

# Fashionomics Africa

Paving the Way for African Fashion Entrepreneurs



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# Fashionomics Africa: Paving the Way for African Fashion Entrepreneurs

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The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on African businesses has been evident with order cancellations and factory closures.

While many attempt to make sense of what's next, various reports highlight how trends which began prior to the crisis have only accelerated.

The rise in consumer activism championing for social and environmental justice and the increased reliance on digital solutions are anticipated to define the coming years.

Moving forward, optimising on digital strategies to develop supply chain resilience and investing in sustainable development will prove to be vital.

Launched in 2016 by the African Development Bank (AfDB), [\*Fashionomics Africa\*](#) is an initiative that already began this structural transformation in the African continent. The project aims to

boost the African apparel and textile industry through digitalisation and sustainable growth, by providing support to micro, small and medium-sized businesses in Africa, with a focus on, but not limited, to Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia and South Africa.

The AfDB supports the growth of African MSMEs in the creative industries with the objective to encourage the development of skills and capacity to stimulate job creation. They believe that the growing interest in Africa's cultural traditions such as wax, printed dyed cottons and high-quality craftsmanship which are regularly showcased in Paris, London and Milan, provide the opportunity to drive economic and social change, especially among women and youth.

## Improving industry literacy

Fashionomics Africa is a centralised connecting and e-commerce platform which can be utilised by entrepreneurs, designers, manufacturers and retailers to find relevant industry information and sell their products.

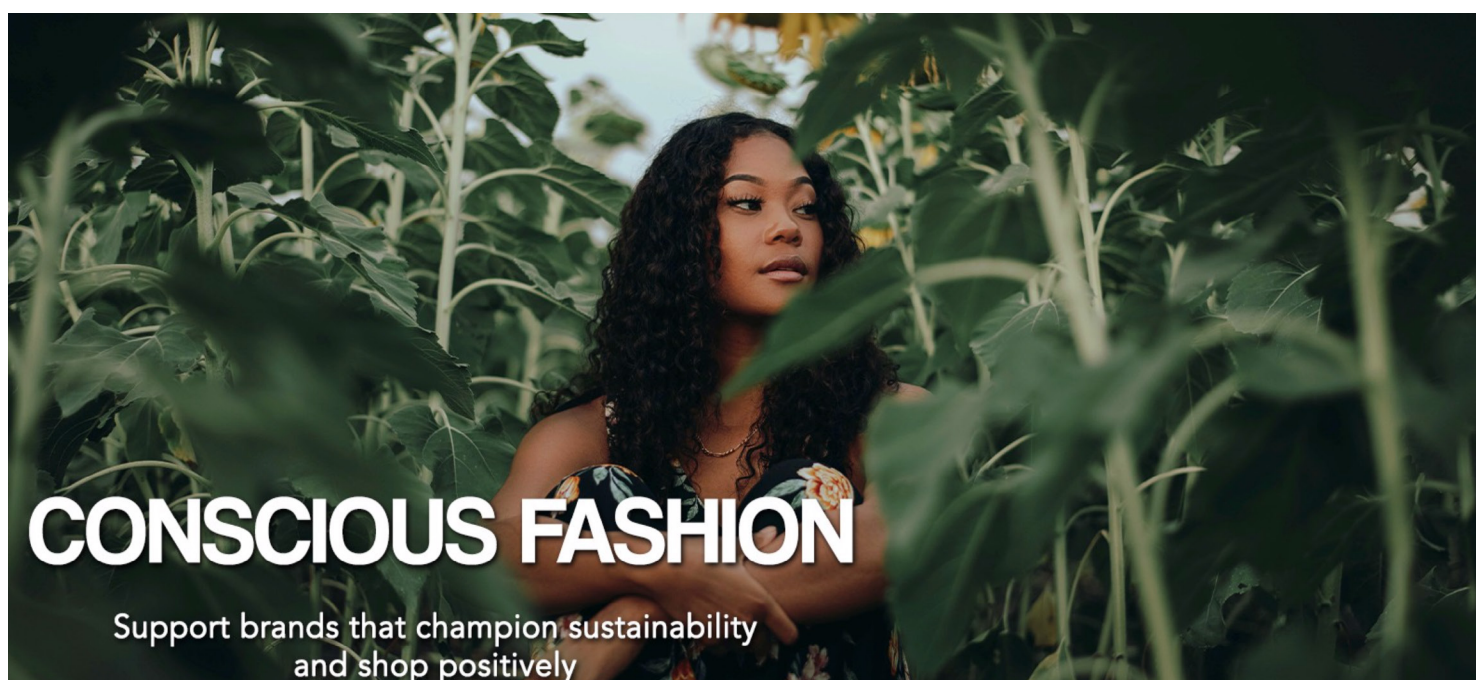
In their report [Investing in the Creative Industries](#), Fashionomics Africa identified that the key strategy to encourage integration of MSMEs in the value chain is to facilitate access to information about the whole supply chain – from financing, sourcing, manufacturing and distribution. The website gives access to a [database](#) of African industry players, [reports](#) about market trends and industry intelligence, as well [financing resources and alternatives](#).

Improving digital and industry literacy is essential to further scale-up businesses and expand capacity. Therefore, free educational events and training are available in the form of webinars, tutorials and masterclasses to harness Africa's creative talents.

Despite the pandemic, Fashionomics Africa has been supporting its community successfully through an active social media presence and hosted more than 20 online events since 2020. Quickly responding to the lockdowns and sanitary restrictions, themes discussed were especially focused on embracing digital solutions and how to be innovative in current times.

Tapping into the AfDB's network, panellists for these events come from various recognised African and international institutions who address industry issues tailored to the geopolitical landscape and market trends. Such exposure provides an inclusive view of the fashion ecosystem providing MSMEs with relevant skills to build resilience.

For instance, last month a webinar with the partnership of [DHL Express](#) was organised to educate entrepreneurs with necessary logistics knowledge to expand into regional and global markets through e-commerce. The masterclass had 221 attendees, and focused on how to catch the momentum of the growing popularity of online shopping within Africa.



## African Heritage & Sustainability

At its core, Fashionomics Africa aims to showcase African talent to spur sustainable growth in the continent. Last December, it launched its first sustainable and circular fashion online contest to highlight some of the best designers from the region.

“What we learned from this Fashionomics Africa contest, in this month celebrating women around the world, is that many women entrepreneurs are advocating for sustainable production and consumption, and we commend their efforts,” said Amel Hamza, Acting Director at the Bank’s Gender, Women and Civil Society Department.<sup>1</sup>



The four judges panel who selected the three finalists earlier in January included collaborators from the United Nations Environment Programme, Parsons School of Design and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The work entries of the designers were published on social media, where the public had the chance to vote for their favourite. [Pine Kazi](#), a Kenyan social business venture that uses discarded pineapple waste leaves to craft sustainable shoes won \$2000 cash prize and, mentorship and technical assistance support from the partners involved in the contest to help them expand their businesses and access to markets.



The competition not only shed a light on African innovation and diversity but sparked an exchange of ideas through the online vote. Appealing to a generation of young entrepreneurs, social media is one of Fashionomics Africa’s most important communication channels to increase participation and collaboration.

Its [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) have well curated content with an emphasis on African youth, cultural heritage and fashion craftsmanship. Beyond advertising online events, Fashionomics Africa celebrates the work of designers within its community on social media and re-directs online traffic to their e-commerce platform and designers’ own websites.

Fashionomics Africa’s mission is an important one for the continent. These creative ideas, bold patterns and colours reflect how emerging designers are determined to reclaim their rightful place in the fashion world by affirming their heritage and textile traditions with a twist of modernity.



## Africa is on the move

The continent's fashion industry is still at its infancy, but Africa is on the move. While the established apparel manufacturing in Mauritius, Madagascar, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia and South Africa have been leading the way for decades, other African states are seeing rising interest in foreign investment to develop the sector, in addition to local governments identifying the apparel industry as a national focus for development.

To successfully develop a thriving African textile and apparel industry, digital transformation will remain the key strategy to create a more connected continent, and further integrate Africa into global value chains.