in VISI magazine May 2015 (Dook 2015)

My initial introduction to VIVIERS was in December 2020 at the Lotus House. This was when I assisted Didintle, a local well-known fashion stylist, for a Mafikizolo music video in Kyalami. While driving around the city, pulling garments and idea pieces that we would later present to

the client and production team, Didintle mentioned VIVIERS as a possible garment source for the shoot.

This was my first ever styling job. I had no idea who or what VIVIERS was, but I was excited for the opportunity. A week prior to meeting Didintle I had DM'ed (direct messaged) her on Instagram asking for a job. The message was short and sweet. I introduced myself as a master's student at The University of the Witwatersrand and mentioned that if she ever needed someone to assist with styling, I was the perfect person for the job. A week later I was booked as her wardrobe styling assistant.

After passing through Rosebank Mall for lunch, Didintle entered "14 Hillcrest Road, Westcliff" into her iPhone 10 google maps. Within eight minutes of driving, we pulled up into a narrow street that would lead to the mansion's gate. Literally located on a kopjie, we took a sharp left turn into a panhandle nook that led to a red, rusting electric gate. While maintaining my clutch control as best as I could, we slowly pulled into a vibrantly painted mansion. I could not contain my excitement. This was the first time I had ever been to a luxury design studio, and the fact that it was a sustainability-centred brand made the experience even more worthwhile.



Figure 2 Front entrance of Lotus House as seen in Dwell (M. Holland 2021)

Walking up to the welcoming prickly garden that led to the wooden front door, Didintle explained that this was VIVIERS Studio, a sustainability brand she had worked with before, and hoped that they would let us use their garments for our shoot.

The 1960s gem of a mansion sat right within the suburban hills of Westcliffe, Johannesburg. My memory and short experience at the house are what made me eager to have the brand and its unique location as my Master's research field site. It was the kaleidoscopic walls, the local art on display, and the rich green concept garden that first caught my interest.

At first glance, The Lotus House did not look like a fashion production space. It felt like the home of an old, rich, eccentric lady who loved art and nature. The house was definitely one of a kind, something you would find on the front cover of international home & design magazines. Mary Holland from Dwell magazine accurately described the house, stating that the “glass-fronted, 1960s gem acts as a display case for her eponymous label, vibrant artworks, and modernist furniture” (M. Holland 2021). The open plan house with its large orange framed windows and bright coloured walls was the perfect space to store and display exceptional local art and interesting jewellery. At this location, it seemed as though the production of sustainable luxury clothes was by chance. A minor feature that existed amongst beautiful and intricate objects.



Figure 3 Curated living room of the Lotus House adorned with designer furniture and local South African art, overlooking the lush suburbia of Northern Johannesburg as seen in Dwell Magazine (M. Holland 2021)

It was only when I went downstairs with Didintle that I saw the "production area". Like the Glasshouse there was an upstairs that was calm, aesthetically pleasing filled with interesting art, furniture, and the latest MacBooks.

The downstairs floor had very low lighting but was filled with an assortment of luxury garments, plastic containers with cut-off fabrics and sewing machines. There were three separate rooms like in the Glasshouse that had separate functions. The first, is a fitting room painted in a deep lavender colour for client consultations and fittings. The middle room acted as a cutting and storage room. This large space was fitted with a large cutting table in the centre and metal clothing racks that hung numerous garments and lined all three of the walls of the room except for the large window that looked out on the conceptual garden in the back of the house.



Figures 4 and 5: Kaleidoscopic interior walls of the Lotus House, fitted with mid-century modern furniture, local art pieces and handmade fans and cloths by VIVIERS Studio as seen in Dwell Magazine (M. Holland 2021)

When I first came to confirm and ask permission to do my ethnographic research at VIVIERS, this is the house I arrived at. In early April 2022, I was greeted by Liso who introduced them self as an intern for the brand and explained that they would be moving into a new space, not too far from the Lotus House. Liso gushed about how cool the new space was and that it was very spacious. They proceeded to give me a full tour of the Lotus House which is where I saw the tailor's room for the first time.

Although the room was small, the brand had managed to fit six electrically powered sewing machines, where three male tailors and two female bead workers were seated and working from. I had a short meet and greet, while Liso explained to the team that I was coming to do my research soon. Right outside of the tailor's room were a number of plastic container boxes stacked beside the large glass window, all filled with different colour fabrics. I did not have time to count how many boxes there were, but Liso explained that the boxes had cut-offs. They

explained that because VIVIERS does not throw any of their leftover materials away, they store them in these labelled boxes for future use.

Liso then guided me into the concept garden and explained that they had just hosted a fashion show in the lush green space. They took me through the natural runway path the models walked, from the production space down into the garden and where the guests were seated. It was only after the tour that I had an opportunity to meet and chat with the brand owner and head designer of VIVIERS, Lezanne Viviers.

I explained to her that I was an Anthropology major from The University of the Witwatersrand who was interested in sustainable fashion and would love to do my research at VIVIERS. I shared how I was inspired to study sustainability within fashion from my love for thrifting at Dunusa, an open second-hand clothing market in Johannesburg. I explained that I had previously done my honours research at a local thrift store in Braamfontein and that I was interested in broadening my understanding of the sustainability movement. She seemed excited about the prospect of me doing my research at the studio and shared that she had just taken her friend who was visiting the country to Dunusa, to show them how the market looked and how thrifting worked in South Africa.

The Glasshouse: Sustainable Luxury Fashion in South Africa, a case study

I arrived just after half-past nine at The Glasshouse and was warmly welcomed by Cebo, the social media coordinator for the brand. We entered the studio through the kitchen entrance where she offered me tea and water and explained that this is where they usually meet for lunch as a team. She went on to explain that if I ever needed to warm up any food, I would have to make use of the microwave that is located in the lower level of the studio in the second kitchen.

During the studio tour, Cebo walked me through each of the main production and storage spaces in the Glasshouse. I was briefly introduced to members of the entire team during the

tour. The VIVIERS team is made up of two distinct teams, an administration team, and a production team. On that chilly Thursday, I met with some of the members of the administration team. Liso, the wardrobe, and studio assistant whom I first met at The Lotus House, Cebo, who is an intern and manages the brand's social media pages and Ocean who is also an intern who was working on the digitization of the brand's entire collection from April 2022.

I was then introduced to all the members of the production team, on the second level of the studio due to this being their primary workspace. I had a short meet and greet with Chiara the studio co-coordinator and manager, Ma' Natalie the fine work specialist, Mark a specialised tailor, Doubia an evening wear courtier, Ma' Chantel the beading and embroidery specialist and Siya the head couturier.

I was introduced as a researcher from The University of the Witwatersrand who would be doing their research at the studio. During this, Cebo had not formally noted what every individual on the team does. The brand's website www.VIVIERSSTUDIO.com was my go-to in identifying what specific roles each creative in the team takes on.

In the context of a sustainable fashion studio, the field can be seen as the space in which industry workers navigate and strive to establish themselves. Here, The Glasshouse, a renowned sustainable fashion studio, represents a valuable meeting point within this field. It serves as a hub for industry professionals, including stylists, designers, and photographers, who aim to create fashion that is environmentally conscious.

Within this field, the distribution of various forms of capital plays a crucial role. Economic capital, such as financial resources, is important for stylists and designers to access the necessary tools, materials, and opportunities. Cultural capital, which includes knowledge,

skills, and aesthetic sensibilities, is also significant as it helps designers align with the ethos of sustainability and gain recognition within the field.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital is particularly relevant to understanding the dynamics of the sustainable fashion studio. Symbolic capital refers to the prestige and recognition that individuals or institutions possess within a field. In the context of stylists, their ability to develop a distinctive style, create visually compelling looks, and demonstrate a deep understanding of sustainability practices can contribute to their accumulation of symbolic capital.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the field is not static but constantly evolving. As sustainability becomes an increasingly important aspect of the fashion industry, the field of sustainable fashion is expanding and changing. The Glasshouse and similar sustainable fashion studios act as gatekeepers, defining the norms and criteria for entry into this specialized field. Aspiring industry professionals will need to navigate the expectations and standards set by these influential institutions, further reinforcing the power dynamics within the field.

High-end Showrooms: Aesthetics, Visibility and Banning Trend Cycles

Marine Serre's namesake brand was founded on similar principles to those adopted at VIVIERS Studio where the brand adopts a circular solution to an ever-growing waste problem in the garment-making industry by using end-of-life materials to create new garments. She is quoted explaining the thought process behind her brand's unique production process in a 2021 documentary by Bloomberg's online magazine The Business of Fashion,

"I have to at least make a small change on the mind, on the process, how we think about business, how we think about people, how we think about fashion, how we think about consuming everything and I'm just there to question everything" - Marine Serre (Serre 2021).

After the brief meet and greet, I took it upon myself to explore and observe both levels of the Glasshouse, taking videos on my phone and making notes where I could. My exploration of the studio began in the kitchen which led me straight into the studio showroom. This is the main room clients are guided into when they arrive at VIVIERS. With black wooden flooring, the open-plan showroom has two metal floating rails that hang from metal beams which form part of the Glasshouse architecture. This is where high-end sustainable luxury garments are put on display for purchase.



Figures 6 and 7: VIVIERS Studio showroom floor. Colour-coordinated; tailored luxury garments hang from metal beams anchored by The Glasshouse interior architecture. Image captured with iPhone 11 (2022)

With the brand's garments as the main focal point of the floor, the interior of the showroom is accentuated with two pale white high-end couches upholstered in texture-rich boucle and an assortment of display shelves where clients can interact with the brand's unique jewellery and accessories that have been crafted in-house.



Figure 8: VIVIERS Studio's Curated consultation space, featuring pale white high-end boucle couches. Image captured with iPhone 11 (2022)

This is where Lezanne meets with clients during consultations when designing or personalising a garment. The look and feel of the showroom transformed with each collection. During my time at the studio there were two distinct art installations that followed the theme of the collection at the time. A number of abstract art pieces were hung or placed throughout the showroom during this time. These pieces were notably different to the bold and controversial pieces that hung in the Lotus House. This seemed intentional. Comparing the description of both studio locations, the brand's website describes The Lotus House as “home to the unique VIVIERS experience, where celebratory rituals and ceremonies form the core of the practice, anchored in time and the allowance thereof. It also acts as a gallery space housing contemporary South African art and boasts an experimental garden” (Viviers 2021). While The Glasshouse is described as “the flagship store, bespoke atelier and creative studio of VIVIERS” (VIVIERS 2022).

The distinction between the two is that, at The Glasshouse sustainable practice with regard to garment production, collection size and client experience are the main focus. Emphasis and

value are placed on the sustainable luxury garment you will be purchasing. The architectural framework and visual qualities of The Glasshouse itself can be read as a metaphor. A see-through open-plan production studio, with large clear windows that invite clients to physically see how items are made, who makes them and where cut-off material is stored and kept for future use. A key feature of ‘sustainability’ within sustainable fashion is that of making the unexciting manufacturing processes visible. It is during this stage of the supply chain where human rights violations such as inhumane working conditions; mass production and environmental pollution occur. As a physical structure and place of production, The Glasshouse can be read as a symbol of what removing the veil behind exploitation looks like. The emphasis on transparency and interaction extends to the client experience as well. Clients are encouraged to meet the production team, fostering a sense of connection, and understanding between the creators and the consumers.

I was able to observe such an interaction while interviewing Ma’Chantel in the tailor’s room. A studio client was in that afternoon to have final fittings for her wedding gown. Ma’Chantel was the lead beading and embroidery specialist for the gown. Although I was not present in the fitting room, this interaction stood out from the ordinary. Ma’Chantel was specifically asked for from the tailor’s room to help guide the bride understand the intricacy needed for her gown. Ma’Chantel explained that she learned how to sew and created beautiful designs through beadwork at her local church in the east of Johannesburg while learning English when she first arrived in South Africa after migrating from her home country of Congo. Her mastery of the skill developed through working for a popular luxury design label in South Africa.

Visibility as an ethical production practice can also be found in the physical garments produced by the studio. As a standard practice, the brand creates a set number of garments that feature in its collections. Each garment has the brand’s unique label sewn in providing a clear description of the season the garment was made in, a description of the garment, the number of the garment

which is usually '1 of 1' and who the garment was made by. This practice gives credit to the tailor and maker of the garment. Although the garment already qualifies as being unique, due to its 1 of 1 status, placing the name of the tailor or bead worker on the garment label provides an additional level of detail and acknowledgement of the craftsmanship and expertise needed to create the garment. In instances where clients may not have the opportunity to meet the individual who created the garment, this practice does provide a tailor like Mark with a small sense of ownership. While questioning the practice of identifying a tailor on the brand's label, Doubia the evening wear courtier at the studio provided a different perspective to the practice. For him, the practise can also backfire on a tailor if a mistake is made on a garment. For example, if the garment features incorrect stitching or is missing a button Chiara the studio manager or Lezanne can easily identify who the garment was made by. He also shared how, ultimately when consumers buy a garment, they are buying it because of the VIVIERS name not because of him. For Doubia having his name on a garment is a nice feature but it does not change the influence held by the VIVIERS name brand.

In a similar vein, the interior design of the studio at VIVIERS aims to create a tranquil and curated environment that enhances the luxury experience for the clients. The showroom and fitting room are carefully designed to evoke a sense of being in an enclosed natural space, with velvet curtains and minimalistic yet elegant furnishings. The client is placed at the centre stage, both physically and metaphorically, during fittings and alterations, emphasizing their importance in the process.

While interviewing Liso as the studio stylist and wardrobe assistant they explained the interior design thought process behind the studio aesthetic using two keywords, 'tranquil and curated'. Liso explained that when clients visit the studio and when they come onto the showroom floor the brand's main aim is to invoke the feeling of being in an enclosed natural space. The client

is the main focus, their experience and journey at VIVIERS has been curated to provide a luxury experience.

The showroom leads into the fitting room which is sectioned off with thick velvet green curtains. The interior here is simple. A single velvet pink couch for relaxing during fittings, four large mirrors and a raised platform in the centre of the space where the client is literally put on centre stage. During fittings and alterations, clients come here to get a 180-degree look of themselves in quality luxury garments.



Figure 9: VIVIERS Studio curated fitting room adorned with a stand-out pink velvet single couch. Image captured with iPhone 11 (2022)

When selecting garments to display in the showroom, Liso emphasised that the brand is not “about a trend cycle”. Although they do select and display garments following the seasons of the year and garment pieces that have been specifically chosen by Lezanne, they are not limited to displaying what was produced during that specific year or season. During our interview, Abby interjected, explaining that “yes, there’s a pink garment from the first season”. The garment she referred to was created in 2019 from the brand's first collection. Explaining the reasoning behind this, Liso shared that “if something did not sell two years ago and we still

have it and it's still in good condition, then we will find a way to incorporate it and resell it again".

This engagement highlights the short, long, and revived life span of fashion trends and how quickly a trend comes and goes but also how often people want to bring back old fashion trends. Liso shared how "maybe a person wasn't a fan of that piece at that point of time but then it's suddenly a thing again and they want it".

When making the decision to remove a garment from the showroom racks and place it into the brand's archive there are some set criteria and conditions applied. Liso explained that the removal happens "when a garment has been ruled off as a sample because it tore or broke or if Lezanne is bored of the item and wants it away from the immediate space and doesn't want to sell it. If she does not want to sell a garment because it is a special piece, then we'll archive it. If it has some sort of damage that we can't really mend or we don't have the time to, then we'll archive it. If it is a piece from two years ago or three seasons ago then we'll archive it and then we'll maybe bring it down if she's willing to sell it again or if the season has changed".

From my conversation with Liso, the showroom at the studio plays a very distinct role. It communicates to clients and amongst the VIVIERS team verbal and symbolic conversations around taste, trends, and values. On the showroom floor, there is no set expiration or out-of-trend date. Garments from previous seasons are never discarded or tucked away in the archive for no one to ever see. Lezanne's taste and fashion expertise are the guiding light here, she says what goes on or comes off the floor. The personal value she places on garments is key. She decides what is special and what makes a specific garment special, what can be sold or what does not feel right or should not be on the floor at that given time. The fact that the studio still sees a garment that has been torn or broken as valuable and not discarded speaks to how the

studio categorises what is valuable and what is not. What can be thrown away and what should not.

The engagement and relationships observed at the studio, specifically Lezanne's leadership role and the extent to which her personal taste and experience determine the look and feel that is communicated throughout the studio is a good example of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital at play. Bourdieu's theory of taste (1987) suggests that people's preferences are shaped by their social and cultural backgrounds, as well as their access to cultural capital. Lezanne's stylistic preferences and creative experience as the creative director for the Marianne Fassler brand for eight years have afforded her cultural capital. She is able to make use of her cultural capital in the context of sustainable luxury fashion.

Although the practices adopted at VIVIERS Studio should be applauded, questions about who can afford to produce and purchase sustainable garments for thousands of rands should be raised. The location and clientele of a brand like VIVIERS Studio give insight into who can really afford to be a sustainable luxury consumer in today's society. Future research on the conditions and context required to purchase sustainable luxury goods can provide better insight in why the sustainable fashion industry has not yet reached a wider community. As chapters five and six of this research report will show, younger fashion consumers have not yet been able to completely move into a space where they are able to purchase garments that have been made sustainably. However, chapter six explores how younger consumers have been able to approach their consumption habits by aligning their personal ethos and motivations with environmental awareness through sustainable practices.

Understanding how cultural capital shapes consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion is crucial, particularly in the context of the global south. Factors such as socioeconomic status, education, and exposure to diverse cultural practices and norms can significantly influence

individuals' preferences and behaviours. Consumers with greater cultural capital are more likely to value sustainable fashion, prioritizing ethical and eco-friendly practices. In contrast, those with less cultural capital may be more swayed by factors like price and convenience, potentially placing less emphasis on sustainability. Therefore, exploring the impact of cultural capital on consumer choices in the realm of sustainable fashion provides valuable insights into the complexities of sustainable consumption patterns and the need for inclusive and accessible approaches to promote ethical and environmentally friendly fashion practices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter provides a detailed introduction to the research field site, VIVIERS Studio, a sustainable luxury brand in South Africa. By highlighting the sustainability-centred practices and values of the studio, through the studio's architectural design, the logic behind its method of garment display and the practise of visibility through garment labels the chapter contributes to the understanding of sustainable fashion as a distinct field within the broader fashion industry.

The chapter highlights the importance of unpacking the daily inner workings, architecture, and sustainability-centred practices of VIVIERS Studio to gain insight into the economic, social, and cultural capital that can exist within the field of sustainable fashion. It establishes the foundation for the main argument presented by this research report, which argues that sustainable fashion as a practice and movement within the field of fashion represents a new field with its own values, knowledge, and aesthetics.

Furthermore, the chapter explores the significance of sustainable fashion brands like VIVIERS Studio as gatekeepers within the field, shaping the norms and criteria for entry into this specialized field. The chapter acknowledges the evolving nature of the field as sustainability gains prominence in the fashion industry and the role of influential institutions like VIVIERS

Studio in defining and reinforcing power dynamics within the field. By exploring the need for visibility during the garment production process the chapter creates room for further investigation around who exactly can afford to create and purchase sustainable luxury garments.

Overall, this chapter lays the groundwork for the subsequent research by providing tangible and intangible examples of sustainable fashion practice and highlighting the role of VIVIERS Studio as a case study. Setting the stage for a deeper exploration of sustainable fashion, its practices, and its impact on the broader fashion landscape.

CHAPTER 4

Deadstock as Luxury: What it Means to Recycle and Reuse During Garment Production

In this chapter, I take you on a journey into VIVIERS Studio's innovative approach to recycling and reusing materials during the garment production process. My ethnographic field notes will serve as our guide as we explore the luxury brands' four interconnected spaces: the pattern-making and fabric-cutting room, the tailor's room, the studio dungeon, and the administration room. Each of these spaces plays a vital role in showcasing VIVIERS Studio's unwavering commitment to sustainability and its mindful utilization of resources.

By immersing ourselves in these interconnected spaces, we gain valuable insights into VIVIERS Studio's sustainable practices and their conscious effort to blend economic capital and sustainability. Their dedication to circularity, mindful fabric sourcing, and resource optimization set them apart as a useful example in the garment production industry. Observing the brand's commitment to recycling and reusing materials as a practise that not only centres on reducing waste but rather an ingrained behaviour that highlights the potential for economic and environmental benefits when sustainability becomes the driving force behind a business.

When companies embrace sustainable practices like recycling and reusing materials, they embark on a journey to minimize their ecological footprint while embracing a host of economic and environmental advantages. Recycling enables the recovery of valuable resources from waste, reducing the need for new materials and preserving our precious natural resources. This, in turn, leads to cost savings in raw material procurement and fosters the growth of a more circular economy. Additionally, by recycling and reusing materials, businesses can contribute to the reduction of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions associated with the production of new materials. By prioritizing sustainability and weaving it into the fabric of their operations, companies not only make a positive impact on the health of our planet but also

unlock opportunities for innovation, cost-efficiency, and long-term resilience when faced with environmental challenges.

The pattern-making and fabric-cutting room

Walking through the showroom, past the fitting area you are welcomed by two distinct views. Straight ahead slightly above (my) eye view is the administration and concept room. I will unpack this space later in the chapter. If you are as short as I am, before you see the administration and concept room the first object that will catch your eyes is the black metal steps that lead you down into the lower level of the Glasshouse. This floor is sectioned into three distinct open-plan rooms each with its own function. These are the pattern-making and fabric-cutting room, the tailor room, and the studio dungeon.



Figure 10: View of The Glasshouse lower-level staircase entrance, with a panoramic view of VIVIERS Studio administration space. Image capture with iPhone 11 (2022)

Figure 11: Bird's eye view of the entry into the lower level of the Glasshouse. View of the Tailor's room and garments being created for the September Fashion Show. Image captured on iPhone 11 (2022)

This subsection makes use of direct quotes from my field notes when I first explored the pattern and fabric room. The chilly, steel-sectioned floor is managed by Siya and Chiara who work collaboratively with each of the brand's specialists and artisans.



Figure 12 and 13: VIVIERS Studio Fabric cutting room. Image captured with iPhone 11 (2022)

The fabric cutting room is Chiara and Siya's main working space. This room is located at the right end of the production floor and has a large glass door that leads to the back garden of the studio where the team members who work in the lower level take their lunch break which is always at one o'clock in the afternoon.

In the centre of the glass-walled fabric-cutting room is a large six-wheeled wooden mobile cutting table, laminated with grey finishing. Located on the front and back end of the table are cupboard doors where metres of dead-sock fabrics are stored. Hovering right above the cutting desk like lighting in a surgical room is a large rectangular led light, which is the main electrical source of light in the room. Placed right at the back end of the room are two black and grey plastic bins that are labelled 'fabrics' and 'paper/plastic'.



Figure 14 and 15: VIVIERS Studio plastic recycling bins. Images capture by iPhone 11 (2022)

Once a sketch design is complete with client dimensions Lezanne will share the design with both Chiara and Siya who will then begin the process of creating garment pattern cut-outs and cutting fabric to match the specified pattern. The two plastic bins are used to collect threads of material and scraps of paper and plastic that cannot be reused by the studio. These materials move from the studio recycling bins into public recycling bins, coloured in red, yellow, and red that are stored near the front entrance of the Studio and collected by the Westcliff municipality on a weekly basis.

It is rare that fabric cut-offs will be completely discarded at the studio. The fabric life chain at VIVIERS is intentionally circular. Liso explained that when the studio looks to buy fabric, they intentionally buy deadstock. This is the fabric that is at its final shelf-life cycle at a fabric store and is no longer placed in the front end of the store. Chiara is usually the one who will go out and buy such fabrics from stores. Once she has selected and bought deadstock its value within the supply chain process and life cycle is renewed the moment it enters the studio. While cutting

there is also a large brown A4 envelope labelled “Glasshouse” with a pen sketch of trousers. These brown sheets of fabric paper are stored in the A4 envelopes and used as reference patterns that will help the team with future pattern making, and also used as guidelines for Siya, Chiara, and the tailors when they need to cut a similar pattern in a future collection. All the A4 envelopes are stored safely in red metal cabinets that are open for all team members to use. At the moment there are two cabinets like this. One is located in this room and the other is upstairs in the concept room where Lezanne usually works.



Figure 18: Diouba and Siya Consulting on a garment fitting using the studio's mobile mannequin. Image capture on iPhone 11 (2022)

In the front end of the cutting room, three bare mannequin busts hang ready for garment fitting. In the back end, a makeshift clothing rack made of a metal chain is connected to the ceiling. An assortment of folded fabrics and garments that seem complete to the unknowing eye clings to the metal chain ready for tailoring and storage. Amongst the fabrics are three garments, a brown leather dress that features a mesh kimono style jacket and to its left hangs a khaki and black spotted pair of trousers.

Behind the cutting table, there is a second rectangular table tightly draped in a cream-coloured cloth which acts as an easy-access stationary table. This desk is also cluttered with a number of objects, four brown envelopes that have garment pieces drawn and labelled on them, an open black file filled with plastic sleeves that have design sketches and fabric swatches from previous collections. There is also a bucket of different coloured khokis and markers and a closed silver laptop.

VIVIERS Studio demonstrates a conscious utilization of economic capital through its approach to fabric sourcing and recycling. The studio deliberately purchases deadstock fabric, which represents an economically advantageous strategy. By purchasing deadstock, VIVIERS not only benefits from lower costs but also contributes to reducing waste and environmental impact. This decision showcases the studio's calculated method of economic capital management, as they leverage their financial resources to access high-quality materials while aligning with their sustainable ethos.

Furthermore, VIVIERS implementation of a circular fabric life chain highlights the studio's understanding of the economic value of resources and their ability to maximize their investments. Instead of treating the cut-offs as waste, they are repurposed or recycled during the production of new luxury garments.

The Tailor's Room

Located in the centre of the lower level, is the tailor's room. Fitted with ten working stations, this section of the lower level is the centre of production where every garment bearing the VIVIERS label comes to life. Of the ten, four of the working stations are fitted with cream-white industrial sewing machines, two bearing the blue branding from Harrison and the others Juki. The energy is cheery but focused. There are five artisans working in the room. Three middle-aged tailors and men, Mark and Charles who are specialised tailors and Diouba who is

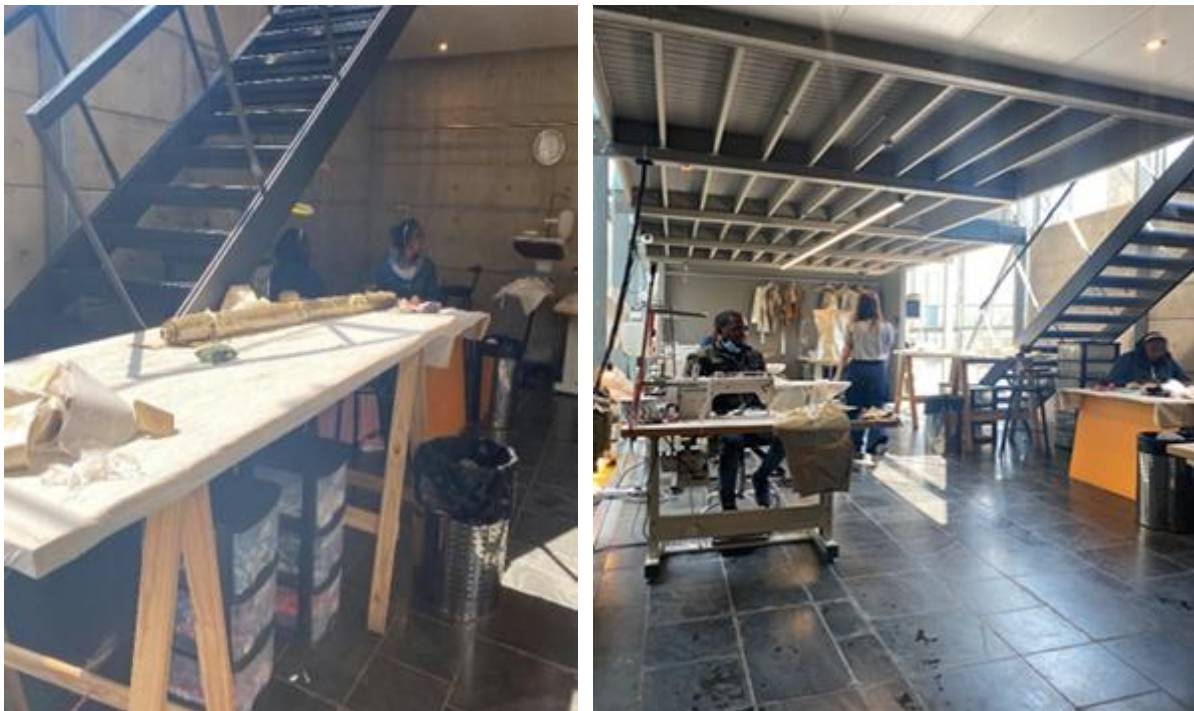
the evening wear courtier and two older women whom I've become friendly with Ma' Natalie and Ma' Chantel who are both beading and embroidery specialists. There is music playing from Mark's phone in a language that is not familiar to my ears but has an African beat and tone to it. Although the sound is low, it is loud enough for everyone in the sewing room to hear and sometimes even hymn or sing to. Pressed for time there is a short dialogue between each artisan passing in the air with a majority of what is said is focused on locating fabrics or consulting one another on the pieces they are working on.



Figure 19: VIVIERS Studio Tailors Room fitted with electrical sewing stations. Image captured with iPhone 11 (2022)

Each of the electrically powered sewing stations is ready for use or already tapping away under the control of a tailor. Adorned in an organised clutter, each station is easily identified by the threads coloured of cotton propped and fed into tiny metal stitching needles ready for the creation next garment. Seated right in front of an unoccupied sewing station located at the very end of the tailor room, I have an uninterrupted, panoramic view of the room, its expensive machinery, fabrics, and focused artisans.

There are four metal bins placed throughout the tailor's room. Similar to the recycling bins in the tailor room, these bins collect scraps of material that are too small to keep and store as cut-off material in the studio dungeon. A large wooden table beside the metal staircase wrapped in a cream cloth acts as the consultation 'office' for additional fabric cutting, label checking and storage. Tucked beneath the table are two plastic shelves that each have three drawers filled with an assortment of colour-coordinated rolls of cotton thread.



Figures 20 and 21: VIVIERS Studio Tailors Room. Image captured with iPhone 11 (2022)

In the tailor's room, physical objects such as sewing machines, threads, fabric bins, and workstations represent forms of cultural capital. The different coloured threads, for example, demonstrate the tailors' and bead specialists' familiarity with and mastery of the materials used in garment production. The sewing machines and other garment production tools reflect the technical expertise and craftsmanship of the artisans. These objects not only serve functional purposes but also carry cultural meanings and indicate the accumulation of specialized knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, the interactions and dynamics within the tailor's room can be analysed through Bourdieu's concept of social capital. The presence of artisans from diverse backgrounds and the collaborative atmosphere demonstrates the social networks and relationships that contribute to the production process. The exchange of information and consultation among the artisans highlight the shared knowledge and expertise within the community. Through these interactions, the artisans collectively build upon their skills and create a sense of community within the space.

By applying Bourdieu's concept of capital, we are able to gain deeper insights into the tailor's room, uncovering the symbolic, social, and spatial dimensions of the production space. The material objects, skills, and interactions within the room are deeply intertwined, contributing to the studio's sustainability mission, and fostering a vibrant and collaborative working environment. Through this lens, we can appreciate the holistic significance of the tailor's room and its role in the creative and cultural fabric of VIVIERS Studio.

The Studio Dungeon

I was greeted by two metal shelves stocked with Mason jars each filled with a kaleidoscope of beads in various shapes. While cutting a sheet of white see-through mesh fabric, Ameira in a bright red wig greeted me with a warm smile. During our small talk, she explained that she would be using the fabric to make a crystal structure for the September fashion show. She had picked up some fabric and design skills while studying theatre during her first year at Wits.

Keeping in tune with the industrial aesthetic and feel of the studio, the dungeon is filled with an assortment of see-through and milky white plastic storage containers, all filled to the brim with zip-lock bags containing cut-off materials from previous collections. Each container is label using white tape and black marker. I counted a total of forty-two plastic contains with labels such as; “mesh” “silk/satin” “motherboard” “nylon/ribbons” “nylon tech” “mesh stretch”

“light wash synthetic” “heavy woven” “VIVIERS prints” and “bridal trims” placed all around the dungeon.



Figures 22 and 23: Entrance to Studio Dungeon. Each side of the entrance visualises the VIVIERS Studio's efforts towards circularity. Image captured with iPhone 11 (2022)

As the studio storage room, the dungeon is the beating recycling heart for VIVIERS. In the front half of the dungeon stands the room's main workstation, a beading and a fabric layout table made of two connected large white tables. One wrapped in brown paper and sprinkled with an assortment of beads. The other holds four rolls of pink, light green, black and a mesh tan fabric.

Hovering above the workstation is a bright four-corner industrial light the same kind used in the cutting room. With so many objects in the room, my eyes were immediately drawn to a mannequin draped in a purple and green mesh boob tube dress. Right beside it, a metal clothing rack stands cluttered with wooden hangers where folded fabric cut-offs hang in shades of metallic blues, purples and pinks to mesh lavender, black, grey, and burnt orange.

Behind the first working station are four fabric cupboards that act as sorting and storage space for the studio. Each cupboard has an open pigeonhole above them with an assortment of fabric rolls in shades of blue, green, pink, white and cream. Inside the are even more rolls of fabric. Each cupboard door is labelled with white paper tape and black marker as “black/dark blue”, “grey/brown”, “yellow orange/red” and “green/light blue”.

There are two more cupboards in the back left-hand corner of the dungeon featuring the same structure as the cupboards I just described. These are labelled as “purple/pink frills” and “Mauritian Brocade”. At the corner of the worktable, there is an industrial metal cylinder drum filled with old cardboard cylinder rolls that used to be the holders of old fabrics. Chiara explained that these are kept and stored in the dungeon as they could be used for future design work or re-used by the studio for a future collection.



Figure 25: Interior of the studio dungeon. Metal cylinder holding cardboard rolls from used deadstock fabric Image captured with iPhone 11 (2022)

Chiara and Ameira have decided to work during this hour and are in the dungeon repacking and re-organising the larger leftover sheets of fabric within the studio. Ameira is folding each sheet by hand and then placing them on wooden hangers which will be colour-coordinated and

kept in a wooden cabinet with glass doors for easy viewing. Each of the fabrics Ameira is handling was used in previous collections, they are now being stored for better visibility and easier access for future use. I only came to understand this after asking Ciara why they were doing this task. She explained that “when new people come to work [in the studio] they might not know the specific name of a fabric, but they know colours”.



Figures 26 and 27: Interior of the studio dungeon. VIVIERS Studio's central storage space. The home of organised deadstock and categorised fabric cutoffs. Image captured with iPhone 11 (2022)

The Studio Dungeon is filled with an assortment of materials, fabrics, and storage containers, all carefully organized and labelled. This demonstrates the studio's deep knowledge and expertise in textiles and materials, representing a form of cultural capital. The presence of specific materials like mesh, silk/satin, nylon/ribbons, and various prints showcases the studio's familiarity with different fabrics and their creative potential. The labelling system used here, with detailed descriptions on each container, indicates a systematic approach to resource management, reflecting the studio's mastery of material culture. This accumulation of knowledge and expertise contributes to the studio's cultural capital, enhancing its creative capabilities and allowing for innovative design choices.

Additionally, the emphasis on sustainability and recycling within the Studio Dungeon is another aspect of cultural capital. The studio's commitment to repurposing and reusing cut-off materials from previous collections showcases its awareness of environmental concerns and its ability to align with contemporary values. By incorporating sustainable practices into its creative process, the studio not only demonstrates its cultural capital in terms of ecological consciousness but also appeals to an increasingly environmentally conscious consumer base.

The Administration and Concept Room

Walking up the studio dungeon staircase you are led to a heavy black push door that opens onto the brightly lit administration and concept room. During my initial studio tour with Cebo, she described the entry section of the large open-plan room as the 'digital workspace'. On this day I found Liso and Abby head down and focused, working from Mac Books placed on a wooden counter.



Figure 28: VIVIERS Studio administration room. Liso and Abby are captured working away on their MacBooks with an uninterrupted view of Westcliffe's lush gardens. Image captured with iPhone 11 (2022)

This workspace comprises of a “viewing self” adorned with accessory pieces; five head mannequins all fitted with plastic hats, belts, cuffing’s, armbands and a large brown triangular leather bag in the centre of the top shelf. All of the accessories were crafted in the studio by hand. Some are new and others are from older collections.

This section of the studio radiates with heat as the name of the studio says, the walls are glass. Cebo and Liso mention that they use the hats from the viewing self to shield themselves from the scorching heat. This area is divided into two, the intern working space and the concept room. The concept room is where the head designer Lezanne works most of the time. Here she draws up collection designs, themes, and concepts, and hosts consultations with staff members while observing the daily operations of the studio.

The concept room features a large brown wooden desk that has a lower shelf attached to it containing a number of fabric rolls. There is a metal clothing rack right next to the viewing/display shelf that hangs a number of luxury garments. The garments are sorted in three categories: “Client”, “Fabric Production” and “Production samples”.

Adjacent to the metal clothing rack is a large red metal cabinet. Within the red cabinet drawers are an assortment of design sketches from each of the brand’s collections. Each of the eight drawers is individually labelled; ‘Client’, ‘V. C.001’ (VIVIERS collection), ‘Concept pieces V.C 001’, ‘Client V.C 002’, ‘Lezanne’, and ‘Accessories V.A 001’. On top of the cabinet are two black torso mannequins, both adorned with tin can openers that have been connected and designed to be styled as necklace pieces.

Beside the cabinet, is a wooden framed mirror that has another clothing rack on its left. This clothing rack features garments that are part of the brand’s current sale catalogue. In front of the rack stands a glass table with six army-green velvet chairs. The dining set features accents of gold trimming. I am told that this is the space Lezanne works from. The table is ruffled with

A4 sheets of design sketches and some of the chairs have a number of zip swatches in different colours. Almost all the shades are there, teal, shades of maroon, coral greens, and blues, black, white, orange, neon yellow, and red.

In the right corner of the room, there is a sort of lounge area fitted with two (a one-seater and a two-seater) mustard yellow mid-century low-drop couches that have been fitted in white wooden framing. Making the area look like it had just been picked up from the sixties. This lounge area gave me a flashback of the Lotus House. Centring the lounge sofas is a glass table accented with silver structuring that has a number of tote bags priced at R2800 that feature a sort of mesh material on the handles and top outline of the bags. There is also a collection of hand towels that feature unique prints that have been grouped into bundles of 8 priced at R1200 and pure wool blankets placed on the glass table and draped on the mustard three-seater sofa each priced at R680. Right next to this abandoned sitting area is a bare mannequin that hangs from a metal stand.

Between the digital workspace and the concept room, stands a large wooden cutting table that acts as a storage space for rolls of fabrics both locally and internationally sourced. Behind the cutting table is a bookshelf that connects with the digital working space. Stored within the cubby holes of the shelves are a number of reference books such as *Tribal peoples of Southern Africa* by Barbra Tyrell, *My eternal soul* by Yayo Kusam, *Africa Rising: Fashion, designing & Lifestyle from Africa*, *African Heritage* by Barbara Tyrell, *How to leave your body behind*, *Mexican textiles* and four collections of Vogue magazine all from the 20th century, Namely the February 1987, March 1988, June 1986 and December 1987 editions. Interestingly Barbara Tyrell is a well-known South African ethnographic artist whose work focused on “illustrating and documenting the disappearing tribal dress of African people” (Jenkins 2012, 1).

The administration and concept room in the studio can be analysed through the lens of cultural capital, which helps us understand how the room's design and resources reflect the studio's cultural standing in the fashion industry. The room is adorned with visual elements, such as the viewing self and luxury garments on display, which showcase the studio's engagement with fashion aesthetics and craftsmanship. These artefacts signify the studio's cultural capital and contribute to its reputation and status within the industry.

Additionally, the concept room serves as the creative hub where the head designer develops collection designs and themes. This space embodies the studio's cultural capital through the creative process itself. The presence of reference books, fashion magazines, and cultural texts further reinforces the studio's cultural literacy and ability to position itself within the wider fashion discourse. These resources provide intellectual nourishment and inspiration, enhancing the studio's ability to create designs that are informed, meaningful, and resonate with broader cultural trends.

Furthermore, the physical layout of the room, with designated workspaces and a cutting table, reflects the studio's organizational knowledge and efficiency. This organizational cultural capital enables smooth operations, timely production, and attention to detail, all of which are valued in the fashion industry. Overall, the administration and concept room exemplify the studio's cultural capital through its visual presentation, engagement with cultural references, creative processes, and organizational efficiency, all of which contribute to its success in the fashion industry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the various spaces within the VIVIERS studio, including the studio dungeon, the administration and concept room, as well as the pattern-making and fabric-cutting room, through the lens of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital.

Through this analysis, we have gained insights into how cultural capital operates in these spaces and contributes to the studio's success and reputation in the fashion industry.

The studio dungeon serves as the vibrant recycling hub for VIVIERS, where cut-off materials and fabrics from previous collections are carefully organized and stored. The meticulous labelling of containers, the presence of fabric cupboards, and the reuse of materials highlight the studio's cultural capital in terms of resourcefulness, sustainability, and a deep understanding of their craft. The preservation and organization of these materials not only demonstrate the studio's cultural competence but also provide a rich resource for future design work, enabling the studio to draw on its cultural capital to inform and inspire new creations.

Moving to the administration and concept room, we observe the studio's cultural capital manifested through visual presentation, engagement with cultural references, and organizational efficiency. The curated display of luxury garments, the presence of reference books and fashion magazines, and the efficient layout of workspaces reflect the studio's cultural literacy and their ability to position themselves within the broader fashion discourse. Moreover, the pattern-making and fabric-cutting room showcases the studio's technical expertise, precision, and attention to detail. The specialized equipment, cutting tables, and storage systems demonstrate the studio's organizational cultural capital, enabling the smooth execution of patterns and fabric cutting, which are crucial stages in the design and production process.

By understanding and leveraging its cultural capital, be it through the resourceful utilization of materials in the dungeon, the curated references in the administration and concept room, or the technical proficiency in the pattern-making and fabric-cutting room, VIVIERS strategically positions itself as a knowledgeable, competent, and respected player in the fashion industry. The studio's ability to harness cultural capital across these spaces contributes to its overall success, reputation, and continued growth as a prominent fashion brand.

In conclusion, the analysis of these spaces within the VIVIERS studio has revealed the multifaceted nature of cultural capital and its profound impact on the studio's identity, creative output, and industry positioning. By recognizing and capitalizing on their cultural capital, the studio thrives in the competitive fashion landscape, continually pushing boundaries, and influencing trends through its innovative designs and sustainable practices.

CHAPTER 5

Insight and Entry into Industry

This chapter shares the personal narratives and methods of entry used by each of my research participants when gaining access to the local fashion industry and VIVIERS Studio. The chapter highlights conversations around elitism, exclusivity and education that exist within the fashion and garment-making industry. It is through this chapter that I intend to understand the roles played by institutions of higher learning, mass media and social media applications such as Instagram and the impact of networking as key tools for gaining access and entry into the fashion industry.

Kitchen-table-talks: Forming eco-dialogs during fieldwork

The cool shaded transitional kitchen became our safe space. Due to the almost unbearable heat that penetrated through the large glass walls of the studio, midday on a chilly winter's day in July quickly turned the administration area into a tanning station. On my first visit to the new studio space, Liso explained that when the sun was really scorching as a means to protect their faces from the sun, the administration team would usually throw on the blue and white plastic crochet hats that were part of the recent Motherboard collection of 2022. The administration team which consisted of Liso, Cebo, Abby, Ameira and Chiara who is the manager of the production team on the lower level, would have their lunch break at one in the afternoon in the upstairs kitchen. I chose this space as the third designated interview space because of how relaxed and easy-going the team would be whenever we would be in there. The heat aided in this decision-making. When it would be too uncomfortable to work in the digital workspace, they would all, except for Chiara, gradually move to work in the kitchen.

The wooden island stood in the centre of the kitchen and would almost, as if it were controlled by the snap of a finger, quickly shift from playing the host of a cosy lunch area to an air-

conditioned communal workspace oasis. In the space of an hour, the island would move from being a hotspot for conversations around what happened over the weekend or complaints around load-shedding all while being cluttered with lunch options from Woolworths, steaming cups of rooibos tea or freshly made coffee, a hot bowl of Maggie 2-minute noodles or home-packed lunch boxes to an organised working station. The wooden island would then support fully charged silver MacBooks, notepads and floating comments on the upcoming September fashion show and the way forward on the lookbook for Milan Fashion Week.

Academia, the internet, and media as access cards

The time-sensitive kitchen-table-talks with each of my participants illuminated the extent to which the local and international fashion industry can exist in an elitist, and sometimes hard-to-access bubble. It was in between water and tea breaks that I observed how the means necessary for gaining informed knowledge on the fashion industry, its internal workings and access to its academic knowledge production machine can be quite challenging. Requiring a higher-than-normal level of interest in the industry and a good deal of patience when doing Instagram or Google searches. This chapter acts as an introduction to four of my eight research participants and will show how mass media, specifically television, social media, the internet, and the world of fashion academia have all played crucial roles in providing adequate access cards into the elusive world of the fashion industry for each of my participants.

Liso's introduction to the world of fashion was birthed by a natural interest in clothing that developed and matured over the years into a passion for the industry. They explained that their interest stemmed from their mother who was their first style influence when growing up. Liso describes their mother as someone who "was always put together and well dressed and loves dressing up and being stylish." As a young child who grew up in the suburbs of Pretoria, Liso's first point of entry for gaining knowledge about the fashion industry was through television

programs and channels. “I started watching a program on DSTV that was called Fashion TV. A lot of the media that I was consuming was fashion-centric.” This early film and television exposure included watching cartoons from the late 90s to early 2000s like Brats, MyScene, and Totally Spies and popular series such as Sex and the City and Gossip Girl which aired from the late 2000s through the early 2010s.

To further their fashion interests, Liso graduated from the London International School of Fashion (LISOF) a design and retail academy that is now known as STADIO Higher Education with a bachelor’s degree in design which took four years to complete. They credit the university as a space that provided them with access to the fundamentals of fashion. It was here that they learnt about patterns, trend analysis, sewing, designing and fashion history. LISOF was an environment that offered a holistic scope of academic knowledge produced in and around the fashion industry, allowing Liso to gain deeper insight into the industry.

Fashion history was one of their favourite modules in varsity. For Liso the course provided insight into how fashion plays a critical role in human history, especially when attempting to understand how we communicate or interpret art, our own personalities, economic standings, social developments, and cultures. “I did quite a lot of fashion history, which was very fun to do because I do love learning about the history of fashion because it does play an important role in humans in human history and the evolution of mankind, like clothes, played a huge role into where we are today.”

Both Liso and Cebo pointed out how they only really learnt about the true ins and outs of the fashion industry through their personal academic journeys. Liso explained that “it is hard to learn more about fashion when you don't have a person who properly educates you and explains things to you. You can read books, you can watch documentaries, which are things I did. But I

felt like going into a school with that as its focus would help me understand things that I couldn't get from magazines, books, or documentaries”.

Cebo shared that although she had always had a passion for clothing, studying fashion was not her first choice, in fact during her final years in high school she was convinced that she would study law. She had even applied to local universities for a degree in BCom Law but explained that after receiving her matric results her decision “just didn’t feel right”. “It actually took a while for me to decide I wanted to work in fashion because I was always a creative person. I had an interest towards fashion, and I used to like to cut up my clothes and like to sew things when I was small, but it was always just treated as a hobby, like not nothing I took seriously”.

Like Liso she caught the fashion bug as a child by watching television programs, as she puts it “2008 Heidi Klum and Tim Gunn’s Project Runway”. While watching shows like Project Runway, a younger Cebo would emulate the show contestants by cutting up her own clothes and making new homemade garments for her younger sister to model in their childhood home. It was only after taking a gap year in 2020 after the Covid-19 pandemic hit that Cebo’s father suggested she study fashion. “It was actually really my dad who got me studying fashion because he knew I had an interest in it, but we also didn't know what that means in the South African context. Like where do you study?”

At first, Cebo saw her decision to study fashion as a mistake, something that happened by chance “but when it happened it felt right”. It was her father who was tasked with googling and finding out where exactly she might attend fashion school in the country. “He essentially did all the research and found FEDISA, found [out that] there was a Vega degree, found all the places, showed me the options, and then I just went for it.”

As a second-year student at Future Excellence Design Institute South Africa (FEDISA) a Fashion School, located in Sandton, Johannesburg Cebo credits the modules that form part of

her Bachelor of Arts in Fashion degree with providing a holistic approach to studying fashion. While explaining an opinion she had obtained from an assignment she was tasked with for a Communications and Social Studies class, she explained how her degree is structured and why she preferred it that way. For her having modules that are a combination of practical and theory-based makes the degree feel more useful when she will have to step into the working world. “I’m getting a really holistic degree, I feel like I can graduate, and I don’t only have to sew or start a brand. I like that my course still feels very academic”.

Cebo and Liso are great examples of how the knowledge produced in and about the fashion industry can be hard for one to access. The knowledge I refer to here is not just about learning more about the latest trends in fashion or knowing how to sew. Private fashion universities like FEDISA have bachelor’s degrees that cover visual studies where learners are taught about conceptual design, storyboarding, illustration, and computer aided design (FEDISA, BA degree 2021). Subjects and courses like Business Studies and Clothing Technology are also part of the Bachelor of Arts degree curriculum. In Clothing Technology, students cover pattern technology, pattern grading, technical drawing, garment & textile technology, and textiles theory (FEDISA, BA degree 2021). Such knowledge is not easily accessible from the internet or from buying a collection of fashion-making books. Attending such a university is a privilege.

The ability and opportunity to understand the internal workings or foundations of the fashion industry as shown through Liso and Cebo’s academic journeys not only requires a passion for fashion but funds to enter private institutions of higher learning such as STADIO and FEDISA. In 2023 a first-year student at FEDISA is charged a total of R106,217.00 for the entire year’s school fees (FEDISA, Fees Schedule 2023). This includes tuition fees, software licences for Adobe Creative Cloud, textbooks and sewing kits. Students studying a Bachelor of Arts in Fashion are also required to have their own sewing machine, a tool that can easily cost over four thousand rands.

In a country like South Africa where the average household disposable income in 2021 totalled about R50,000.00 (fifty thousand rand) per annum (Galal 2022) paying FEDISA fees are impossible without taking out a loan or receiving funding. In 2021 FEDISA ran a 'FEDISA Creative Leaders Bursary' where only three 'lucky' students could stand a chance of winning the bursary competition valued at R30,000.00 (thirty thousand rands) (FEDISA, creative leader's bursary 2021).

With such limited options of entry into the industry as an educated expert, labelling the fashion industry as 'elitist' and 'excluding' (Svendsen 2006) is well deserved. If only a select few have the means or opportunity to enter such institutions or really learn about the essence of what it takes to be a fashion designer or illustrator, then entry into the field is not equal. When students, future fashion buyers and pattern makers need to take out loans just to have the opportunity to engage with fashion theories, histories, and future-forward tools it is not just the education system as a whole that is elitist. The universities that provide such specialised skills and knowledge should face criticism. Just like the #FeesMustFall movement of 2016 (Hodes 2017) there is room for more critical engagement around decolonising fashion schools (Bedford 2020) and providing access to all not just those who can afford it.

Bourdieu's field theory can help explain how certain institutions, such as fashion schools or prestigious fashion houses, function as gatekeepers, defining and reinforcing the rules of the game. These institutions act as key players within the field, controlling the allocation of symbolic capital, such as recognition and prestige. My time spent at the studio revealed that participants who had received formal education from reputable fashion schools often had an advantage in terms of acquiring cultural capital, which then translated into better opportunities for entry and success within the industry.

In Bourdieu's field theory, institutions play a crucial role in shaping and maintaining the power dynamics within a particular field. Within the field of fashion, institutions such as fashion schools, renowned designers, fashion houses, and industry publications hold significant cultural and symbolic capital. They establish and reinforce the dominant norms, tastes, and trends that shape the field.

These institutions have historically held a monopoly over the production and dissemination of fashion knowledge, controlling access to resources, networks, and opportunities within the field. They act as gatekeepers, determining who is considered legitimate and who is excluded from the field. As a researcher, it is essential to recognize the influence and power that these institutions wield within the fashion industry.

However, in recent years, the rise of social media and online platforms has disrupted the dominance of these traditional fashion institutions. Influencers and online communities have emerged as alternative sources of fashion authority, challenging the institutionalized hierarchy and opening up new possibilities for participation and recognition. These digital platforms have enabled individuals to bypass the gatekeeping mechanisms of traditional institutions and establish their own influence and credibility within the field.

Securing Internships via Instagram and Networking; Internal crisis and Fact-checking

Having taken a more traditional academic route, Ameira, and Abby both attended The University of the Witwatersrand (WITS). Abby graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Social Anthropology in 2020 and received a diploma in Business in 2021. Ameira completed three of the four years required for a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre but due to financial reasons, she had to leave the university in 2021.

Ameira's formal introduction into the working world of the fashion industry happened in March 2022 with the help of the social media application Instagram. She explained how her

application and confirmation to the role of an intern at VIVIERS Studio happened through direct messages on the application. “It was just like an Instagram post. They said we are looking for interns and volunteers to come and do set design, like styling things, jewellery, making things. I hit them up and they were like, okay, cool, come”. For her Instagram was a loophole. A portal on her phone created access to a luxury clothing brand and a job in the fashion industry. ‘Sliding’ into VIVIERS Studio’s DM’s (direct messages) was as simple as messaging a friend. From those instant messages, she was able to secure a weeks-long internship for the Motherboard fashion show in March 2022. However, it was her networking skills and charm at the Turbine Art Fair that secured her role as a returning intern for the brand. Jokingly, she explained that it was Lezanne’s baby who interviewed her for the returning role. Instagram and the Turbine Art Fair as social media applications and industry networking spaces proved to be instrumental tools that provided access into the fashion industry for Ameira.

One could argue that if the (South African) fashion industry was so elite and exclusive how is it that both Ameira and I two women of colour were able to get junior role jobs simply by sending direct messages on Instagram? Access to smartphones and the money required to have a smartphone should be noted here. Technological tools such as smartphones are not objects everyone has access to. You are also required to be active and participate on a platform like Instagram which has its own elitist connotations and undertones (Marwick 2014). The fact that both Ameira and I only worked as freelancers in junior roles that are not stable and known to be exploitative in nature should be acknowledged too (Entwistle and Wissinger 2006).

Networking and solid connections proved to be a key asset in Abby’s arsenal too. Her introduction to the brand was through a connection she had made with a make-up artist named Caroline. Abby worked under Caroline for several years as an assistant make-up artist. As a team, they worked for the brand on a few fashion shows and shoots. This was Abby’s ‘foot in the door’ moment. She explained that while completing her business diploma at the Wits

Business School, she was required to complete a two-month-long internship with a company of her choosing. VIVIERS Studio was her first choice.

Having had the experience of working in the fashion industry before, for a smaller clothing company, Abby explained that the practises and conversations that were happening at her previous job were worrying. “I noticed that they really weren't interested in who made their stuff or cared about where their fabrics came from. They once made a joke, oh, let's go to Thailand and make it there because we can have things made cheaper there. I felt very offended by that”.

She shared how she had experienced a moment of crisis when she began working in the fashion industry and was contemplating leaving it all for charity work. Abby was at a crossroads, after acquiring knowledge about the industry from YouTube, listening to podcasts and reading articles on topics around water wastage, inhumane labour practises and the methods used in the discarding of garments. “I just didn't know if I wanted to work in an industry that was so bad”.

She commented on how hard it was to know more about the internal workings of the fashion industry. For Abby, the information and knowledge about the practices that the industry is involved in are not obvious to those who are not intentionally looking to know more. Abby choosing to intern at VIVIERS Studio was not only due to the connection she had made with Caroline or while networking with the head designer Lezanne during fashion shows. For Abby, her choice was motivated by the brand’s openness about where they source their materials and how their garments are made. She credits making this choice to becoming more aware of the eco world, “it's a principal thing”.

Personal values and principles were a strong driving force for Liso when they had to choose a brand they might want to apply to for work after graduating. Because of Liso’s academic

background and the knowledge, they gained in the fashion industry, their job search and brand selection were based on what Liso describes as a 'personal ethos'. For Liso, working in the industry was the next step in their academic journey. They found out about VIVIERS through a Google search of 'South African Luxury fashion labels', "I just wanted to see what designers from our country were actually producing. I felt like the next step after learning academically was gaining an experience of a luxury brand, and how it operates, especially one that has such a strong, sustainable practice".

To learn more about the company and its sustainable fashion efforts Liso went through the VIVIERS Studio website and the brand's Instagram page. Liso was excited about the possibility of joining the brand as an intern but remained cautious about the possibility of greenwashing that could be happening within the brand. "It was exciting for me to find a luxury label in South Africa that did avant-garde clothing at a high-end level, but still cared about sustainability. I didn't like, walk into it blindly, I kind of was like okay, I'm gonna come here and see if we're actually being sustainable."

This section explores how individuals navigate the contemporary landscape of internships, relying on social media platforms like Instagram and networking opportunities to secure valuable positions. By applying Bourdieu's theory of culture, we are able to gain insights into how cultural capital and social distinctions shape the processes of internship acquisition, contributing to both opportunities and internal crises within the industry.

In Bourdieu's theory, cultural capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and cultural tastes that individuals possess and that are valued within a particular social context. Within the field of fashion, cultural capital plays a pivotal role in determining one's access to internships. Those with a high level of cultural capital, acquired through education, exposure, and immersion in the fashion world, are more likely to secure internships compared to individuals who lack such

capital. This is because fashion internships often require a specific set of knowledge and familiarity with industry practices, trends, and aesthetics. By leveraging their cultural capital, individuals can position themselves as desirable candidates, showcasing their understanding of the field and their ability to contribute meaningfully to the industry.

The advent of social media platforms like Instagram has significantly transformed the landscape of fashion internships. Instagram has become a powerful tool for self-promotion, networking, and establishing social connections within the industry. Individuals can strategically curate their online presence, showcasing their fashion sense, style, and industry knowledge. By amassing followers and engaging with influencers and industry insiders, they increase their social capital, which in turn enhances their chances of securing internships. The ability to present oneself as culturally knowledgeable and well-connected on platforms like Instagram becomes a form of symbolic capital, reinforcing one's status and attractiveness as a candidate for coveted internships.

However, this reliance on social media platforms also gives rise to an internal crisis within the fashion industry. The proliferation of influencers and the emphasis on online visibility can lead to a saturation of self-promotion and a blurring of authenticity. With the democratization of fashion content creation and the increasing prevalence of influencer culture, it becomes challenging to distinguish between genuine expertise and strategic self-presentation. This crisis of legitimacy calls for fact-checking and discernment, as the credibility and authenticity of individuals vying for internships are scrutinized.

In this context, Bourdieu's theory of culture sheds light on the power dynamics at play. Those who possess a higher degree of cultural capital can navigate this crisis more effectively, as they can draw on their genuine expertise and established networks to secure internships. On the other hand, individuals with limited cultural capital may find themselves marginalized or

overlooked, despite their potential and enthusiasm. This perpetuates social distinctions and reinforces existing hierarchies within the fashion field.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter delves into the personal narratives and entry methods used by the research participants to gain access to the local fashion industry and VIVIERS Studio. It explores concepts such as elitism, exclusivity, and education within the fashion and garment-making industry, and the role of institutions, mass media, and social media in providing access and opportunities.

The chapter highlights the significance of personal connections and networking, as well as the role of institutions of higher learning, such as fashion schools, in equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the industry. Participants like Liso and Cebo emphasize the importance of formal education in gaining a deeper understanding of fashion history, design, and other aspects of the industry. However, it also acknowledges that access to such education is often limited to those who can afford it, making the industry elitist and exclusive.

Furthermore, the chapter explores the impact of social media platforms like Instagram in providing alternative avenues for entry into the fashion industry. Participants like Ameira share their experiences of securing internships and opportunities through direct messages on Instagram, highlighting the democratizing potential of digital platforms. However, it is important to note that access to smartphones and active participation on social media platforms still require resources and may not be universally accessible.

The chapter also touches upon Bourdieu's field theory, which emphasizes the role of institutions as gatekeepers that define and reinforce the rules and power dynamics within the fashion field. Traditional fashion institutions, renowned designers, and industry publications

hold significant cultural and symbolic capital, determining who is considered legitimate and who is excluded from the industry. However, the rise of social media and online platforms has disrupted this hierarchy, allowing individuals to establish their own influence and credibility within the field.

Overall, this chapter highlights the complexities of gaining access and entry into the fashion industry, with a focus on the roles played by education, institutions, mass media, social media, and networking. It calls for critical engagement and discussions around elitism and exclusivity within the industry, advocating for more inclusive and accessible opportunities for aspiring fashion professionals.

CHAPTER 6

Intimate Spaces of Influence: Agents for a Field of Sustainable Fashion

This ethnographic chapter is interested in the intimate spaces where ideas and conversations around sustainability occur and how such discourse results in the formation of alternative methods of fashioning oneself and conceptualising fashion. Through noting the established and new players that make up the current sustainable fashion industry this chapter suggests a need for the legitimization of a ‘field of Sustainable Fashion’. The chapter follows three participants, who all began their careers in the fashion industry as interns at VIVIERS Studio. This chapter aims to identify the research participants and their intimate spaces of influence as new players or agents that make up the field of sustainable fashion.

My time spent in the studio, the insight I gained from open discussions and debates over lunch in the kitchen and personal stories from interviews all reminded me of the work produced by Bourdieu primarily his work on field theory.

It was here that I observed and heard of the possible agents that could make up a field of sustainable fashion. Being in the studio daily, touching used fabrics, reading storage labels, and investigating the studio archive, it was there where I observed practices that create and play host to the individuals and environments that I propose as the newcomers and agents that will form part of a Field of Sustainable Fashion. These are lifestyle conversion and the eco-kin.

This chapter begins with a short reflection on Bourdieu’s theory on fields and what moving toward an established Field of Sustainable fashion means. By unpacking both concepts mentioned above, the chapter seeks to comment on how intimate and public social spaces - such as the home and work environment, and interactions within social media platforms such as YouTube or blogs - can have a direct influence and impact on how individuals think about

their relationship with the fashion industry, their everyday clothing practices and what that means for the environment.

The Possibility of a Field of Sustainable Fashion

It was my introduction to Pierre Bourdieu and his work in the Field of Fashion through Agnès Rocamora (2016) that caused a lightbulb moment. After all the progress made in the fashion industry, the advocating by NGOs and consumers, amended policies on trade and labour practices, and the increase of sustainable fashion brands in the last decade, surely one can now argue that there are enough grounds for a Field of Sustainable Fashion.

Bourdieu's notion of the field developed through his writings in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), *Sociology in question* (1993) and *The rules of art* (1996). Rocamora summarises Bourdieu's notion of the field as “a microcosm structured by the power relations between forces of conservation and forces of transformation, and the state of these power relations at a particular historical time determines the structure of the field at that time” (2016, 234-235). Within fields, meanings and values are not inherent in things, they are rather understood as relational, therefore the struggle for a definition of their dominant values is a key characteristic of fields (Rocamora 2016, 234). In addition, a field is also characterised by “established players and newcomers who contest for the power to define what can be acknowledged as a legitimate practice, aesthetic or norm” (Rocamora 2016, 234).

Field theory can be applied to explore or suggest the potential emergence of a separate field of sustainable fashion or sub-field within the field of fashion. This new field would have its own actors, rules, and codes, distinct from those of the mainstream fashion industry. The actors within the field of sustainable fashion would include designers, manufacturers, retailers, and consumers who prioritize sustainability and ethical practices. They would negotiate and establish new rules and codes, such as standards for sustainable production, material sourcing,

and supply chain transparency. The actors within the field of sustainable fashion would need to negotiate and establish these new rules and codes in order to define and legitimize their position within the industry.

Agents for a new field

We would like to believe that the choices we make on the clothes we wear, the aesthetics we subscribe to, our garment consumption and maintenance practices and our purchasing motivations are all decisions we make without great external influence. Unfortunately, it is not that straightforward. There are a number of socioeconomic factors that have a direct influence on what we choose to wear, why we choose to shop at a specific clothing store or prefer a specific cut on a dress or skirt. One's financial situation, global movements, religious adherences, cultural customs, work environment, social interactions with friends, family and technology, social and political activism and ever-changing fashion trends all have a direct influence and impact on how we choose to dress, our views about the fashion industry and how we take part in the practice of shopping for clothing. These actors, social interactions and technologies should all be considered.

Let us consider the established players that may make up a “field of sustainable fashion” in South Africa. International Organisations for change (Dake 2022) such as the Sustainable Fashion Apparel, the Ethical Fashion Forum, and the UN Alliance For Sustainable Fashion. Local sustainable fashion brands like VIVIERS Studio, Fundudzi, and Sitting Pretty or local digital platforms such as Twyg that advocate and educate on circularity, equity, and sustainability within the industry. Twyg is a South African digital platform that is focused on “creating content, events and campaigns to promote a way of being that is sustainable, circular, regenerative, caring and ethical” (Twyg n.d.).

The digital platform officially launched the annual Twyg Sustainable Fashion Awards in 2019 “to celebrate designers who use sustainable practices and to promote their work to consumers” (Twyg n.d.). Now throw in a growing number of fashion consumers who have become avid second-hand fashion enthusiasts, minimalists, and environmentalists all of whom have seemingly gone against the norm of choosing fast fashion options when it comes to the items they buy or stores they prefer to shop in.

As sustainable fashion gains legitimacy and recognition, it could challenge the dominance of the mainstream fashion industry and prompt a broader reconsideration of the values and practices that underpin the fashion industry. As a new field, sustainable fashion can challenge existing power dynamics in the broader field of fashion by disrupting the traditional hierarchy of cultural and symbolic capital. The adoption of sustainable practices and values by a significant portion of the industry could challenge the dominance of luxury brands and designers that have historically held the most cultural and symbolic capital. This shift could create opportunities for new actors to enter the field and establish themselves as legitimate and influential players. Additionally, the emergence of a field of sustainable fashion may prompt a broader reconsideration of the power dynamics and values that underpin the fashion industry.

Lifestyle Conversion and The Influential Eco-Kin

In life we progress from being a child raised in a home to attending nursery then primary school and eventually matriculating from high school. Some will get the chance to attend varsity with the goal of having a job. Each of these institutions; the home, school and work, and the knowledge they produce and regurgitate to us in each stage of our lives introduce us to new ideas about life, the objects that make up our lives and how we could live it.

My time spent with each of my participants highlighted the influence of the home, immediate family members and the objects that store our material possessions. Specifically, how each of

these institutions can have an impact on the way we see and think about our clothing practises. During interviews, each of my participants highlighted how their family members had an impact on how they choose to think and reason about conversations around sustainability when it came to their food choices, where they shop for clothing and how they think about the fashion industry.

This subsection is called lifestyle conversion and the influential *eco-kin*. *Lifestyle conversion* is not a new term and has been used within the health and religious sectors (Noar, et al. 2011) (Lorenzen 2012). The concept has been used to describe an individual who has gone through the process of changing or completely moving away from past behaviours for personal reasons. With regard to this research report, I have chosen this label to describe the process established players/agents within the field of sustainable fashion go through when making the conscious decision – based on the knowledge they have gained from the industry or outside parties – to change their own clothing and eating practices.

The concept of the ‘*influential eco-kin*’ describes any person within the home who is informed or passionate about environmentalism. This individual will usually go through a process of a *lifestyle change*. They are the ones who initiate conversations around sustainability at home. It is important to note here that this is not always the case. As shown through Ameira, this individual can also be motivated by social and economic conditions. Ultimately, this individual displays having a significant impact and influence on how their family members think, discuss and practise environmentalism and sustainability within the home.

Cebo and Liso play dual roles in their homes. They have both made the decision to completely convert their approaches to food and clothing while also playing the role of the *influential eco-kin* in their family. Reshaping the way their family members think about food and their clothing

practices. Ameira on the other hand, falls under the '*influential eco-kin*' label. She gets the conversation going while also influencing family members to rethink their shopping practices.

Lifestyle conversion

The concept of '*Lifestyle conversion*' came from hearing how both Cebo and Liso completely converted to veganism or plant-based-ism. This was due to personal motivations and values that were influenced by becoming more environmentally aware of their own carbon footprint. Liso's appreciation of the planet and the animals that call it home played a huge part in how they would ultimately choose to live their life. Their personal motivations and values would develop into what Liso described as a "personal ethos". This driving force seeped into the minute and larger aspects of their life. Impacting where they choose to work, how they choose to travel, dress, shop, the food they eat and the materials they would use to make their own clothing.

Liso's lifestyle conversion was driven by wanting to retain the beauty of nature. Becoming a plant-based eater, opting not to drive, being selective on the types of garments they buy and collect in their wardrobe or the quality and nature of fabrics they use to make garments were all key aspects of their lifestyle conversion. As an everyday practice, lifestyle conversion for Liso allowed them to show gratitude to nature, their main source of creative inspiration.

They explain and see this practice as the most logical thing to do. "You get inspired by nature. So, it would be redundant if you're trying to take inspiration from nature and all of its beauty, then overdoing it. It's just damaging to not really look after our atmosphere and our environment. So that's why I became a plant-based eater, just so I can reduce my carbon footprint and emissions and I wanted my career path to have the same ties to it".

Liso's eco-awareness and personal values were their motivation for the conversion. During kitchen-table-talks there were many conversations centred around food. Both Liso and Cebo were quite specific in what food they would eat and where they would buy or order from. Specific food stores like the local Woolworths and Pick n' Pay were usually preferred. It was interesting to see how whenever the conversation on why Liso became plant-based came up, they would always refer to their personal values. Liso would comment on how it is not just the food they ate but that they have made an active choice to be conscious about their carbon footprint in most aspects of their personal life.

Here we see how one's own personal values and opinions around environmentalism can have an impact on the way they choose to live their life and exist within society. The practice begins as a conscious effort to rethink, reflect, and critique one's consumption practices. Ultimately the lifestyle conversion I observed amongst Liso and Cebo required a rejection of consumption norms dictated by society, like driving a car, eating meat, or constantly wanting to buy new clothes.

With Liso we see the practice in its settled stage. They had no desire to debate on matters surrounding consumption but rather engage in open conversations around food alternatives colleges could try if they were keen. The choice made here is a personal one, that gives gratification to Liso and speaks directly to their own values and motivation. The environmental benefits and impact of Liso's lifestyle conversion may seem small, but it is their willingness and openness to engage in dialogue with others in the workspace that can plant seeds for change in others.

Liso's form of lifestyle conversion captures the essence of embodied capital, a habitus (Bourdieu, 1986) that has been consciously crafted. One can also argue that the fact that Liso attended a private institution of higher learning where they acquired knowledge on sustainable

fashion, also present cultural capital in its institutionalised state (Bourdieu, 1986). Emphasis on an embodied state is due to how Liso has now come to think about and understand ideas around food, work and fashion in relation to a personal ethos. One that is tied to environmentalism and sustainability and has been archived through a process of self-improvement and questioning. Although Liso's embodied capital cannot be bought it can be shared and passed down to friends and family members through enlightening discussions on the harmful impact of the fashion industry or discussions on healthy eating. The sub-section titled '*The Influential eco-kin*' covers ethnography that shows how embodied capital is transmitted or shared.

Cebo's lifestyle conversion stemmed from adopting and actively becoming a conscious shopper. This decision also branched into the way she thinks about her everyday and special occasion clothing practices (which I cover in the next section) and eating habits. While describing her own fashion style and aesthetic, Cebo elaborated on how she related to the eco-ideals that have been making waves within the fashion and sustainable fashion world recently. "In the sustainable fashion world and the mainstream fashion world they talk about conscious shopping and being a conscious shopper and like drawing back. I feel like there are conscious shopping habits in my life, basically saying that I think the conscious shopper mindset, which is really just a minimalist mindset, has translated into most of my consumer choices".

Although Cebo completely converted to veganism, it was her comment on becoming a conscious shopper that stood out most to me. This was not the first time I had heard of the concept. What stood out most was where she referenced picking up the term. She learned about this concept from both the 'sustainable fashion world' and the 'fashion world'. I thought surely it would be contradictory for the fashion world to support such a movement. The fundamental ideals of a conscious shopper completely go against the current fashion industry's production

model, so it was interesting to hear that the ‘contemporary’ fashion industry promoted such an environmentally-centred concept.

This made me think of Mariko Takedomi Karlsson and Vansa Ramasar’s (2020) work titled *Selling women the green dream: the paradox of feminism and sustainability in fashion marketing*. I have come to understand that it is vital that we critique the motivations behind why fashion corporations and conglomerates are now interested in promoting a social image that is moving toward sustainable fashion.

It is interesting to see how this shift has coincided with the promotion, use and advancement of technology that is environment friendly specifically within the production chain and marketing sector of the industry. Brooks et al explain that this technocentric move by the fashion industry fosters the proponents of geoengineering, which sees innovation as a remedy to climate change (2017,497). In this case, the fashion industry has used technology and marketing as a “magic bullet” Brooks et al (2017,497). A Band-Aid solution to social, environmental, and political problems they have caused through exploitative practices such as harsh labour conditions and mass production which has led to increased landfills and water pollution. Problems that have a direct impact on communities within the Global South. This magic bullet is proposed as a ‘golden ticket’, an essential tool that can easily portray the industry as one that cares for the environment.

Greenwashing is a good example of a ‘magic bullet’ used by the fashion industry, through marketing. Fashion brands can promote an idealistic image of being seen as an industry that is associated with the development of the “good Anthropocene” Brooks et al (2017, 496) by associating themselves with imagery that displays eco-awareness and circular fashion practices.

Karlsson and Ramasar explore the “paradox of corporations using social and environmental justice concerns to market products that are themselves made in conditions of environmental and social injustice” (Karlsson and Ramasar 2020). In Cebo’s case, the marketing of environmental justice through the promotion of the conscious shopper had a positive effect on her current and future decision making unlike the participants interviewed by Karlsson and Ramasar (2020). Cebo took this concept and fully adopted it. Allowing her to rethink her clothing consumption practices while re-evaluating the value she places on her own clothing. During our interview, she did not comment on this paradox but rather took the source of the knowledge as credible and made a conscious decision to make a lifestyle conversion for herself and her wardrobe.

For Cebo lifestyle conversion began with the information she consumed from the fashion industry. It later required a conscious effort on her part, of changing how she thought about consumption and clothing. Which resulted in a clothing practice that is rooted in environmental awareness and the rejection of overconsumption. At first glance, the adoption of this practice seems as though it was made through an individual decision taken by Cebo with the help of the fashion industry. The following section will show that this is not the case. This next section looks at how in addition to the external knowledge we consume the individuals with whom we share our intimate environments, have an impact and influence on how we think about and practice environmentalism with regard to our eating and clothing practices.

The influential eco-kin

The individuals we share our homes with although having their own lives outside of the home tend to be our first teachers and role models. During our collective kitchen-table-talks and individual interviews, Cebo’s family members, and the influence they have in her life came up several times. She credited her older sister with not only introducing her to television shows

like Project Runway but also mentioned how her sister sparked the sustainable lifestyle conversation in their home.

Cebo explained how she only really began thrifting when her older sister suggested she watch 'The True Cost', a 2015 documentary film by Andrew Morgan that provides insight into fast fashion and several aspects of the global garment industry. "Thrifting became an actual practice for me after I watched The True Cost documentary. My older sister recommended it to me because she's vegan. She's like, very into sustainability. And now most of my family's vegan and my dad is a pescatarian. She wants to live a sustainable lifestyle and not only have it in what she eats, so she had watched The True Cost and learnt about the fashion industry. And she was like, this is good for you, watch it. I just remember crying while I was watching this documentary".

From the statement above one can see how Cebo's older sister who has her own vegan blog became the family's '*influential eco-kin*', starting up conversations around sustainability and eating habits through media pieces like a documentary. Not only has her sister influenced her but she has also had an impact on the family's dietary choices. The influential eco-kin here has also managed to plant a content creation bug in Cebo herself.

Cebo saw how her sister found passion in her own blog and was motivated to do something of her own in a similar lane. In 2020 during the Covid19 pandemic, out of boredom from being at home, she started her own YouTube Channel and Instagram page under the handle *@thriftsbycm*. Both content creation spaces focused on educating followers and subscribers on sustainable fashion. "It started in 2020, that year I wasn't at school. I was incredibly bored and needed something to do and my oldest sister has her vegan blog '24Carrots' so she was creating all of her vegan content. So I think, again, as a younger sibling, you're inspired by that. So I had like my very cringe Instagram feeds where I was like, I'm a

sustainable fashion girl. So I was like making all these like reels and doing infographics and like, just like sharing information about like, what I knew about sustainable fashion.”

The *influential eco-kin* was a catalyst in Cebo’s home. Her sister started conversations and shared opinions around sustainability and veganism not only with her blog readers but brought conversations around sustainable food and clothing directly into their home. Change happens through the actions of the influential eco-kin. Her influence, although small, made a large difference in their home. Each member of the family home now approaches their eating habits differently. If we look at Cebo specifically, due to the actions and efforts of the *influential eco-kin* she now sees herself as a ‘conscious shopper’. Making conscious efforts in what she eats, where she shops and what she chooses to put out into the public sphere. The knowledge Cebo gained from documentaries, articles and observing her own sister influenced her to influence and educate others outside of her home through social media. The sustainability-centred, knowledge web spun by her sister’s interest and personal motivations created threads of influence that penetrated outside of their home.

Cebo’s older sister should not only be seen as a player within the field of sustainable fashion because she challenges the norms and values put forward by established players within the fashion and food industry. Her decision to share gained knowledge not only with her family but an online community she has created is an example of how embodied capital can be transmitted within the field. Although the passing down or sharing of embodied capital can take time to really evoke change, the efforts of players like Cebo and her sister is necessary in the field of sustainable fashion.

In *Haute Couture and Haute Culture* Bourdieu explains how the “precondition for entry in the field is recognition of the values at stake” (P. Bourdieu 2020, 48). In this instance, an agent like Cebo (who has an institutionalised state of cultural capital in the form of knowledge gained

from a fashion university) has come to learn and understand the values held by legitimate players in the field of fashion. Her entrance into the traditional field of fashion as a newcomer who is interested in values that challenge the traditional is characterised as a “subversion strategy” (Bourdieu 2020, 47). Newcomers like Cebo and her older sister whose values challenge the norm share internal struggles that Bourdieu explains “can only lead to partial revolutions that can destroy the hierarchy but not the game itself” (2020,48).

In the field of fashion, the game played between players (established and newcomers) is one that focuses on the accumulation of specific capital, be it social, cultural or economic and the radical reversal of the tables of value (Bourdieu 2020, 47). Players and agents like Cebo and her sister, are the individuals and institutions that struggle for dominance causing the field to be perpetually restructured (P. Bourdieu 2020, 49). Within the field of sustainable fashion, a key objective of the influential eco-kin is that of initiating the restructuring of the traditional field. Although the traditional field of fashion continues to function and thrive, the efforts of agents like Cebo and her sister should not be overlooked, through them revolution begins. Norms and values such as fast fashion are questioned and practices like harmful production models are criticised.

Like Cebo’s older sister, Ameira played a similar role of influence with her younger brother. In Ameira’s case, the intention was not to motivate her brother to become more aware of the harmful impacts of the fashion industry but rather to provide him with a means to level his playing field with others when it came to dressing himself.

Ameira explained how she saw thrifting as a means to level the playing field between those who can afford to shop in malls or by higher-end brands in comparison to those who cannot. “I feel like it [thrifting] kind of puts them on the same level. It also even maybe levels them up”. She chuckled at how she remembered tweeting once “Yoh, thank you God for making me

poor” explaining that it [poverty or being less privileged] gives you style and ‘swag’ because “you know how to do the most with the least ”.

In this instance, the practice of thrifting is seen as an economically accessible platform for those who come from middle to lower-end income backgrounds. Thrifting spaces like second-hand clothing stores and open second-hand markets give young individuals the means to obtain their own personal agency when it comes to creating and developing one's own sense of style and taste while allowing them to compete aesthetically with those who shop in malls or from higher-end brands.

This practice of sifting through bales of the ‘white man’s clothes’ in the inner city of Johannesburg has become a sort of gold mine for young individuals, an Egyptologist’s Valley of the Kings. Thrifting for Ameira gives her brother the means to have ‘drip’, style, and confidence through affordable clothes. She commented on how her brother is now able to access the latest trends or higher-end brands through second-hand clothing himself. “I want him to find his own style. I just wanted him to feel like, Okay, I can do this, I can do this for myself, and I can still drip.”

As the influential eco-kin, Ameira’s actions here were not motivated by personal environmental values. Second-hand clothing and the practice of thrifting were a ticket to self-confidence in social settings where the economic playing field is usually unbalanced. Although thrifting is a sustainable alternative to buying new garments produced by the fast fashion market, this practice can also be seen as a means to balance the unequal economic and social scales in a developing country like South Africa.

Players and agents like Ameira and her brother find themselves having to compete for capital within the game of fashion. The symbolic capital acquired through owning and wearing name-

brand clothing like Nike and or Gucci also requires economic capital. As the influential eco-kin, the social and cultural capital possessed by Ameria gives her an advantage in the game. She is aware of the economic situation she and her brother find themselves in but uses that to her advantage. In her struggle for symbolic capital through ‘drip’ her shortage of economic capital has forced her to make full use of her cultural capital. Playing the game for Ameira means taking full advantage of the social bonds she has created. During our interview, she proudly shared that she formed strategic relationships with the men who sell second-hand clothing in large bales in the inner city. Explaining that they would always allow her to negotiate prices when thrifting. Honing in on such relationships and those formed through becoming an intern at a sustainable luxury studio that proudly produces clothing from deadstock is just one aspect of how an agent like Ameria is able to struggle for and gain symbolic capital within the field.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the intimate spaces where ideas and conversations around sustainability in fashion take place, and how these discussions shape alternative methods of fashioning oneself and conceptualizing fashion. By examining the participants' experiences as interns at VIVIERS Studio, the chapter has identified these individuals and their family members as potential agents in the field of sustainable fashion.

Drawing inspiration from Bourdieu's field theory, the chapter has proposed the need for a "field of Sustainable Fashion" to legitimize and establish a distinct space for sustainable fashion within the broader fashion industry. Within this field, established players and newcomers would contest for the power to define legitimate practices and norms, setting new rules and codes that prioritize sustainability and ethical practices.

The chapter has also highlighted the influence of various socio-economic factors, such as financial situation, global movements, cultural customs, and technological advancements, on individuals' clothing practices and views about the fashion industry. It emphasizes the importance of considering these actors, social interactions, and technologies when examining the formation of a field of sustainable fashion.

Furthermore, the chapter discusses the concept of lifestyle conversion and the influential eco-kin, showcasing how personal values and motivations can drive individuals to make conscious decisions and adopt sustainable practices in their everyday lives. The participants' experiences demonstrate the impact of the home, immediate family members, and material possessions on their clothing practices and environmental consciousness.

The emergence of a field of sustainable fashion has the potential to challenge the dominance of the mainstream fashion industry and disrupt traditional power dynamics. It could prompt a broader reconsideration of the values and practices underlying the fashion industry, allowing new actors to enter the field and establish themselves as legitimate and influential players. Moreover, the shift towards sustainable fashion could foster a re-evaluation of power dynamics and values in the fashion industry as a whole.

In conclusion, this chapter has shed light on the agents and intimate spaces that contribute to the formation of a field of sustainable fashion. By recognizing the importance of these spaces and actors, we can better understand the potential for sustainable fashion to challenge and reshape the broader fashion industry. The insights gained from this research provide a foundation for further exploration and development of sustainable fashion as a distinct and influential field.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has successfully answered the primary research question: how is sustainability and sustainable fashion discussed and practised in the local South African fashion industry? The study determined that the concept of sustainability and its embedded ideals of eco-consciousness within sustainable fashion have been adopted in the form of a personal ethos amongst fashion consumers who work in the sustainable fashion industry. Furthermore, the study highlighted how sustainability is practiced as a key business model by fashion institutions such as VIVIERS Studios and as a tool for critique in fashion institutions of higher learning.

The study aimed to research the impact and influence of sustainability and sustainable fashion on fashion institutions and fashion consumers. The research data was collected through in-depth phenomenological interviews with eight participants all employed by VIVIERS Studio. In addition, participant-observation was applied to provide rich ethnographic detail and data on the inner workings and practice of sustainability within the sustainable luxury studio.

Findings revealed how institutions such as VIVIERS Studio which base their business model on sustainability have production and sourcing practices that challenge the traditional business model associated with fast fashion. Furthermore, the research highlighted how institutions (VIVIERS Studio, fashion universities and the home) and media (documentaries, articles, and social media) are able to shape and influence individual practices of fashion consumption, personal values and conceptions associated with the fashion industry. By applying Pierre Bourdieu's field theory and theory of cultural production the research demonstrates how sustainable fashion with its own values, rules, agents, practices, and institutions represents a new field of fashion. The research report demonstrates how institutions, established and newcomer players and agents within the field of sustainable fashion have developed their own codes, values and rules while struggling for capital in the broader social space of fashion. This

results in a new field that is able to challenge the standards and practices normalised by the traditional field of fashion.

The results of this study have several implications for society most notably for fashion academics, to question the legitimacy and power held by the traditional field of fashion, and the influence held by consumers to enforce change. In addition, it is valuable to specialized institutions of higher learning, fashion brands and organizations to help them critique their own values and motivations when participating in the globalised field. The research provides valuable insight to future studies on sustainable fashion and highlights the need to create and enforce policies that protect garment workers and the environment from harmful and exploitative processes adopted by the traditional field of fashion.

However, the research report is subject to a number of limitations such as the small sample size of participants interviewed and limited scope of data collection. Due to time constraints, the research did not address the impact of migration, class, and gender exploitation in areas such as pay, sustainable garment affordability and career advancement. Future studies on sustainable fashion could explore and unpack the effects or implications of such topics in more detail resulting in a more holistic understanding of the field of sustainable fashion.

The research discussed in this research report offers implications for fashion institutions, textile and trade policymakers and academics. For fashion institutions, the results of this report suggest the need for decoloniality and decolonial thinking when educating future change-makers within the fashion industry. Fashion institutions can use the findings of the report to check and challenge their own garment production processes and motivations for creation. Academics can make use of the methodologies used in this report to gain deeper insight into the individuals and technology used within sustainable fashion. This can provide textile and trade policymakers with a deeper understanding of existing or future challenges such as equal

pay, the role of technology in climate change and bias within career advancement. This would provide a more holistic understanding of the field of sustainable fashion, its current and future challenges and how academia can aid in providing potential solutions.

Overall, the findings of this research report suggest a new field of sustainable fashion that exists besides the field of fashion. This new field challenges the norms, values, rules, and legitimacy of the traditional field of fashion. Fashion institutions should take part in and ultimately adopt processes and practices that centre on sustainability to address the harmful environmental and social impact created by the exploitative, toxic, and wasteful fast fashion production model. Additionally, academics and textile and trade policymakers should explore the impact of migration, class, and gender exploitation within the field of sustainable fashion and develop initiatives to reduce it. The research acts as a valuable starting point for the understanding and development of the field of sustainable fashion. It offers insight into potential solutions and alternative methods of garment production while offering insight into new agents and players within the field who challenge the standards and ethics of the traditional field of fashion.

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