



# Sector Overview

## Fashion System

Thanks to the industrialization and the urbanization which is occurring across the continent and to the ballooning African middle class, Africa's textile and fashion sector is developing more and more. Although only a small part of the African population can afford to buy expensive clothing and accessories, this minority has a high spending capacity, especially for luxury and fashion brands, and are intent on accessing the most important brands directly in their own cities without being forced to go abroad to shop.

Moreover, the central role that South Africa plays in the African fashion sector is evident, both for the highest presence of HNWI (people with investible assets in excess of \$1 Million) and for the interest in shopping, which is clear, for instance, since the opening day of the Mall of Africa in Joburg registered 100 000 visitors.

Exports represent R1.4 billion of clothing and R2.5 billion of textiles, mainly to the American and European markets, but there is huge potential for exports to the rest of the African continent, as trade barriers and regional integration.

The skills and reputation of South Africa's local fashion cluster is on the up, setting their sights on the global market as a new target of their products. For this reason, African fashion weeks are now widespread all over the world. In fact, it is worth mentioning the Africa fashion weeks in New York and in London. Italy has caught up with other countries too: for instance, Pitti Uomo in Florence hosted the project called 'Constellation Africa', where four African brands (Dent de Man, MaXhosa by Laduma, Orange Culture and Projecto Mental) showed clothes and accessories made in their own countries.

There are around 179 women's designer labels in South Africa and 66 womenswear designers have their own online stores. 53 womenswear designers have their own stores and 58 womenswear labels showed their collections at SA Fashion

Every year South African fashion plays a leading role in the most important fashion events across the African continent with two of the most important ones take place in South Africa, namely the Johannesburg Fashion Week and the Cape Town Fashion Week. The most relevant South African

brands are Gavin Rajah, David Tlale, Hip Hop, Maya Prass, Craig Port, Darkie, Sonwabile Ndamase and Malick Dippenaar. All these South African fashion designers are sharing the new and unique trends, through the use of bright colors and both simple and more extravagant cuts which resemble not only African themes but global ones too.

Johannesburg is the leading city in terms of women's fashion in Africa, followed by Cape Town and Durban. Despite several challenges that local designers have to face up to, such as production constraints, availability of certain fabrics and lack of financial support, South African fashion and design companies are growing and fashion designers are succeeding in the whole African continent.

The sales channels of choice for designers in South Africa are wholesale and the online platforms, which are key channels to project local production onto the global market.

Moreover, consumers' taste is evolving, and interaction with a brand has become increasingly important. Local designers are responsive to the consumers' tastes both internationally and locally, thanks to the flow created by the SA Fashion week where international designers and consumers can interact and show their own ideas.

Regarding the fabrics and the material used, many Southern African brands create eco-friendly clothing or made by recycled materials in order to limit the use of chemical and industrial products and to respect the environment and the sustainability.

South Africa is the most industrialized country in the African continent, with a strong financial system. The country exports not only raw material but also finished products, and the fashion sector is appreciated for the quality of the materials and the creativity all over the world, especially in the United States and in Europe. Therefore, after an initial market analysis, we might say that South Africa can offer foreign companies concrete opportunities for profitable commercial partnerships in the fashion sector.

**If you are interested in more in-depth research into a particular sector please contact [dsg@italcham.co.za](mailto:dsg@italcham.co.za)**