

# The State of Fashion Education in Africa 2021

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July 2021

Report 001

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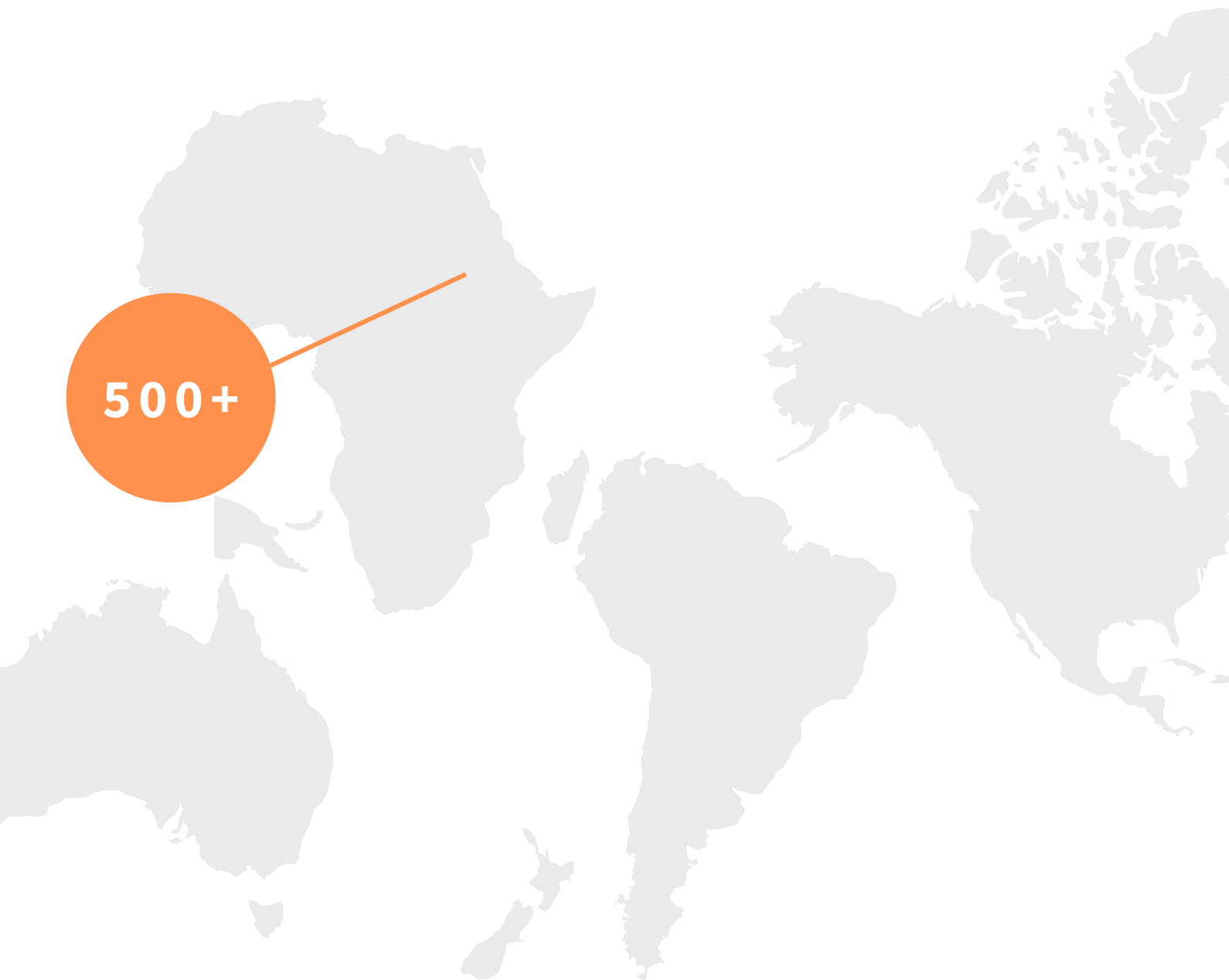
8 core matters to be mindful of

# Executive Summary

In recent years we have seen the African fashion industry grow significantly. This growth has led to a surge in international attention for designers on the continent and opportunities. Despite the increased attention on the African Fashion Industry, many of the few prominent fashion designers that emerge from Africa are either self-taught or went to a fashion school abroad, although there are fashion schools on the continent.

The questions we asked ourselves were “*Why aren't Africans patronising the fashion schools?*”, “*Are the fashion schools not standard enough for our fashion enthusiasts to attend?*”, and “*Why do we simply focus on fashion design when there are many other sectors to consider?*”. We believe that this report will highlight the current state of fashion education on the continent and help develop solutions to improve the quality of fashion education in Africa, ensuring we equip our future talent with the necessary skills and knowledge to create a robust industry and economy.

This report looks at various topics such as accreditation, curriculum, the number of schools, admissions and more. Data is essential to the development of our industry, therefore, this report aims to serve as an essential tool to help support the fashion education system.



500+

## A continent wide view

Through our research, we were able to identify over 500+ fashion schools on the continent. However, for this report, we focused on 193 schools. Our findings also showed that West Africa had the most fashion schools, Ghana and Nigeria in particular. This is then followed by the Southern African region.

# Highlights

Through our research, there were many points that arose however the main key issues that were consistent were the 4 points listed below. Throughout the report, these areas are explored in detail with some examples provided. The conclusion and recommendations section provides points on what fashion schools can do to further develop their practices and strengthen their position.

01

## Curriculum

95% of the curriculum focuses heavily on fashion design

02

## Accreditation

Most fashion schools do not have recognised accreditation

03

## Non-functional websites

Majority of fashion schools do not have functional websites

04

## Lack of information

92% of websites do not provide core information to help with decision making

# Methodology

Africa is a large continent with 54 countries. To begin our research, we split Africa into 5 subregions namely; North, East, Central, Southern and West. We then focused on each individual country within each of the subregions of Africa.

Our research focuses on expanding the knowledge on the current fashion education scene through a process of data collection. Due to the kind of insights we sought to obtain from our research, we employed a mixed-methods approach. Our research is best classified as descriptive research.

We conducted individual searches on the countries within each region of Africa using Google because distance was a barrier in visiting every country in Africa to gather information.

Using Google, we created a spreadsheet for the various countries in Africa. We then individually searched for fashion schools within each country in the respective subregions. Per the research method we employed, we experienced some issues in our search where there seemed to be an absence of fashion schools in certain countries. One of the insights we obtained through our use of Google was that the social media platform; Facebook is popular for fashion schools. This pushed us to use the location filter on Facebook to help us look for fashion schools in countries that showed no presence of such via our Google search.

We also conducted interviews with some of our networks from some of the countries that showed no online presence of fashion schools. We did this to verify if there were truly no fashion schools in certain countries. With a research population of 27 different countries across Africa, we came across 500+ fashion schools.

However, we decided to focus on 193 fashion schools within Africa as these had somewhat of an online presence to help with our research.

Some limitations that we faced during our research was the lack of online presence of some fashion schools across Africa. Some of the websites were difficult to navigate and did not have enough information to properly understand what the schools have to offer.

From our findings, we discovered a significant amount of issues with fashion schools in Africa:

- The websites for the majority of the fashion schools have not been updated in months or years and many of the links do not work
- A large number of fashion schools websites do not work
- Most courses are focused on fashion design
- The majority of schools fail to mention accreditation for the courses
- Social media pages of many fashion schools need revamping; they do not provide any information that would make it appealing to study at the school
- Many fashion schools don't provide information about accommodation facilities or make provision for international students. As such, in case someone from a foreign country wants to study in one of these schools, they would be required to figure this information out on their own.

These issues show that the African fashion education system needs improvement, not just to uplift the flag of fashion education within the continent but also to allow the fashion schools to compete on an international level.

Most importantly improving the standards of our education system creates better opportunities for future talent and strengthens the industry as a whole.

**We need an equal balance we have  
numerous schools yet very few  
recognised accredited schools and  
courses.**

## Numerous Fashion Schools

Our study highlighted that Africa has an overwhelming amount of fashion schools and is not necessarily seeing the fruits of it. On the continent alone, there are over 500+ fashion schools. Spotlighting Nigeria for example, there are over 80 fashion schools in Nigeria that offer solely fashion design courses.

With more international eyes on the African fashion industry, the outlook of the fashion industry has changed. As such, many fashion schools have emerged in order to satisfy the demand for fashion education across Africa. Yet, the proportion of successful fashion designers in Africa to the number of fashion schools in Africa is unbalanced.

On the continent, we have the potential to birth many more established and industry-ready fashion entrepreneurs and professionals since every year the fashion schools on the continent produce new graduates. It can be concluded that it is quantity over quality with respect to fashion schools in Africa. However, due to the limitations, we faced in obtaining data for the research, we're unable to quantify the data with respect to alumni success on the continent.

**On the continent alone we have over 500+ fashion schools. There were many that we chose not to include in our research. There are over 80 fashion schools in Nigeria that offer fashion design courses alone.**

**Thousands of students, who have enrolled for fashion courses are enrolling for predominately short courses and are leaving with no accreditation and potentially leaving without the necessary skills and knowledge needed for the industry.**

## Unrecognised Accreditation

South Africa and Kenya are both countries that lead with highlighting their accredited fashion courses within Africa that are clearly stated on their websites. In Ghana alone, there are over 100+ fashion schools and only 8 schools have recognised accreditations that are clearly stated on their websites.

Though there is an abundance of fashion schools on the continent, their websites don't show their accreditation, so it's hard to decipher if they are actually accredited. With that being said, the websites of some schools clearly state that after the completion of a course, students receive a certificate of participation to verify that they have successfully completed a course.

This is a concern because there is a possibility that thousands of students, who have enrolled for fashion courses are enrolling in predominately short courses and are leaving with no accreditation and potentially leaving without the necessary skills and knowledge needed for the industry. They may not be able to create and sustain fashion businesses and many may not be equipped to take on professional roles within industries outside of design.



## KEY POINT

# Career development needs to be enhanced in fashion schools.

Fundamental business acumen skills are usually not a priority when it comes to delivery. Additionally, there is little emphasis and attention given to career development. There is a trend that most students want to be fashion designers, this boils down having exposure to other jobs in the industry. Whilst the usual design subjects teach usual career paths available within the industry, there are many that are not mentioned, such as the following on the right:

- Pattern Cutter
- 2D Designer
- Start a Manufacturing Business
- Fabric Buyer
- Pattern Grader
- Illustrator
- Garment Technologist
- Creative Director
- Trend Forecaster
- Product Manager
- Production Coordinator
- Show Production Coordinator
- Retail Manager
- Researcher

However, a lack of career development could prevent the industry from growing and reaching new heights. It's not enough to produce only designers. We need to consider how consumers will know whom to buy from if there is no marketing or press coverage? For this reason, we need marketers and publicists, we need journalists and publications. Again, we need more distribution channels such as physical retail stores and e-commerce platforms.

# South Africa is doing a great job when it comes to fashion education

South Africa is doing a great job with respect to the fashion education industry, the country is home to many leading fashion schools on the continent that offer an array of Bachelors and Masters programmes.

After browsing through the websites of some of the fashion schools in South Africa, you will realise how detail-oriented the websites are. First off, most of the fashion schools in South Africa have websites and an online presence. Most of the South African fashion school websites talk about their accreditations, courses and provide in-depth information about their school, the facilities, the semesters, course content, faculty and fees. In addition to being informative, what sets them apart is that their curriculum is more modern and they incorporate other subjects. Stadio's School of Fashion and Design offers three Bachelor's degrees. They have a course titled Bachelor of Commerce in Fashion which explores the following subjects:

## **Bachelor of Commerce in Fashion at Stadio, School of Fashion in South Africa Curriculum outline**



### **1ST YEAR MODULES**

- Business Studies & Management
- Marketing & Brand Management
- Consumer Buying Behaviour
- Fashion Practice
- Trend Analysis
- Computer Literacy & Design
- Textiles & Fashion
- Financial Accounting & Management

### **2ND YEAR MODULES**

- Operations & Human Resources Management
- Business Statistics
- Marketing & Brand Management
- Consumer Buying Behaviour
- Fashion Practice
- Trend Analysis
- Supply Chain Management
- Experiential Learning
- Company Law
- Microeconomics
- Macroeconomics

### **3RD YEAR MODULES**

- Strategic Business Management
- Business Model Innovation
- Marketing & Brand Management
- Consumer Behaviour and Sociology
- Consumer Behaviour and Netnography
- Supply Chain Management
- Experiential Learning
- Project Management
- Industrial Psychology
- Merchandise Planning & Buying

# 8 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY TO CONSIDER

## **Strengthening the application process**

Many fashion schools' websites do not provide clear information on their application process. From the onset, this can, unfortunately, deter people from wanting to apply for a course. Due to a lack of websites for some fashion schools in Africa, it is hard to get information on what exactly to do if you are interested in a particular school. These schools should make sure the application process for the programmes they offer are clearly stated on their websites. They should also make recommendations such as facilities for short-term stays, and if they offer long-term courses, make their student accommodation known to appeal to more people interested in their school.

## **Consider teaching more than just fashion design**

Many fashion schools focus predominantly on fashion design, the most popular courses being fashion design, pattern cutting, garment construction, CAD and fashion illustration. Very few schools teach fashion business. When it is taught, it is usually a few days or a week-long, and the information is also delivered on a very basic level. There are only 5% of courses that we vetted that cover core subjects such as operations, retail, logistics, supply chain, sustainability, merchandising, law, finance, risk management, organisational structure and marketing.

This could be a cause for concern as we are not producing enough skilled professionals and entrepreneurs which fundamentally slows down the development of our industry and economic growth. People are leaving programmes without the necessary skills to thrive. Being able to sew is not just enough. Fashion schools should focus on other sectors of fashion because people may be interested in other areas such as m-commerce. The design sector cannot accommodate everyone and the other subjects of fashion should be explored to help grow our industry. Fashion educators across Africa should include a wider range of options for courses to study and pick from so that the fashion industry can grow holistically.

## **Focus on creating a structure before developing new schools and courses**

With an increased spotlight on the African Fashion industry, more Africans are enthusiastic about venturing into the industry because there is potential for growth. As such, many people are investing in the industry and this led to the establishment of more fashion schools across Africa. The continent is not in need of any new fashion schools which are at the same level as the majority of the schools today. Fashion schools should really consider innovating their offerings and forming structures. The motive for setting up a fashion school should not be about profit but merely having an interest in seeing people learn about the various aspects of fashion. It should also be about developing successful students and courses, working to raise the standard of the African fashion industry.

## **Develop functional websites and keep them regularly updated**

Unfortunately, there are many non-functional websites when it comes to fashion schools on the continent. In addition, many of the schools do not have websites. The few that do have websites have not been updated in a while and do not contain adequate information about the school, courses, faculty, accreditation and fees.

Having a website for a fashion school is critical for making a good first impression because it is frequently the first point of contact that people have with the school. As a result, the school website influences the school's overall image and reputation, which can lead to more admissions. With that being said, for fashion education in Africa, the baby steps count and working on the websites of fashion schools is one of them to improve the outlook of the fashion education system on the continent.

## **Facebook pages should not be prioritised over websites**

Apart from the fashion schools within the Southern and East sections of Africa, the fashion schools located in the other regions of Africa have more functional Facebook pages than websites.

According to StatCounter as of May 2021, 57.8% of Africa's population is connected to Facebook. The platform itself is known to be popular amongst people on the continent. This could imply that the schools with solely Facebook Pages find it easier to reach their target audience. Fashion schools should make it a priority to have functional websites to cater for people who do not have access to Facebook and to ensure the right level of information is provided.

## **Social media is a powerful tool that should be utilised effectively**

Facebook and Instagram are two popular platforms used across Africa to engage with people, build a brand, and increase a brand's visibility.

Over 60% of the fashion schools across Africa have accounts across various social media platforms. As much as these fashion schools have a large social media presence, their accounts do not provide adequate information to build their brand. Some of the issues with the social media pages include:

- Poor quality pictures
- Link to websites that don't work
- No correlation of posts to the services they provide
- Errors in captions
- Wrong use of hashtags

## **EdTech should be considered it is the next big thing in education**

The fashion industry is constantly evolving and to keep up to date on the continent, we need to align with the current macroeconomic trends. EdTech (Educational Technology) provides learners with the opportunity to attend fashion school from the comfort of ones own home or anywhere. EdTech, in fashion, would make skills and knowledge more accessible thus closing the gap. People often question whether it is possible to teach technical topics in fashion, and the answer is yes, it is possible. Many designers on the continent have established their brands through the power of YouTube. Nigerian Designer Adebayo Okelawal has shared his story and his experiences on many occasions through interviews. Priscillia Okpan, a fashion designer originally from Nigeria but based in the UK, is the founder of Kim Dave Designs. She has spent many years teaching fashion design on YouTube has over 300,000 subscribers and many testimonials.

There are countless social media content creators on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube finding innovative ways to share knowledge. Schools should consider incorporating this within their strategies to attract more awareness by potential students, in addition to furthering the development of current students. Another advantage of EdTech is that it provides flexibility within the curriculum. We are aware that the fashion industry changes rapidly and education is often known to not meet these changes when needed. By incorporating EdTech, this could meet the demands required by the industry.

## **Many successful designers are self-taught or go abroad to study fashion**

Designers have often been pushed to study abroad due to an outdated curriculum and a lack of opportunities within the courses. CIAFE spoke with 12 designers and the top 3 reasons they mentioned as to why they study abroad were the following:

1. Curriculum was outdated
2. No work experience opportunities
3. No supportive resources

We spoke to 6 self-taught designers during a focus group who said they were self-taught through attending online classes and using YouTube. When asked why not attend a short course at your local fashion school, many of the responses were similar and came down to the fact that there was a lack of brand awareness, recommendations and information provided, which did not make them feel comfortable in enrolling on a course.

We should develop schools with high standards to not only attract our local talent but also international talent. This all contributes to economic growth and employability opportunities.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

In order for us to make necessary changes within our fashion education system, we need to begin by carrying out internal audits. This is vital as it will help to understand the performance, the success rate of students leaving fashion school and getting employment opportunities or setting up businesses and students satisfaction. It is also crucial for leadership in these schools to have a core understanding of the macroenvironment, understanding industry trends and asking core questions; are we meeting the industry needs and demands, are we preparing our students for the jobs of the future, will they be able to scale their businesses from a local to an international level? Can we attract international talent to study with us?

The core recommendations from this report are the following:

- Many fashion schools must update their curriculum
- Many fashion schools must update their website and social media pages continually
- Many fashion schools must ensure their website includes core information such as dates, fees, entry requirements, teaching methods, resources available, course overview and faculty
- Work on getting recognised accreditation
- Investing in marketing and branding is essential
- Integrating quality assurance into practices is essential
- Documenting their activities and surveying students to keep records of data

The next report to follow this will be 'Improving The Standards of Fashion Education in Africa: What to Consider'.

