

*INSIDE-OUT:
South African Fashion Designers' Sewing Success*

by

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Declaration

This dissertation represents the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any other form to another university. Where use has been made of the work of other authors and sources, it has been acknowledged accordingly and referenced in the body of the dissertation.

The research for this dissertation was completed in the School of Development Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Research was undertaken under the supervision of Ms. Caroline Skinner.

Opinions expressed and conclusions attained are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the School of Development Studies.

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Renato Palmi
November 2006

Abstract

A fundamental change in the global and textile industries took place on 1 January 2005, when the global quantitative quotas were abolished. International retail buyers are now able to reduce the number of their international suppliers, and can act on a preference to buy from suppliers anywhere in the world, offering the cheapest price on international orders.

South Africa had been experiencing growth in cheaper imports, mostly at the lower end of the market, since 1994 when the political arena in South Africa changed, resulting in a reduction of its tariffs faster than the World Trade Organisation required. The post-2005 environment has seen a rapid increase in imports into South Africa, predominantly from Asia. This has resulted in numerous South African firms in the clothing and textile industries having to reduce their labour, outsource part of their production, or close down altogether, due to their inability to compete with their Asian counterparts.

One area of the clothing and textile industries in South Africa that has the potential to assist in the sustainability of these industries is the development and growth of South African design content. Relatively new to South Africa is the growth in and recognition of South African fashion designers entering the market, which has resulted in the heightened visibility and activity of numerous inter-related industries, all servicing South African fashion, such as: model agencies, hair-stylists, make-up artists, the fashion media, fashion events and private boutiques.

This study explores the experiences of and problems faced by South African designers in producing garments, meeting the price demanded by consumers, and being competitive in the current context of the local market that is dominated by the major retail chains. However, as this research paper will show, numerous South African designers are managing in different ways to succeed and in so doing, have created viable and successful design operations in a very competitive industry.

The participants interviewed for this study are all independent designers and successful in their own right. Some have been in the industry for many years, while others are establishing their names and brands in the marketplace. All these designers manufacture from their own *atelier* (studio) or factory, thereby retaining production control. As and when the need arises, some outsource part of their production to CMTs (cut-make-and-trim specialists) or home-based workers. Many of the designers sell within both the formal and informal economy, some sell their products through their own boutiques while others sell through private boutiques.

A common theme of these designers' success is that they grew their business gradually, learning incrementally about the business of fashion and how to maintain control over their cash-flows while slowly growing their visibility in the market. In the interviews, the designers reflected on the importance of customer relations, the importance of Fashion Weeks for promoting their products, as well as the importance of finding reliable suppliers. A common difficulty experienced by the designers is that of finding the correct balance between creativity and commercial success.

The study concludes with some recommendations for the promotion and sustainability of South African design content, such as development of co-operative ventures or small clusters of designers working together and creating economies of scale in order to wield greater influence in the value chain. Another important recommendation made is that of designers finding suitable business partners, so that while the designers focus on creative work, their partner drives the commercial and marketing arm of the operation.

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List of Abbreviations

Atelier:	Studio / workroom where designers work
ATC:	Agreement on Textiles and Clothing
Avant-garde:	Original design (same as high fashion)
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
Boutique:	Small private shop that store fashionable clothing
CMT:	Cut, Make and Trim
COFESA	Confederation of Employers of South Africa
Collection:	A group of selected designs
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
Couture:	The business of designing, making and selling fashionable garments.
DCCS	The Duty-Credit Certification Scheme
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry (South Africa)
GATT:	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
Haute Couture:	High Fashion (one-of-a-kind) Design
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LRA	The Labour Relations Act
Ready-to-Wear	Mass-produced garments
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SACTWU:	Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union
WTO	World Trade Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In South Africa, there is substantial academic research (Barnes, 2005; Skinner and Valodia, 2004; Ince, 2003; Rogerson, 2001; Morris *et al*, 2005) and public debate through the media focusing on the state of the clothing and textile industries. However, there has been very little research on the fashion designers themselves, who contribute in their own various ways to the rise and fall of the clothing and textile industries nor on the role design plays within the context of the clothing and textile industries.

The design element of clothing is acknowledged as a vital part of the "creative industries" and is increasingly been seen as an important sector of academic study in relation to the analysis of policies and development within the clothing and textile industries (Cunningham as cited by Rogerson, 2006:4). Central to this emerging area of research is the recognition that fashion is a business and can be taken seriously for empirical study in terms of its economic, political, social, cultural and strategic positioning in a post-industrial context.

In identifying this lacuna in the research, it was vital for this researcher to provide a definition of the term "independent fashion designers". For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the collective entity made up of those who create, market and sell their own designs - whether these be *haute couture* (high fashion) or ready-to-wear collections.

The study recognises that fashion designers do not work in isolation and are not excluded from the various local and global influences and factors that affect their business. The result of globalisation and the changes in the clothing and textile industries across the world have had either a positive or negative impact on designers' ability to maintain successful businesses and to contribute to the growth and sustainability of South Africa's clothing and textile industries.

There are, however, a number of independent designers who are succeeding, even in the face of increased global competition. Therefore, the objective of this research is to explore and assimilate the experiences of some South African designers. Given that there has been very little formal research on local fashion designers, this investigation is an attempt to probe and map this aspect of the industry, and to highlight areas for further comprehensive research. The information gathered in this study provides a sufficiently broad overview of the designers' activities and contributes to an understanding of the

importance of fashion design itself to related industries, as well as the external and internal influences that impact on these enterprises.

The intention of this research is to grasp the essential elements of the environment in which fashion designers operate and to gain a better understanding of the role of fashion design through a comprehensive literature review of the global and local fashion sector, and identify their common experiences. The focus is on understanding those designers who are commercially successful and identifying their key success factors. A further objective is to throw more light on their role in the value chain. Several studies have been undertaken on the role of manufacturers, buyers and retailers as components within the value chain, but there has been little investigated on independent designers and their role in the value chain.

The interviews conducted with the designers afforded an evaluation of their relationship with suppliers, the commonalities of issues relating to imports, the role of the government, and the designers' opinions on the various factors involved in promoting locally designed content, such as fashion shows and fashion councils, as well as consumer behaviour in terms of the support for local content.

The designers researched in this study appear to have achieved success because of common attributes and approaches: they all have a clear understanding of the business of fashion; they spend resources and time on cultivating and developing their brand in the market, and more broadly, in establishing a reputation of reliability and quality craftsmanship. They have also identified their niche markets and created brand recognition within such spaces, where consumers tend to be less price-sensitive and prefer to acquire uniquely designed garments.

The choice of site was made on the basis of preliminary research for this project, during which the owner of the Durban Fashion Week noted that many of South Africa's famous designers started their careers in Durban, a centre that is increasingly regarded as a growth point for the design component of clothing manufacture. The selection of the designers interviewed for this study was done on the basis that they are independent designers with brand recognition.

The study used a formal questionnaire as a means to gain personal testimonies of the individual participant designers who granted in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain a range of perspectives on the industry from fashion editors and other figures in this sector who were not able to engage in lengthy interviews. In

addition, observational methods were deployed at events such as fashion shows, to which the researcher secured access.

This study will show that, while there is an abundance of rhetoric around the need to develop South African fashion design and designers, there is no concrete evidence of how the industry and the government does, or could plan to, stimulate the developmental progress of these individuals. Evidence is presented of internal contests for control of locality and space within the sectors that promote fashion design and amongst individual design personalities, who tend to forget that such actions dilute the designers' prospects for creating a viable industry.

By documenting the stories of various local designers, along with commentary and information gained from various other key informants actively involved in fashion, this research attempts not only to deliberate on the success of the designers interviewed, but to focus on their endeavours as a means of unearthing various tensions within the industry. Finally, the study attempts to identify possible solutions to these frictions and obstacles, so as to catalyse critical thinking around business-driven interventions towards the development of South Africa's design industry.

Even though the survival of the South African fashion sector's independent designers is contingent upon that of the local clothing and textile industries, designers are confident in their own inherent functional significance on the "**inside**" of the industry – being crucially positioned in terms of their specialist knowledge, skills and creativity – but lament having to function on the margins of, or "**outside**", their wider industry – in terms of their capacity to assert influence on the fate and fortunes of the sector as a whole.

Fashion is now recognised as a vital contributor to the development of South Africa's clothing and textile sector, according to Rogerson (2006:4), who views fashion design, in particular, as crucial for local creative development, such that it has become a discrete sub-industry within the broader context of the clothing and textile industry. Closely connected and reliant on fashion design are not only the manufacturing service providers, but also those involved in regular fashion shows and events across the country. Such suppliers include, but are not limited to: models and their agencies, hair-stylists and make-up artists (and suppliers of their products), event co-ordinators, venue owners and management, stage production companies (including technicians and equipment for lighting, sound and theatrical effects), music DJs, videographers, photographers and fashion reporters.

The heightened promotion and development of this sub-industry is evidenced in the advent of Fashion Week events held in the major centres, in the formation of provincial fashion clusters and proposed fashion councils. As it is the designers and their outputs around whom these activities revolve, this study has been conducted to explore whether South African designers can confront the challenges of globalisation in a clothing and textile sector that is dominated by the buyers of large retail outlets and fashion houses. How, if at all, can they compete with the "race to the bottom" in respect of price, and meet various other challenges facing the industry, so as to collectively become and remain profitable?

Chapter 2 is an introduction to the global textile and clothing industries, also providing background to the design aspect of these industries. The chapter continues with a brief reflection on the history of South Africa's clothing and textile industries as well as the industry in KwaZulu-Natal. The chapter also briefly reflects on the post-1994 environment within these industries. Chapter 3 looks at the design element of South Africa's clothing and textile industries and the promotion of design in South Africa. An overview of the clothing and textile value chain follows in Chapter 4, and Chapter 5 explains the methodology used for this study. Chapter 6 reflects the findings of this study, and Chapter 7 concludes with some recommendations for the design component of South Africa's clothing and textile industries.

CHAPTER TWO

The Global and South African Clothing and Textile Industries

2.1 The Development of the Global Clothing Industry

In the first half of the 1900's, the global clothing industry was dominated by countries such as the United States of America, Great Britain and Japan. Over time, labour costs and capital began to shift, and developing countries implemented strategies of import substitution to encourage growth for their own domestic industrialisation. Part of this strategy was the relaxation of labour codes and the offering of preferential duties, by creating Export Processing Zones (EPZ) (Salinger, et al, 1999).

In 1974, the Multifibre Agreement (MFA) was initiated as the formal basis for "quantitative restriction by developed countries against clothing and textile imports from developing countries" (Naumann, 2005:1). According to Traub-Merz (2006: 9), in the 1960s, developing countries accounted for only 15% of the world textile exports and less than 25% for the world clothing exports, but by 2000, the figures had grown to 50% for textiles and 70% for clothing.

The increase of exports originating from developing countries was and still is due to their ability to lower the cost of production, thus providing international buyers and manufacturers with cost incentives to either move their production facilities to these favourable locations, or to order from factories located in countries such as China, Vietnam, Bangladesh, India and Eastern Europe.

In 1995, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) established the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) as a multilateral instrument to regulate the removal of quotas over 10 years, to be terminated on 1 January 2005 (Naumann, 2005:2).

The termination of quotas, which related to the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) took place on 1 January 2005, when all the reservations and limits it contained ended, the objective being to integrate the clothing and textile industries. International buyers are now able to reduce the number of their international suppliers, and can act on a preference to buy from suppliers offering the cheapest price on international orders.

Various policies in ATC were put in place to preclude discrimination against imports, and to ensure that all members practise fair and equitable trading conditions. Mayer (2004)

argues that the ATC will, in due course, increase global socio-economic welfare, as resource allocation becomes more efficient and further reduces the price of products, which will benefit consumers.

Several countries, including the United States, South Africa and those in the European Union, feel that the post-ATC environment will see an increase in cheaper clothing flooding their domestic markets: "Job losses and plant closures are expected to accelerate" after 2005 (Sajhau, 2005:10).

The ending of quotas has caused concern in terms of its consequences for global unemployment and factory closures in the clothing and textile industries in both the developed and developing countries. Although job losses in one country may enable jobs to be gained in another, the competition to lower production costs has resulted in developing countries competing with each other for global orders. Reports by the International Trade Union in December 2005 estimate that one-million jobs will be lost in the next five years in the European Union alone. In the US, between September 2004 and September 2005, some 25 000 jobs were lost in the garment industry (International Trade Union Report, 2005: 9).

The December 2005 Report of the International Trade Union states that Africa has been the worst hit by job losses since the termination of the ATC. From Morocco to South Africa, virtually all the textile and garment-manufacturing countries are having great difficulty withstanding the competition from Asian goods. The ILO analyses the situation as follows:

Sub-Saharan African countries have seen their textile and clothing industries grow sharply in the last five years owing, in particular, to a preferential trade agreement, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), signed with the United States. US apparel imports from sub-Saharan Africa rose in 2003 and 2004 to more than US\$1.5 billion a year, benefiting from duty-free access under the AGOA. This advantage is now under threat. During the first three months of 2005, textiles and apparel exports to the United States under the terms of the AGOA fell to US\$270 million, compared with \$361 million for the same period in 2004. This 25 per cent drop coincides with a 19 per cent increase in China's textile and clothing exports for the same period. At the same time, many Asian companies, which had invested in Africa in order to take advantage of the AGOA, seem to be pulling out.

(International Trade Union Report, 2005: 5)

To alleviate the threat of employment loss and factory closures, the impact of which is already visible, a safeguard was put in place to deal with "serious damage or threat thereof to domestic producers" (WTO).

Most researchers and analysts confirm that China stands out as the force that dominates clothing and textile industries internationally. This has seen an increase in new jobs that service these industrial sectors such as the retail and transport sectors. At the same time China's winning of the global market share is also seen as the most serious threat to the development of international domestic clothing and textile industries in a post-ATC environment (Traub-Merz, 2006:9; Kaplinsky and Morris, 2006: 3).

Ongoing research is showing that numerous countries are experiencing a decrease in their exports, as international buyers consolidate and move to China to take advantage of these post-2005 opportunities. The 2005 International Trade Union Report shows that during the first six months of 2005, exports in clothing decreased for various countries. "Brazil, Morocco and Cambodia fell by 10%, Thailand and Vietnam by 15%, Pakistan by 17%, Indonesia and Mauritius by 23% and South Korea by 50%" (International Trade Union Report, 2005:6).

Whilst it seems, for now, that China is increasing its market share in a post-2005 environment, other countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Bangladesh are seeing multi-nationals moving their manufacturing operations into these countries because they also offer cheaper labour conditions and preferential treatment in Export Processing Zones (Traub-Merz, 2006).

2.2 Design-Intensive Clothing in the Global Market

Design-intensive clothing within the context of the global clothing and textile industry is a "critical element in the global clothing economy and a critical source of power", according to Agins (2000, as quoted by Rogerson, 2006:4). The fashion sector of the clothing industry is interwoven with clothing production, as Kawamura (2005) argues: clothing production transforms into fashion through a process operated by this industrial sector and directed by various social "actors [consumers who want a product that is] symbolically and aesthetically charged" (Kawamura, 2005:1, cited by Hauge, 2006).

Fashion is acknowledged as a vital part of "creative industries" and is increasingly being seen as an important sector of economic activity for

academic study, particularly in relation to the analysis of policies and development within the clothing and textile industries (Cunningham, as cited by Rogerson, 2006:4).

A new approach for harnessing the energy, resources and economic potential of these creative industries is emerging worldwide in the form of "creative clusters" (Rogerson, 2006:5). The development of South Africa's Johannesburg fashion district, and the fashion cluster planned for Durban are evidence of South Africa's fashion sector recognising the importance of these global trends, which are manifest in New York, New Zealand, Dallas and India.

The fashion clothing industry is an economic force of considerable magnitude. For example, the global high-end men's fashion market is estimated to be in the region of \$47,9 billion (*Pursuit*, 2006:55), according to a new Mintel Report.

Italy remains one of the global players in the high-end fashion garment sector, in spite of the changes occurring in the global clothing industry. Italian fashion manufacturing and retailing do not focus on economies of scale; instead, the industry's primary focus is on "flexibility, specialisation and an emphasis on product design and quality" (Doeringer and Crean, 2004:8). By concentrating on these operational aspects, Italian designs are harder to replicate by others within the global community, who would instead target cheaper apparel; the Italian market for fashion-designed commodities thus remains competitive and viable. In Italy, a good designer is evaluated as one who can "show a new and interesting point of view through the medium of commercially acceptable garments" (Au, 2001:28).

A new development in the area of fashion content is the creation of "fast fashion", (Doeringer and Crean, 2004:16). Originating in Europe, it is an option that the South African fashion designers - in collaboration with local manufacturers and private boutiques - could emulate. The concept involves creating short-cycled, popular fashion products with the emphasis on producing small runs only, thereby stoking consumer demand for these limited editions at affordable retail prices. The capacity to bring such merchandise to the market quickly and effectively is dependent on the efficiency of the various players in this particular supply chain.

Meeting the demands of fashion-conscious youth who are limited in their ability to pay high prices for designer wear, is the creation of "street-fashion", known in France as *mode de la rue*; this process involves rapid innovation of contemporary designs to create a sense

of style and variety at affordable prices. Emphasising the element of surprise (leading to consumer excitement), the Italian variant on the French concept of "street-fashion" is known as "flash" fashion, where limited "flash" designs are launched at staggered intervals throughout the year. The "flash" designs complement the various fashion seasons reaching the consumers either one month before or one month after a particular seasonal range (Doeringer and Crean, 2004: 18).

South African fashion designers and the clothing industry could do well to study these European creative strategies for concepts of designer content, both to counter the rapidly global changes and competition within the global clothing industry, and to ignite consumer demand for locally designed content.

Rantisi, supports this argument that South African designers collectively, in conjunction with production and retail players, need to imagine and create markets and demand for their products:

Fashion, by definition, is change. Revolving around the imperative of planned obsolescence, it must continually adapt to keep in lockstep with cultural shifts in tastes, by altering the actual designs and by altering the image of the products ... an overall organisation and process of control or oversight is necessary to ensure effective response to shifts in consumer preferences. [It is imperative that] fashion designers cope with these uncertainties – in ways that are aesthetically innovative and yet commercially sound.

(Rantisi, 2001:2)

The problem of counterfeits (garments that falsely bear the name of the designer or brand) and knock-offs (copies of designer garments with slight changes and bearing no label claiming that they are the products of a particular designer or brand) is an international dilemma faced by designers. In the fashion industry, imitating a designer's new design is, to some degree, a form of flattery.

The argument against protecting designs by copyright is that trends are short-lived and designers cannot afford the time or expense involved in registering their designs. The fashion industry might do well to consider lobbying for a more accessible and expeditious means of protection in this regard.

In the United Kingdom and the European Union, designers are offered "unregistered protection" for a limited period of time. In the European Union, cost-effective design protection is offered for a period of three years, starting from the date that the design was first made available to the public (World Intellectual Property Organisation, 2005:16).

The increasing sophistication of technology, coupled with human skills within the clothing industries, has provided opportunities for illegal operations to produce apparel so proficiently that seasoned buyers and designers find it hard to differentiate the authentic product from a counterfeit (Decker and Rosenthal, 2006:4). These authors argue that consequently, consumers are buying "sophisticated and authentic-looking" clothing at a lower cost than the originals.

Another perspective (Decker and Rosenthal, 2006) is that one of the reasons for designer products being so expensive is the high cost of brand protection for brand owners and fashion houses. They argue that if consumers were to become more vigilant and inquisitive about the authenticity of the products they purchase, the prices of designed products could be reduced.

Due to the global changes in the clothing and textile industries, there is growing recognition worldwide that designer clothing can be a means of maintaining or stabilising industries that have been negatively affected by the influx of cheaper clothing from developing countries. This chapter has reviewed how some countries are managing these challenges by creating different forms for designer garments.

2.3 South Africa's Clothing and Textile Industry

The literature covering South Africa's clothing industry falls within various themes. Key among them is the importance of the industry for employment, the challenge to the industry caused by the surge of cheap imports (both legal and illegal imports mostly originating from Asia), and the relationship between retailers and the clothing producers that affects both the formal and informal clothing workers. The literature also reflects some of the positive policy changes for the clothing industry.

The body of independent fashion designers in South Africa who contribute to burgeoning creativity within South Africa's clothing industry is showcased in the literature as one sub-sectoral roleplayer-cum-stakeholder that seems to bring many, if not all, the diverse industry components together, by concentrating on the promotion of locally designed content. The review that follows indicates that it is this sector, and the independent

designers within it, that could constitute a primary catalyst for securing some means of survival for the clothing industry, as the latter adapts to the warp and weave of globalisation.

2.4 History of South Africa's Clothing and Textile Industries

Records reflect that the first clothing factory to be registered in South Africa occurred in the 1907 in the Cape, before then informal clothing manufacturing had occurred in the 1800s in both the Cape and Durban (Netshitomboni, 1996:49). After the Second World War, the South African clothing industry was the fourth largest within the manufacturing sector (Berger, 1992:177 as cited by Nethsitomboni, 1996:49). Until 1989, the industry supplied about 90% of local demand (Westhuizen, 2003: 37).

On 1 April 1989, the South African National Party's Structural Adjustment programme (SAP) was introduced in accordance with the demands placed on South Africa by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan conditions, with the objective of encouraging exports in deference to neo-liberal policy. Unfortunately, the SAP did not achieve the desired outcomes for the production levels in the clothing and textile industries and instead of hoped-for improvements, the programme had "unforeseen distorting effects", with imports into the local market increasing by over 40% (Westhuizen, 2003: 37).

While much of the culpability for the current crisis prevailing in the industry can be assigned to the pre-1994 government and its protectionist measures, the knowledge that the industry was facing similar problems in the 1980s is an indication that its role-players have been notably complacent in advancing programmes for technology upgrading and skills initiatives so as to meet the challenges of globalisation and the relaxation of global tariffs.

A cursory scan of media archives shows that cheap imports from the Far East were already having a negative effect on South Africa's industry in the 1980s. (*Natal Mercury*, 17 March 1982; *Natal Mercury*, 25 February 1982; *Natal Mercury*, 15 May 1982).

2.5 The Clothing Industry in KwaZulu-Natal

The clothing industry in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) dates back to the early 1920s (Skinner and Valodia, 2004). Durban was and remains the centre of lower-end clothing production (Skinner and Valodia, 2004) the very sector that has to compete with Asian imports. The clothing industry has always been an important actor in the economy of KZN (Robbins et al, 2004), contributing about 14% of the industrial output, as recorded in the 1996

Manufacturing Census, with about 525 clothing firms in KZN alone at the time of this research, according to Morris *et al*, (1997), providing in the region of 24 000 jobs and contributing R4-billion to the province's gross domestic product (Clark, 2005).

The Natal Bargaining Council's July 2006 list cites that there are 379 registered manufacturers and cut-make-and-trim (CMT) suppliers within KwaZulu-Natal, providing 32 060 jobs, an increase of 8 060 since 1996. A total of 99 companies have more than 50 workers, placing them in the framework of medium-sized business and the remainder are registered as small and micro-enterprises. There are two independent fashion designers listed as having their own registered manufacturing plants and employing a total of 37 people.

In the regional context, there is evidence that the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government is attempting to assist local industry. According to Barnes (2005), a clothing cluster was launched within KZN on 1 August 2005, establishing four steering committees to facilitate the project with a Sector Business Support Centre based in Newcastle (KZN Department of Economic Development, 2005). Recent media reports (Inggs, 2006k), stated that Mr Price would join Edcon, Foschini, Truworths and Woolworths in this cluster.

2.6 South Africa's Industry post-1994

The current crisis in South Africa's clothing industry exemplifies the trajectory of industrial development internationally, as it can be traced to result from the influx of cheaper apparel from Asia and the means by which local industry role-players are attempting to deal with global neo-liberal economic policy applications.

Post-apartheid trade policies shifted from an "inwardly- to an outwardly-orientated, export-promoting economy" (Barnes *et al*, 1997). The current government formulated policies in line with WTO commitments tariff reductions, often faster than was required by the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT), by reducing tariffs over a period of eight years instead of the prescribed 12 years, as agreed at the 1994 Uruguay Round of GATT (Gov. of SA, 1996; Valodia, 1997; DTI, 2005). The aim of this agreement was to integrate the South African economy into the global economy (Adelzadha, 1996; Padayachee and Michie, 1997; Valodia, 2001 cited in Ince, 2003: 4, and expanded by Rogerson, 2001; Harrison and Dunne, 1998).

In March 2006, a media report indicated that the Department of Trade and Industry had outlined a new strategic vision for the South African clothing and textile industry until 2014.

The vision involves upgrading the industries' value chains to meet international standards by "co-ordinat[ing] strategic initiatives and capital equipment upgrades to enhance competitiveness" (Inggs, 2006g). Further positive development plans for the industry was reported in the media (Inggs, 2006h; Inggs, 2005b).

The Department of Trade and Industry, in its 2005 report, states that there is a "lack of creativity, entrepreneurship, vision and leadership" in the clothing and textile industry, and that even in the wake of adverse competition at the lower end of the value chain, there are opportunities that "fly over the heads of established industry leaders." In his 2005 report to NEDLAC, Barnes concurs with the DTI assessment, saying that "the industry lacks innovation" (Barnes, 2005:7).

The argument for creativity and innovation is confirmed in Fakude (2001), who notes that the clothing industry needs to focus on the higher end of the value chain, and to innovate products for the higher income markets. Hoosen Rasool, the CEO of the Education and Training Authority for clothing, textiles, footwear and leather goods, supports this view (Inggs, 2006d) and it is in this vein that South Africa's independent fashion designers play a pivotal role in sustaining and developing the clothing industry. However, they cannot do so in isolation. They need the active support of unions, key industry players, the clothing and textile manufacturers, as well as the smaller players such as CMTs, the media and most importantly, the consumers.

Expanding on this argument, it is felt that there are gaps in the global market that could be targeted and fulfilled by local industry, mostly so at the top-end of the industry, due to China being unable to produce infinite demand or meet all orders for short runs, short lead-times and the rapid flexibility sometimes required by buyers.

A newspaper report on the Design Indaba stated that it was discussed at the indaba that "South African designers should concentrate their designs in the high-end of fashion, thereby creating a market that would not be in competition with China" (Donwald, 2006). Nonetheless, due to the high levels of poverty in South Africa, price does determine the buying behaviour of many South African consumers and would not be in a position to afford these design intensive clothing unless the designers and manufacturers were able to price their products accordingly.

Industry leaders such as Gert van Zyl of the Cape Clothing Association repudiated the argument by government that companies need to move up the value chain in order to survive, and should avoid competing with the imports at the lower end of the value chain.

He cited the example of the top-end Rex Truform and Polo clothing companies, which were compelled to either shut down operations or retrench hundreds of workers (Inggs, 2006d).

To meet these challenges, the industry needs to self-evaluate, and find ways to correct identifiable weaknesses. In an assessment of the Cape Town clothing sector, Barnes identified the following:

Production downtime due to a lack of human resource capacity resulted in a production loss of 5,6 percent. Equipment failures resulted in a further 3,2 percent production loss, and the lack of access to material resulted in a 1,3 percent loss in production. In comparison, the international benchmark for lost production was 3,6 percent for lack of available people, 1,8 percent for equipment failure and 2,1 percent due to the lack of access to material (*Pursuit*, 2006:26).

The textile sector is highly capital-intensive (Macedonia, 2005:6). The most important input into the clothing sector is the fabric, which amounts to nearly half the cost of the finished product (Barnes, 2005:5). Barnes observes that the limited range of fabric designs and volumes of fabric produced in South Africa create an impediment to the growth of clothing and design industries (Barnes, 2005:5). In a 2004 survey conducted on textile operations in South Africa, long lead times, poor delivery and declining quality of the fabrics were some of the weaknesses revealed (Barnes, 2005:6).

Kadwa (2004) interviewed 57 CMTs operating within KwaZulu-Natal and in the course of her study, calculated that local textile mills and textile factory shops supplied 44.1% of locally used fabric, while imports of textiles came to 36.5%. A total of 15.8% of the 57 CMTs interviewed said that fabric was supplied to them and the remaining 3.5% said they got material from retailers. Commenting on local suppliers, the CMTs complained that the cost of local textiles was still very high, and limited choices in fabric motifs impeded their ability to create more designs (Kadwa, 2004:177). This aspect of the paucity of textile designs is investigated further in this study through the interviews with the designers.

Figure One

An Overview of the CMT Sector in Cape Town and KwaZulu-Natal

	No. of workers	No. of CMTs	Annual turnover	Annual income	No. non-compliant (National BC)	Variations in wages (Nationally)
Metropolitan W Cape	3-40	> 154 (2002)	----	R144 000	>877 employing 24 000 workers	Between R50- R450 per worker per week
Metropolitan KZN	Typically spread between 5-150; up to 300	500-600 (2005)	R600 000- R5m	----		
Rural KZN	Ave 200		----	----		

Sources: (Interviews 3, 9; 12; Van der Westhuizen, 2005: 342; Mail and Guardian). Figures for 2005 unless stated otherwise.

Source: (Westhuizen, 2006:10)

This table shows that there are far more CMTs in KwaZulu-Natal than in the Western Cape, and this correlates with the knowledge that, by comparison with the Western Cape, Durban has always focused on mass market products whereas the Cape has focused on the higher-end market. Westhuizen was able to determine through interviews that the CMTs have to compete with cheaper imports, but are also forced to compete amongst each other for orders from the large retail chains who can drive the prices down; for example, a CMT can receive R18.50 per women's shirt for an order from retailers, which is then sold by the retailer at R249.00 (Westhuizen, 2006:11).

2.7 Employment in the Industry

Figures reflecting employment in the clothing industry are "unreliable because of the large number of informal and small clothing firms that are not captured and/or miscalculated" (Morris *et al*, 2005:15). Barnes (2005:6) states that the clothing sector contributes about 1,8% to overall employment in South Africa. Or as COSATU claims, the industry contributes "less than five percent of the manufacturing output, but contributes 10 percent of manufacturing jobs" (Wray, 2004). Barnes (2005:6) says the job contribution of this sector is in the region of 13.4% of the total manufacturing employment. Expanding on the importance of the clothing sector for employment, Robbins *et al* (2004:4) cite a quote from SACTWU, claiming that each factory worker in the industry supports a family of five.

According to Barnes (2005), 83.3% of those employed in the clothing sector are women compared to the 16.7% of males. The scale of women workers in the industry is reflected in statistics that show 95% of the workforce in the Western Cape clothing sector is made up of

women (Greenburg, 2005:40). Given the higher percentage of women clothing workers, and the developmental impact of money in the hands of women means retrenchment in this industry does have negative effects for the house-hold well being.

Interestingly while the unions fight for the survival of the industry and retention of jobs they themselves contribute to the erosion of the industry. In 2005, it was reported in the press (Masemola, 2006) that Cosatu had T-shirts made to celebrate its 20th Anniversary and some of the shirts it was discovered had been made in China. Cosatu leadership could not provide any plausible response when questioned about the decision to have the shirts made in China.

Although there is some disagreement on the exact number of people having lost their jobs in the clothing and textile industries, what is indisputable is that there have been substantial formal sector job losses and issues relating to the labour conditions in the industry (Inggs, 2006e).

2.8 The Informal Economy

The restructuring of the clothing industry in South African has resulted in the migration of parts of its labour force from formal sector employment to informal employment. However, there is little empirical evidence to show that while there is an inflow of individuals into the informal economy, there is the likelihood of an outflow, as the informal businesses themselves have to either downsize or close in the face of increased competition between informal industries themselves seeking ways to meet the price demands dictated by the buyers of the large retail outlets and the consumers as reported by (Inggs, 2006c).

Many companies that out-source their production needs to home-worker contractors increase competition between informal home-workers, as the buyers from the formal sector are continually demanding lower prices and driving these conditions down the value chain (Fakude, 2000:21; Nadvi, 2004:25).

2.9 Policy Developments and Formal – Informal Linkages

Policy recommendations directed to the clothing industry are rooted in the analysis (as described previously) that there are gaps in the global market for the industry, mostly so at the top-end of the industry, due to China and many other Asian suppliers being unable to

produce infinite demand or meet orders for short run, short lead-times and the rapid flexibility required by buyers (Alves, 2006).

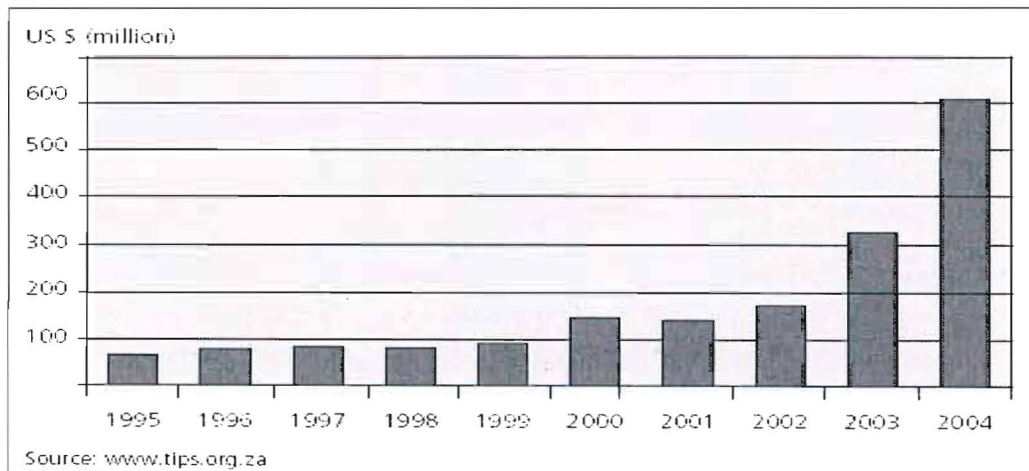
If the industry were to shift market strategies to target the higher value-added sector, such actions could create fierce competition for the independent home-based operations involved in designing, making and marketing their products, predominantly for the same sector of the consumer market that policy-makers recommend should be targeted by the formal sector. Meeting the specifications of design-intensive products requires skilled labour, excellent quality management and state-of-the-art equipment.

2.10 The Role of Chinese Goods in the South African Market

China is not the only country whose exports have resulted in the South African apparel market being flooded by cheaper products, against which local manufacturers struggle to compete. Exports from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Cambodia also contribute to the inflow of cheap imports into the country. It is China's growing dominance of the global apparel market and ever-increasing imports into South Africa (figure two) that has exhorted industry leaders, unions and analysts to focus on "the China syndrome".

Figure Two

SA Imports of Textiles and Clothing from China, 1995-2004



Source (Volk, 2006:234)

According to Steyn (2004:57), imports from China in 1995 amounted to 11 million units. This grew to 123 million units in 2002 and then to 213 million units in 2003. In 2004, 389.3 million clothing units were imported from China, which amounted to R3.6 billion (Volk, 2006:234). At present, cheap imports from China are the major threat to South Africa's clothing industry, contributing over 70% of the total clothing imports into South Africa (Barnes,

2005:10; Naidu, 2005:474); COSATU claims that China contributed to 74% of these imports in 2004 (The Shop Steward, 2005).

In June 2006, both China and South Africa stated that an agreement under which "China will limit its textile and clothing imports" would be implemented imposing quotas on Chinese imports for the next three years (Hamlyn and Inggs, 2006). Further reports relating to this agreement (Inggs, 2005a; 2006i) indicated that China was going to provide a "donation" of R17.5 million to help train South Africans in the clothing and textile industries. It was announced that the agreement, which affects 31 categories of Chinese-made apparel, would become effective from 1 January 2007.

In order to maintain their profit margins, the retailers threatened to place their orders for cheaper apparel to other countries such as Vietnam, Bangladesh and Eastern Europe, so as to override the quota restrictions on importations from China. In response, South Africa's Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, equated such actions with "treason" (Mokopanele, 2006). Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Mr. Rob Davies, added that "government would not hesitate to take action against such threats" (Stephen, 2006).

Were South Africa's large retailers to fulfil their recent threats in response to quota restrictions on Chinese imports, by moving their orders to other countries, the discrepancies between wages will widen even further, depending on the country of choice. In a 2006 report, the NGO called Labour-Behind-The-Label indicated that wages in Bangladesh's clothing industry were a pitiful £7 per month in some factories. The same report cites wages in Cambodia's clothing industry as £25-30 per month, while workers in Turkey earn on average of £220 per month (Labour-Behind-the-Label, 2006: 7).

Whilst both the retailers and manufacturers were critical of the implementations of the quota agreement, no reaction has been recorded from South African fashion designers, nor from the owners and organisers of the various Fashion Week events (who work to represent and promote South African-designed content), for whom this agreement should be little short of life-saving. To date, the Cape Town Fashion Council has also remained silent.

In a letter to the media written by this researcher (see Appendix 1) it was argued that the implementation of the quota restrictions could be beneficial to South African independent fashion designers if they, and the various bodies set up to support them, worked collectively to promote local content to South African consumers.

2.11 The Retail Sector in South Africa

The major retail companies dominating the South African apparel retail market are: Edcon; Mr Price; Foschini Group; Truworths and Woolworths (Wooltru). All of these retailers have taken advantage of globalisation and the changing face of production; retail buyers can now source their products from various foreign companies, or establish factories in favourable low labour-cost countries, which has resulted in the commodity chains being buyer-driven (Doel, 1996 as cited by Kenny, 2003:171; Gereffi, 1999). The development of such buyer-driven chains has a substantial link to the concept of fair trade, which submits that workers in the developing world are being exploited by the buyer-driven international corporations in a persistent search for cheaper production and labour costs in order to procure higher profit margins (Sengenberger and Campbell, 1994, cited in Barrientos, 1999:8 and Starr, 2000:17).

Surveying the value chain from manufacture to retailing, and exploring the growth of retail sales and profits reflected by Statistics South Africa, the indications are that sales in garments have grown significantly during the past years, while production volume has declined, compounded by employment losses within the industry (The Shop Steward, 2005).

Analysis of these retailers' Annual Reports for the years 2002 – 2004 and of the 2005 annual results for Edcon, Mr Price and Foschini Group (Figure Three) shows that these companies made a combined profit of R8.3 billion before tax (The Shop Steward, 2005). The following table reflects these companies' rapid growth in profits:

Figure Three

Profits before tax

R million	2002	2003	2002-3	2004	2003-4	2005	2004-5
Edcon	263	565	115%	1027	82%	1851	80%
Mr Price	193	256	33%	296	16%	411	39%
Foschini	283	513	81%	753	47%	1141	52%
Truworths	452	549	21%	761	39%	n/a	n/a
Woolworths	599	778	30%	937	20%	n/a	n/a

Source: Annual Reports of the retail companies cited above (The Shop Steward, 2005)

Reports by Statistics SA reveal that sales by Edcon had jumped 21% in the 2005 quarter to December compared with the same period in 2004; Mr Price reported a 20.7% increase in sales for the same period (Bloomberg and Robbins, 2006).¹

The private boutiques claim that retailers are importing more from Asia than they declare, and that it is the independent retailers' substantial mark-ups on the retail price of imported apparel that contributes to the growth in their profits.

Countering these remarks from the independent boutiques, the major clothing retailers say that they are supporting local industry by purchasing up to 70 percent of their total purchase from local sources (Vynick, 2005). Steve Ross, CEO of Edcon, which owns retail outlets such as Edgars and Jet Stores, elaborates by reporting that their company "purchas[ed] R6.5 billion in local products [that equates to] 200 million units between April 2004 and April 2005" (Vynick, 2005). The same report quotes Tony Taylor, the deputy-managing director of Truworth saying that his company manufactured 70-75 percent locally, while Foschini said their local content was between 70 to 80 percent and Woolworth said that 75 percent of their clothing was made locally. In the report, Mr Price did not divulge what their local content was but the CEO Mr. Alistair McArthur said that they had not dropped any local suppliers. The regional Secretary of Cosatu, Tony Ehrenreich said in the same report that he doubted these figures given by the retailers.

In study done by Dunne, retailers cite local producers' delivery; after-sales service and inability to be flexible as the reasons why they still import a large proportion of fashion designs for the higher end market (Dunne, 2000:19). This study will show that the above problems are still prevalent when designers have to outsource their production.

The April 2006, Cape Town Fashion Festival's primary focus was to promote local content. Mr Price won the "Proudly Chinese Award"; this award was created to draw attention to the high levels of imports by specific retailers. The yardstick used to determine this award was through public nominations that identified Mr Price in its absolute level of imports or imports as a percentage of total sales, rate of increase of their imports or public perceptions of their sourcing practices.

¹ A 2005 media report stated that in 2003, Edcon's CEO, Steve Ross, earned R7.6 million and R9.9 million in 2004. Mark Lamberti of the Wooltru conglomerate earned similar packages (www.journalism.co.za: 2005).

Notably, in 2003, the European-based Clean Clothes Campaign revealed that its research of factories both in South Africa and in other Southern African countries producing for Mr Price had very poor working conditions. The report identifies "compulsory overtime, poverty wages, verbal and physical abuse, humiliating body searches, and the violations of workers' rights to freedom of association."

The research found that employees producing clothing for Mr Price work a seven-day week with unpaid overtime. In a Malawian factory, the targets set for workers were so high that the workers had to meet the deadlines in their own time, putting in an additional three to six hours every fortnight, with the overtime being uncompensated. The findings in factories based in Lesotho and Swaziland reported similar issues. In releasing the report, the Clean Clothes Campaign called on Mr Price to reevaluate its supply chain and ensure that their products are "made in good conditions" (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2003).

In an April 2006 media report, Mr Price indicated that they would like to become part of the cluster initiative that is being planned for Durban, on the same basis as that of the Cape Town initiative, where various retailers have joined the Cape Clothing Cluster to assist the clothing industry in becoming more competitive (Inggs, 2006k). In July, it was announced that they had become a member of the cluster. It remains to be seen whether the various manufacturers that are involved or plan to be involved in these initiatives, adhere to criteria that assure transparency in their value chains.

These cheap imports have provided consumers with access to a wide range of clothing at affordable prices, which supports the perception that, for the majority of consumers, it is not design, creativity or even quality that defines the buying philosophy of the consumers, but cost. Rather, price (Fakude, 2001; Dunne, 2000) is dictating the "race to the bottom" in the apparel market. Nordas (2004) confers that consumers are concerned about price: "Consumers are more demanding in terms of price" (as cited by Morris, 2006:89).

Further import figures collaborate with data already supplied in this study show according to Barnes (2005) that total imports on clothing (he does not mention the origin of these imports) were in the region of R3.9 billion between 2000 and 2004. The CloTrade 2005 Annual Report says that imports into South Africa between May 2004 and April 2005 were in the value of R3 973.9 million, with China accounting for 86% of the total volume.

The evidence of increasing imports, mostly originating from Asia, is reported by the Southern African Labour Research Institute (cited in the 2005 *Shop Steward Report*) claiming an increase by 73% in 2003 compared to 2001-2002 imports, with 2004 showing an

increase of 84% compared to the previous year. Endorsing the data that cheap imports originate from Asia, Kipling (2005) states that imports rose from 133-million garments in 2001 to 389-million garments in 2004, equating to nine garments for every South African citizen. Out of these totals, China contributed 86 percent of the import market, while imports from India made up 5 percent.

The foregoing analysis shows that the South African clothing industry and unions are critical of retailers, even though the retailers claim that they are supporting local industry and would do more to support the industry if the manufacturing sector could meet certain demands beyond the issue of price.

On this point, media reports indicate that certain retailers are providing space and opportunities for some local designers. Unfortunately, most of the designers being given these opportunities already have brand recognition, which illuminates the difficulties for start-up fashion designers in gaining market penetration and securing accessibility to their designs accessible across the wider consumer base.

In 2004, Woolworths was already showcasing local designers which contributed some R65-million in annual sales. A recent development of socio-responsibility by Woolworths is the collaboration of the Woolworth Trust and GreaterGood South Africa initiative where Woolworths will be donating surplus and 'end of season' clothing to various South African NGOs for non-sellable distribution to needy communities or organisations (GreaterGood South Africa, 2006).

On April 27 2006, Edgars, which is one of South Africa's largest mass retailers, launched a clothing line that features seven South African designers in 11 of its flagship stores throughout the country. The designers' lines will sell at a cheaper cost than similar lines in private boutiques. The initiative behind the Edgars campaign is to provide high fashion at lower prices, simply because Edgars will produce between 300 to 500 of each design, compared to a run of, say, five items for sale in a private boutique (Makgetla, 2006).

Besides the relatively new space management concept of fashion boutique co-ops that are appearing in South African suburbs, which brings numerous designers together to offer a fresh concept of fashion retail for consumers, is the new development known as the Outlet Retail Industry. The concept has been imported from America and the first outlet is due to open in Cape Town in September 2006. The Outlet Retail concept is to provide big brand retailers and designer labels with the opportunity to sell their out-of-season stock at 30% less the regular price within a controlled upmarket environment while maintaining

brand integrity and recognition. It is estimated that the Outlet Retail business is worth over 15 billion US Dollars in America annually. In Europe, there are some 500 Outlet Retail shops (www.sablesquare.co.za , 2006).

Local designers and the various bodies promoting locally designed apparel need to analyse the threat this concept poses to the local design sector. It is a form of new competition relating directly to price as well as a threat of diminishing the market for local designers, as consumers will now have the opportunity of access to international brands at even more affordable prices even if the clothing is out-of-season.

According to Greyling (2005), independent retailers have not seen as remarkable an increase in either sales or profit as have the large retailers during the past few years. The only way they have prevailed and continue to survive is through innovation, customer care and creativity. This argument is supported by Fakude (2001:15), but he reiterates that there is a lack of financial capital to promote local products, designs and labels to both the local and international market.

Fakude (2001) expands his argument that this niche market of local design and the survival of private boutiques that support South African manufactured products is shrinking even further, due the unwillingness of the majority of consumers to spend more on a product merely because it is the creation of a local designer, from local sources.

The desire of designers to see their labels on the hangers of national retail outlets is understandably high, as profit margins would be very lucrative due to the inherent economies of scale. However, in some cases, small, individually owned boutiques have invited local designers to stock their garments but have been met with a somewhat anaemic response. The owner of BeMuse Gallery Boutique in Cape Town, Anna Szymonowicz, reported that when she opened her boutique and invited local designers to share the space, none showed any interest. It was not because she was charging an exorbitant rail-charge or wanting a high commission; she felt that the reluctance was due to "fear and the lack of business and marketing skills that would assist in promoting themselves in the retail market" (*Pursuit*, 2006:48).

A micro-case study (see Appendix 2) indicates that price is dictating the purchasing motivation of retailers and brand managers, even when the merchandise is a localised brand. While undertaking field research in April 2006, the researcher discovered a range of South African rugby merchandise being retailed in a clothing shop in Durban, all made in China. The furore over Standard Bank, the official sponsor for the national one-day Cricket

Series in March 2006, having had all their promotional caps made in China (Masemola, 2006), is a further example of "price rather than patriotism" prevailing over shopper-behaviour. Even concern for the local clothing and textile industry does not appear to be a major factor in the eyes of South African consumers (despite their loyalty to the national sport teams).

This chapter has shown that South Africa's clothing and textile industries emerged from a protected environment in 1994 to international competition, and because this sector did not position itself to face the impact of a globalised trade regime, where price dictates the market, it has experienced substantial loss of employment. The South African government, through the imposition of import quotas, is attempting to address the problem, but for the industry to survive it is vitally important that the manufacturers upgrade not only their technology, but also labour and management skills.

Some argue that the higher-end, design-intensive market might be a focal point for the sustainability of the clothing and textile industry. It is the large retailers who are gaining financially from cheap imports. Although these retailers have encountered severe criticism for this policy, there is evidence that some retailers are supporting local designers. What is also apparent is that the designers themselves need to be more proactive in upgrading their production and business skills, as there are private boutique-owners wishing to support local content, who experience difficulty in dealing with designers in terms of efficient and reliable delivery, and consistent quality.

The flood of cheaper apparel into South Africa is not a recent phenomenon; as this Chapter has shown, in the 1980s, imports were already a concern for the clothing industry. What is clarified in this Chapter is that the industry has been far too reliant on government for assistance, especially since the post-1994 environment, when the new ANC-led government began to shift trade policies in line with WTO recommendations. This Chapter reflects on various policies implemented by the government in its bid to support the clothing and textile industries, on the industry's production capabilities, and on the shift in production methods which has resulted in many people leaving the formal sector for the informal clothing sector. The Chapter outlines the various debates around policies to counter the imports mostly from Asia, and in particular from China, and the role of retailers and private boutiques in South Africa's clothing value chain is reviewed.

CHAPTER THREE

The South African Fashion Design Market

Fashion design, and the designers creating both goods and a market for them, are fundamental to the sustainability of South Africa's clothing and textile industries. The importance of this role has become increasingly evident over recent years, as exemplified by the development of national and provincial fashion councils, with Fashion Week events showcasing the geographic and cultural diversity of the country's fashion design terrain. The dimension of prospects for general market and economic stimulation afforded to the clothing and textile industries by these developments is immeasurable at this stage, but undoubtedly, the potential scope is vast and highly favourable.

3.1 Fashion Design in South Africa

South Africa has the opportunity to become the central focus of the fashion industry on the continent of Africa, according to Mike Freedman of Freedthinkers (Design Indaba, 2006).

Prior to 1994, South Africa's fashion output was small and narrowly focused. Demographically, whites dominated this area of industry, and design innovation was largely directed and controlled by the major chain stores (Rogerson, 2006:2). The post-1994 environment in South Africa provided new opportunities for this sector and gradually, South African designs by young black designers began to appear in private boutiques.

South African fashion journalist Adam Levin says that apartheid, in its various manifestations, eroded and "erased all evidence of black fashion" (Design Indaba, 2006). The history of fashion in South Africa shows that various ethnic groups in South Africa adapted a variety of imported textiles. For example, the Indian import of Salempoor fabrics by Van Riebeeck was integrated in traditional garments worn by the Shangaan and Venda tribes, now known as the "Venda Stripe". Another form of imported cloth, *iShweshwe*, was imported by German missionaries in the late 1800s and is now commonly used by South African designers.

Freedman suggests that there is a growing trend called "Brandlash" whereby consumers are asking serious questions about the ethical links in value chains in respect to higher-end garments. He states that fashion designers should not only think of the end result, but also take responsibility for the entire value chain involved in the production of garments:

"Where do the fabrics come from and are the designs manufactured in the right environment?" (Freedman, 2001).

In the higher-end garment industry, there are two forms of design: creative design involving fashions, brands and labels using textile fabrics and styling; the other is technical design, which uses technology to interpret creative ideas in order to produce samples (Fakude, 2001:10). Fakude remarks that "local designs play only a very minor role or have no role at all in the mainstream clothing value chain" (Fakude, 2001:13). Locally designed clothing may not be the first item on the list for most South African consumers when they buy clothing, but the local design industry is making a positive contribution to the South African clothing industry.

According to SACTWU General Secretary, Ebrahim Patel, "the fashion [clothing] manufacturing sector sustains about 200 000 jobs and is vital to the economies of a number of cities and towns. We believe strong partnerships between design and manufacturing can grow the sector and create jobs" (SA Fashion Week, 2006).

The Department of Trade and Industry estimates that the fashion [clothing] and textile industry contributes R27.2bn to the GDP, creating 200 000 direct jobs and a further 300 000 indirect jobs, with over 2 000 South African companies involved. The industry has a wide variety of players ranging from photographers, dressmakers, make-up artists, models to cotton farmers, coat-hanger manufacturers, related media outlets, large and small retailers, as well as designers and fashion schools. It also incorporates sectors of the informal economy via home-based operations, home-based designers and manufacturers and women's co-ops in making locally designed craft (SA Fashion Week, 2006).

A constraint for home-based designer enterprises in reaching a larger market is the competition from imports as well as design plagiarism by the large retailers and enterprises within the informal sector, which contribute to the continual erosion of prices. As mentioned, there are those that have the determination and drive to succeed; one example is the creation of the Hector Pieterse range of merchandise by a group of young South African designers. (See Appendix: 3)

Interestingly, it is the design sector of South Africa's clothing industry that has seen the government, unions, clothing manufacturers and retailers coming together with proposed visions for its promotion and growth. Formal retailers (Inggs, 2006) expressed in April 2006, a wish to work more closely with local clothing manufacturers, so that exciting designs could be marketed successfully and smaller orders could capture consumer interest. Retailers

reiterated the need for local manufacturers to meet the demands placed on them by retail buyers in terms of service, quality and fast production. Both the retailers and manufacturers stated that they would seek ways to actively support local designers by encouraging design innovation. The Department of Trade and Industry announced its plans to launch a "designers" forum [creating] forward and backward linkage between designers and manufacturers (Inggs, 2006g).

3.2 The Creation of Fashion Events

Fashion Events are noted as an important "nodal point" in the fashion sector and within the value chain for designers, whereby, in a specific geographical location, a temporary cluster is created through which designers can share knowledge and market their products to a captive audience (Skov, 2006:765; Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006: 743).

Within the design sector of the clothing and textile industries, several factors work against each other. Various platforms have been created to promote local designers and provide them with opportunities to enter the local market and even the international market, but the cost attached to such entry and participation in promotional drives precludes many new designers' involvement. A store at the SA Fashion Week, which promotes itself as South Africa's premier fashion event, costs in the region of R2 800 to R45 000, while exhibiting designs on the catwalk can cost in the region R11 000 (Johnson, 2005).

In a show of support for the South African designers, financing and insurance giant Sanlam has agreed to be the major sponsor for the next three years of the prestigious South African Fashion Week; this event showcases local designers in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. The idea for a South African Fashion Week arose in 1997, its aim being to "develop fashion into a serious business and [the] creation of wealth through design." The SA Fashion Week not only provides space for local designers, but also hosts an ancillary exhibition providing a platform for various actors in the industry to meet and exhibit their products, capabilities and services.

Durban's Fashion Week was initiated in 2005, not only to showcase Durban designers, but also to bring Durban design to South Africans and to the global fashion stage. It is also noteworthy that many of South Africa's best designers originated from Durban.

The Durban Designer Collection (DDC) celebrated its 26th year in August 2006. The 2006 event took place at Durban's Harbour. Billed as the longest standing fashion event in South Africa, it has firmly placed Durban on the local and international map as a locality for

creative talent in design content. Many of Durban's and South Africa's designers have launched their careers through the DDC.

The Cape Town Fashion Week, which was conceptualised and launched four years ago, is intended to provide "an international platform for designers across sub-Saharan Africa" (Cape Town Fashion Week).

3.3 Fashion Weeks and Developmental Projects

Linking the SA Fashion Week to the development of local creative content has been the theme for national workshops initiated by Sanlam and the Department of Arts and Culture, in collaboration with the organisers of SA Fashion Week. The objective of these workshops is "to foster a much closer relationship between crafts and design from the grassroots level." A number of crafters throughout South Africa take part in the workshops, engaging with up-and-coming designers to "create new and unique designer collections that would be exhibited and sold at the 2006 SA Fashion Week". Thereafter, nine of the selected designers stock the products in their boutiques for a period of a year.

This researcher attended in the Durban phase of the SA Fashion Week Workshop Series as an observer, involving 22 crafters from KwaZulu-Natal selected by the Department of Arts and Culture. Working in collaboration with prominent Durban-based designers such as The Holmes Brothers, Rozanne Immerman and Sifiso Mthethwa, the crafters spent the three-day workshop developing ways of integrating their beading designs with new ranges of clothing.

South African traditional designs and crafts are being seen on the international fashion catwalks. Leading British designer Emma Hope used a Cape Town-based community project making unique handbags to complement her latest European winter fashion collection. There is increasing recognition that the combination of traditional craft with high-end clothing is providing numerous opportunities for the inclusion of South African community projects, not only as beneficiaries, but as active design participants, with positive effects for both the industry and the broader economy.

The POSITIVE Extravaganza is a further example of how designers can address the socio-economic challenges facing South Africa. This extravaganza was hosted by the two women owners of the South African label "Hip-Hop Clothing", and involved the donation and auction of designs to raise funds for an AIDS Hospice. The "Hip-Hop" label has also developed a new collection of designs called "Afro Diva", created by women in the

informal sector, with each designed item telling a story relating to their personal life-stories (iFashion, 2006).

Minister for Trade and Industry, Mandisi Mpahlwa, said that it is important for "South Africa to find innovative ways to manage the realities of global competitiveness, which includes focusing on our indigenous culture and character as a basis for developing our unique competitive edge." Sanlam's marketing executive stated: "We feel strongly that the [clothing] industry, which is focused on individual expression, is a natural fit for us. We too are focused on individuals in terms of financial needs. Together we can turn catwalk collections into clothing realities, helping to keep jobs and grow the South African economy while promoting this vital industry both in this country and internationally" (SA Fashion Week, 2006).

Another example of collaborative innovation in the South African industry is the SA Clothing and Textiles Workers Union's annual "Spring Queen Pageant." Also sponsored by Sanlam, it is the only fashion show in the world where workers from the clothing and textile industry model the clothes they have helped to manufacture. Over 100 factories took part in the 2006 pageant. Here too, the objective is to amplify a call to consumers to support locally produced content, but it also showcases the collective face of the thousands of workers that depend on employment in the clothing and textile industry.

The April 2006, Cape Town Fashion Festival's primary focus was to promote local content. Present at the awards night was Minister of Public Enterprises, Alec Erwin, and COSATU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi. The award for Designer of the Year went to husband-and-wife team Vanya and Thando Mangaliso of Sun Goddess, who have stores in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town.

The award for Best Retailer went to Naartjie, a children's brand with 15 stores in South Africa; this company is uniquely and stringently South African, with over 90% of its products sold in South African stores produced by South Africans. The brand has also been launched in 19 stores in the USA and last year (2005) the company exported R13 million of locally made clothing to these stores.

The Best Manufacturer award went to Levi Strauss South Africa, one of the world's largest clothing brands; it set up a local manufacturing plant in 1996 with 130 workers. Today the local factory has 400 workers and provides an incentive scheme to workers. The factory supplies both its own stores as well local retail outlets. As a result, it is one of very few factories in the local clothing industry that has seen growth over the past few years.

Textile manufacturers are seeing the benefit of entering into the design-intensive industry by creating their own brands. South African textiles company Vlisco has found a gap in the market by creating "Afro-Gucci brands (Makgetla, 2006). The label, known as "Aziza" - which means "gorgeous" in Swahili - was launched in July 2006 with the intention of exporting this conceptualisation of a "pan-African" design.

In 1987, the South African Fashion Designers Association (SAFDA) was formed by local designer Sonwabile Ndamase, who saw a need to bring together under one body the severely fragmented fashion industry, so that designers could have access to various sources and use the agency to catalyse cohesion among various related sectors. He realised that the fashion design sector cannot operate in a vacuum.

The ideas of SAFDA are to:

Bring together and create partnerships with all stakeholders in the design industry both locally and internationally. Encourage distinctive South African design. Maintain standards of quality that are comparable with international benchmarks. Provide a platform for young designers to market their products and innovation. Link designers with credible clothing manufacturers and act within a framework of sound social and business ethics to create and maintain social responsibility projects by assisting and promoting sectors of the informal economy operating within the clothing industry.

(Vukani Fashions)

A further development towards industry cohesion is the creation of the Cape Town Fashion Council. Established in July 2006, the aim of the Council is to be the "representative mouthpiece and common platform for the industry." Currently housed under the wing of the Cape Provincial Government Department of Economic Development, the Council seeks to position itself as an enabling hub for fashion designers, government bodies, retailers, manufacturers and tertiary institutions to pool their expertise and resources. There are concerns that opposition from the various districts and municipalities might arise from plans to implement similar projects, which would create even more contestation among various representative bodies claiming control over designers.

3.4 China's entry into high-end fashion design

A report released in April 2006 by the London-based trends specialists Worth Global Style Network (WGSN), which analyses and researches the fashion and style industry, identified a new player in the global design intensive industry which could have adverse effects on the South African market. The report stated that China could become a powerful force on the

global fashion stage. With China's dominance of the apparel market through low labour costs, it could produce brands that may become "global brands in the near future" that are affordable and trendy.

The key to China's entry into the market is through "fast fashion", said Roger Tredre, editor-in-chief of WSGN. By this, he means the creation and manufacture of very small runs for key stores to "either test the market or simply create a buzz of excitement on the part of the consumer" (Jiang, 2006).

A statement from South Africa's Department of Trade and Industry in May 2006, announcing its draft agreement with China to restrict imports into South Africa, indicated that China would begin to focus on "more high-quality textiles and clothing, as this would reduce direct competition against producers of lower-quality goods" (Fabricius, 2006). This prospect is highly problematic for the local clothing and textile industry, and specifically for locally designed content. While it is understandable that the government and other stakeholders should seek mechanisms to protect the lower sector of the clothing and textile industry, which has been the hardest hit by Chinese imports, by encouraging China to focus on the higher-quality products will exert enormous pressure on South Africa's fledging fashion design industry, which exists mainly to produce high-quality products made by local designers. This move would therefore solve no problems; indeed, the negotiators of this agreement would only achieve the shifting of the problem from one end of the market to another.

This scenario raises a number of important questions to be addressed by key industry members; intelligent, transparent and participatory initiatives are needed to counter the likely threat posed by China's proposed entry into this sector of the market. It also signals a dire warning to South African designers and related stakeholders not to be complacent by relying on government protection for their area of production, as the clothing and textile sector has done in the past. If not, South Africa could see its design industry swamped by these niche-focused Chinese imports.

There is much active promotion of locally designed content, but - as was highlighted in the interviews with various designers and fashion magazine editors, - the rhetoric around such support is not being manifested in the form of tangible action. It is vital that all the bodies and individuals involved in backing South African design come together to agree on demonstrable indicators of elevating awareness of, and demand for, local designs and brands, with formal monitoring and evaluation techniques implemented to reinforce such commitment.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Value Chain

4.1 Introducing the Value Chain

McCormick and Schmitz (2001) describe the value chain (see Figure four) with a concise description of its numerous dimensions: one is the flow or input structure, commencing with the design stage and moving on to sourcing of raw materials, production activity and product distribution. At each stage, various services are needed to maintain the smooth process of development from conception to completion of the product. Value chain analysis is a mechanism of understanding how retailers, designers, manufacturers and home-based workers operate, overlap and are interdependent. The value chain approach allows a better understanding of the linkages and therefore the governance and power relations so giving an insight into the systemic competitiveness of industries. Further, it allows policymakers to make more accurate design policy interventions.

The process and system represented by the value chain is used to understand the relationship between the various role-players and stakeholders (and in accordance with the particular focus of this study, the fashion design sector) in the clothing and textile industry. This perspective provides space for further research, evaluation and policy development, in order to provide credible recommendations for strengthening the clothing and textile industry's capacity to meet the challenges of globalisation and secure methods of procurement (Sturgeon 2001).

Another element in the structure of the entire value chain, which is not as discernible as the above, is the value of knowledge and information gained, harnessed and manipulated along the links that make up the chain.

The geographic spread of the value chain is also important, with some links being locally focused and others global. Some are stand-alone operators while others work in clusters. The agency for control (especially in the case of the clothing and textile industry) resides primarily in the retail buyer. Retail buyers are key to the strategic business thrust of their companies, because they are tasked to assess and decide upon the clothing ranges and brands (as well as the volume, costs margins and duration of orders for chosen stock) to be marketed and sold by their retail outlets. The retail buyer is therefore the dominant role-player with the mandate to dictate which clothing ranges and brands become part of the value chain, and in this sense, he or she serves a function that is grafted upon the various,

interlinked levels of the value chain. (To clarify and highlight this powerful positioning, it is useful to view the impetus generated by the retail buyer in the clothing and textile industry's value chain, with an altogether different process as exemplified in, say, the motor industry, wherein the value chain is driven by the manufacturer.)

Retail Buyers for brands and retailers have the option to choose from a number of producers both locally and internationally, according to a number of criteria, namely: standards of quality, weighed against local demand for such standards, as against speed of delivery and price. In determining those suppliers most strategically favourable for use by the retailers, the retail buyers also take account of the geographic location of producers, as well as the labour laws of various countries and their trade policies (Kaplinsky and Morris, 2001).

Dismantling each link in the entire chain allows for analysis of specific issues relating primarily to its particular functions and character; secondarily, study of the entire value chain process in terms of broader considerations (such as ethical sourcing, labour conditions, market access, skills development and pricing) builds knowledge around and targets identification of value chain flaws and weaknesses that require reinforcement and restructuring.

Kaplinsky and Morris (2001: 23) elaborate on the importance of value chain analysis, saying that there are five reasons to study the value chain: first, it provides a platform for the researcher to obtain a global view of the industry from one particular business through to various linked operations. The second reason is that insight is given into the activities of all the role-players and the "rents" derived from each activity. The third reason focuses on understanding the returns within the value chain policy format, which helps to inform the upgrading of chain's sectors, so as to create better returns. The fourth reason is that the value chain reveals local linkages and government responses in relation to a specific sector of the country's economy, thereby providing indicators for the re-design of certain mechanisms that might better equip companies to meet global and local challenges. The fifth advantage resides in studying the trajectorial view of the industry and of the global changes taking place within it.

4.2 Upgrading and Governance

Upgrading and governance are two elements that are fundamental to the value chain. Kaplinsky and Morris (2001:37) hold that upgrading and innovation is critical for clothing operations if competitive edge is to be maintained and market share sustained and

developed. Apparel operations can upgrade in three ways: process, product, and functional upgrading (Kaplinsky and Morris 2001:39).

Process upgrading involves improving the production line to deliver more effectively at a cheaper price. Through product upgrading, the company can enhance quality or offer higher-end products. Functional upgrading involves redrafting the company's business strategy to move from manufacturing only, to design, branding and marketing. These are the core elements on which South Africa's independent fashion designers should concentrate in order to increase their market profile in South Africa.

Within the context of functional upgrading, e-business (Moodly, 2002) has been seen as a useful tool, but restrictions within South Africa for using this mechanism within the value chain is constrained by the high cost of the internet and the poor functionality of lines for Internet usage.

According to Gereffi *et al* (2001), there is another aspect that lends itself to upgrading: the creation of networks. This involves companies seeking out new customers with brand recognition and proven market value, and which in turn provides some surety for better financial returns for the manufacturing industries.

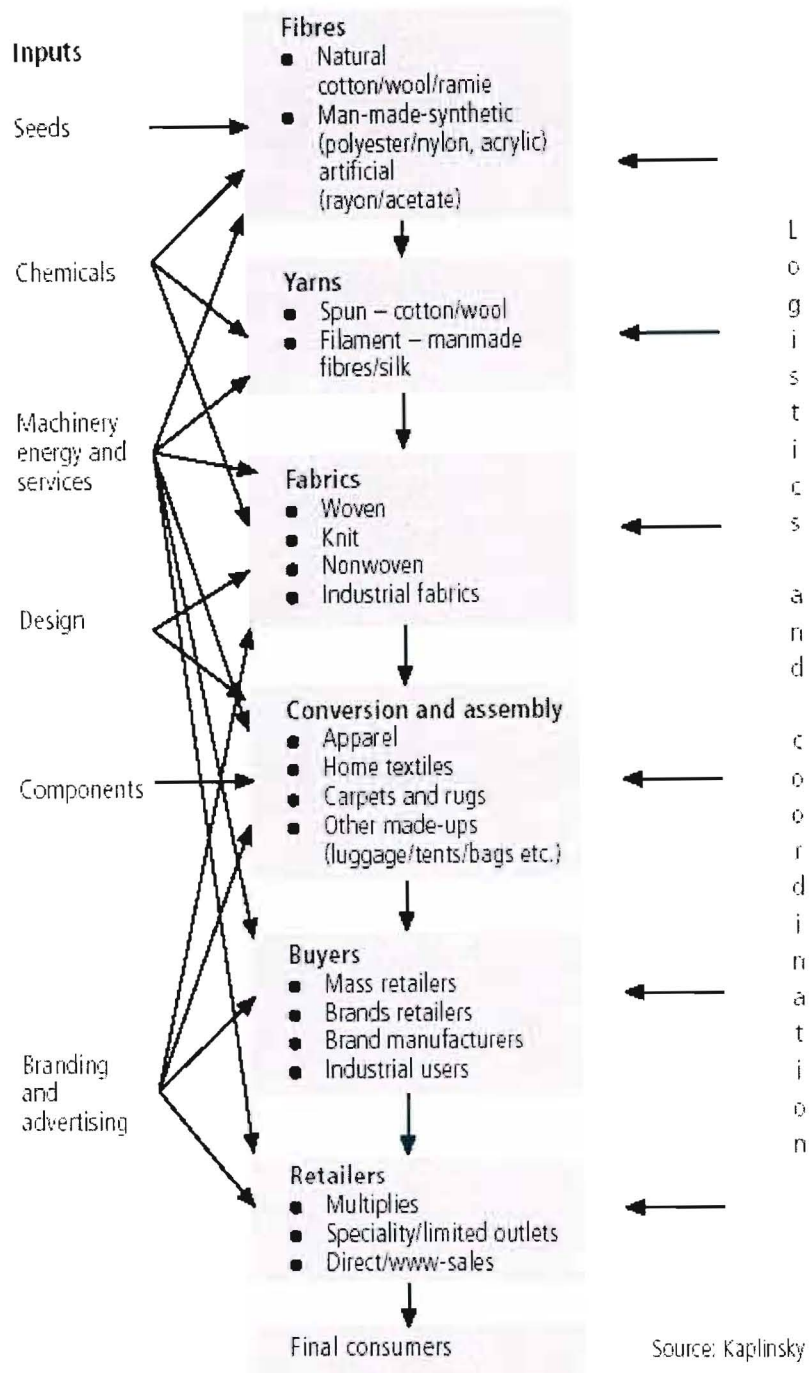
Governance provides a parameter in which the various players linked into a value chain need to confer and co-operate in establishing a basis of uniform understanding, so as to comply with prescribed ethical standards including those pertaining to labour regulation.

4.3 Buyer-Driven Value Chain

Changes in the global clothing industry and the way retailers stock their stores have impacted strongly on clothing manufacturers, forcing them to adapt their entire operations as they strive to keep abreast with mutating realities and norms. Today, the retail level of the value chain functions on "just-in-time" buying in response to demands by consumers for new styles. According to McCormick and Schmitz (2002), retailers retain low stocks and demand rapid turnaround on production orders. These authors claim that the clothing industry has evolved to the point where there are multi-seasonal, short-run designs appearing in the retail outlets.

Figure Four

The Global Clothing and Textile Value Chain



A distinct opportunity for the revival of the South African clothing and textile industry lies in being able to align with developments in the fashion market and restructuring the entire value chain to meet these demands. This concept of a leaner retailing strategy conducts

"ripple effects back into manufacturing and through the manufacturers to the labour force" (McCormick and Schmitz, 2001:31).

Retailers order more frequently, thereby placing a demand for faster production, optimal quality control and flexibility in production methods to meet consumer demand and trends. South African producers, who can restructure accordingly, implement these changes in their production lines and maintain such standards can secure local market penetration and, ultimately, growth, if both retailers and manufacturing form strategic alliances that establish understanding of business needs from both sides. This collaboration can be extended down the value chain to find ways of supporting small clothing operations within the informal sector who can meet the demands of flexibility, quality and efficient production.

4.4 The Agile Value Chain

Particular to the high-end and niche markets in the clothing and textile industry is the concept of creating agile supply chains. To define this type of supply or value chain, it is important to identify what fashion niche-designed clothing encompasses. Christopher, Lowson and Peck (2004: 2) define fashion as having the following characteristics:

Short life-cycles: designs created to capture the mood of consumers and which limit the saleable life of the particular product. High Volatility: demand for the products is not stable. Interest in a range can arise from trends in contemporary culture such as the film and music markets, and innovation in related formats and events. Low Predictability: because of the volatility of demand, it is difficult to project the actual levels of demand or period of interest. High-Impulse Purchasing: many consumers make spontaneous decisions at the time and points of purchase, so that availability becomes critical.

The authors recognise the global spread of sourcing, but argue in the case of fashion that the long lead and delivery times may have a negative influence on the savings inherent in using lower labour cost countries for their sourcing (Christopher *et al*, 2004).

With the onset of high fashion turnover and the continual changes in design trends, retailers are narrowing their supply chains and sources so that they can develop more "responsive replenishment systems – something that is not possible when sourcing is spread over hundreds of suppliers" (Christopher *et al*, 2004:369).

The authors (Christopher *et al*, 2004) identify three critical issues that must be upgraded in the value chain for all players that are linked in the high-end fashion industry:

Time to Market: how long it takes to identify an opportunity or trend and to translate this into a product and bring it to the market. Time to Serve: how long it takes to identify and capture a customer (or retail Buyer) order and deliver the product while meeting all requisite specifications. Time to React: rapid implementation of changes.

In order for an agile supply chain to operate efficiently, real-time information must be shared up and down the chain. This entails retailers sharing their point-of-sale data with suppliers so that suppliers can prepare in time for orders from retailers. Overall, the agile supply chain relies on the ability of all the various players to meet market sensitivity and ensure solid vertical integration. Connection via electronic means would enable all the players "from the fabric manufacturers, to the garment makers and retailers" to share information on stocks, delivery times and consumer demands so as to meet rapid response times (Christopher *et al*, 2004: 10). The various CMTs in South Africa which according to House and Williams (2000), and Gibbon (2002) as cited by Velia (2004:14), consist of "operations that specialise in particular production such as pleating and embroidery; those that focus on design and those that produce basic products" would have to upgrade to meet the demands of an agile value chain.

4.5 Designers and the Value Chain

The integration of designers within the value-chain (see figure five), according to Pan and Holland (2006), lies in the origination of styles, which involves market research, design conceptualisation and market surveys, leading to the development of samples. Production planning and scheduling is then implemented, followed by the final manufacturing process, and delivery of the finished product to the retail outlet (Pan and Holland, 2006: 346). The influence and importance of design and the designers within the value chain is elaborated on by Abecassis-Moedas, who states that this role is essential for the successful production and sale of clothing products (Abecassis-Moedas, 2006:424). This view is extended by Atkinson (2002:117) who states that the "role of the designer in the [clothing] sector is crucial to its success, as the skill of any good designer lies in maximising the value that can be added to a set of basic raw materials" (Atkinson, 2002:117).

Rogerson endorses this view thus:

The future prosperity of the local clothing economy lies in value-added design and manufacturing around certain niche products and markets, which are viewed as having a real long-term potential to penetrate specialist local, regional and international markets.

(Rogerson, 2006: 9)

Many of South Africa's independent designers do not have the same influence in the value chain as do their counterparts who work for retail outlets or manufacturers of "own brands", as the latter work to economies of scale, enjoying the benefits of large marketing divisions and access to research resources that are used to capture their target markets (Abecassis-Moedas, 2006: 416). As such, independent designers are reliant on other forms of marketing and value-chain connections for the development their business, such as word-of-mouth advertising, using fashion events for marketing and creating stronger ties with manufacturers within the value chain.

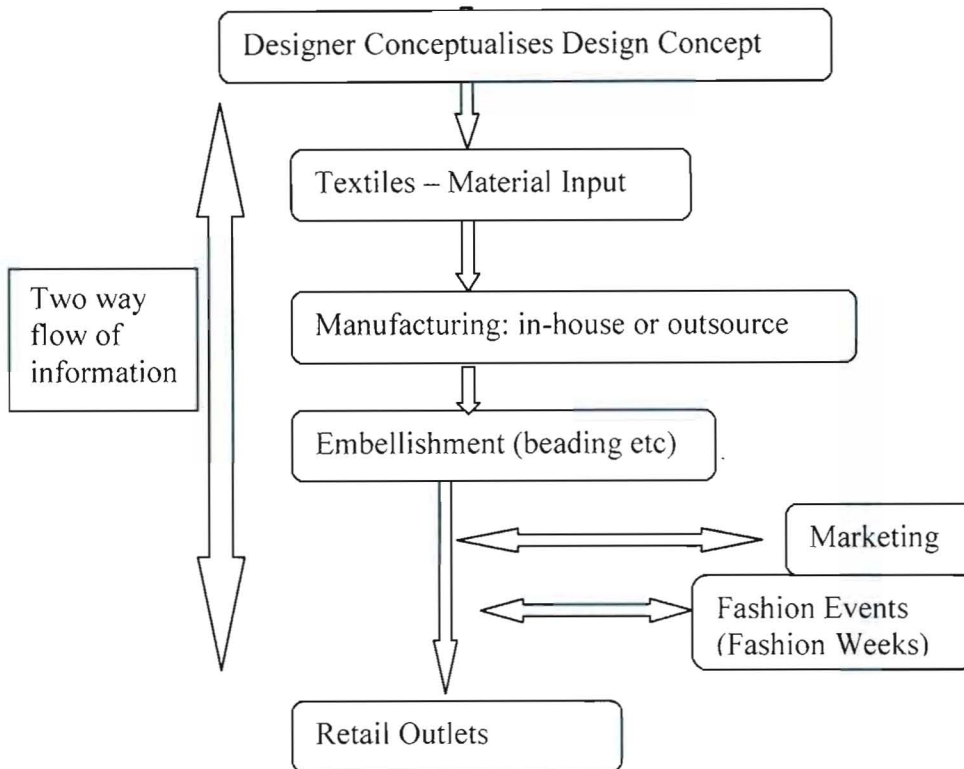
Furthermore, due to the rapid turn-around of fashion trends, and the short lead-time available (from conception to retail) for designs to be launched, independent designers struggle to compete with retailers and manufacturers who have a number of designers working on new ranges and so can turn out newly conceptualised designs faster (Abecassis-Moedas, 2006). Many independent designers feel that the increasing pace of the fashion cycle prohibits them from spending time on research, exploring different design concepts and being fully creative in their production (Atkinson, 2002:117).

Even at the higher-end of the market, consumers are not willing to wait for long periods for new designs to enter the market; also, with the heightened competition from retailers and other designers, it is imperative for independent designers to get their products onto the retailers' shelves as fast as possible. Hence, it is critical for these designers to take up a prominent niche in the value chain that underpins their business process, from the point of creation, through production, to delivery of their made-up designs.

There are opportunities for South African designers to utilise CMTs, but in turn, the CMTs themselves need to reevaluate their business operations to maximise the opportunities arising for them through the promotion of locally designed content. CMT operators need to form sound and sustainable business relations – or, indeed, partnerships – with designers, and focus on improving their production and service points. Current evidence indicates that CMT operations are not adequately competent in high-end, quality production, and this is impeding the utilisation of CMTs by local designers.

Figure Five

Designers' Value Chain



In terms of design conceptualisation, fashion designers are subject to a two-way flow of information: "top-down" and "bottom-up". Historically, design concepts and fashion ideas have tended to originate from the higher income consumer groups who wanted original designs so that they could stand out from the masses. In the post-modern era, and particularly in post-1994 South Africa, this inspirational flow has changed direction, so that designers are also influenced by "street trends", mass media and popular, rather than elitist, culture. In other words, it is the consumer that starts and ends a designer's value chain (Aspers and Skov, 2006:804).

Private boutiques and retailers constitute an invaluable part of the designer's value chain in view of the market information that the designer can obtain from these sources. The private boutiques, where most independent designers retail their products, are in constant touch with consumers and so are able to "gauge trends and consumer demands", and this information is passed back to the designer for interpretation into new designs (Aspers, 2006: 751). The particularly important task for South African designers in this creative process is that of embellishing the garment, as this provides them with an opportunity to add further value to their designs, extending the vision of a unique South African aesthetic

in their designs. Embellishment also limits the degree of vulnerability of designers' creations to being copied (Rogerson, 2006). The role of fashion events is a vital component in the value chain for designers, as such spaces provide designers with opportunities not only to network within their industry, but also to interact directly with their prospective market (Skove, 2006: 765).

CHAPTER FIVE

Methodology of the Study

5.1 Introduction

Every day, worldwide, consumers aspire to be seen wearing brand-names that demonstrate their choice of the most fashionable clothing. The desire to emulate iconic personalities (and, by association, their status in society) by conforming to the trends they set, is reflected in the clothes worn by individuals from every walk of life. The human desire to attire oneself in the most up-to-date fashion is driven by marketing directed by the brand's companies, fashion magazines and other conduits of social influence.

Consumers who pursue and thereby create demand for fashionable brands and styles that rapidly change throughout the year, give little thought to the individual producers of these goods and the economic and developmental complexities behind what hangs in the end-users' wardrobes. In South Africa, there is substantial academic research and public debate through the media focusing on the state of the clothing and textile industries. However, there has been very little research on the fashion designers themselves, who contribute in their own various ways to the rise and fall of the clothing and textile industries.

In identifying this lacuna in the research, it was vital for this researcher to provide a definition of the term "independent fashion designers". For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the collective entity made up of those who create, market and sell their own designs - whether these be *haute couture* (high fashion) or ready-to-wear collections.

5.2 Focus of the Study

The study recognises that fashion designers do not work in isolation and are not excluded from the various local and global influences and factors that affect their business. The result of globalisation and the changes in the clothing and textile industries across the world have had either a positive or negative impact on designers' ability to maintain successful businesses and to contribute to the growth and sustainability of South Africa's clothing and textile industries.

There are, however, a number of independent designers who are succeeding, even in the face of increased global competition. Therefore, the objective of this research is to explore and assimilate the experiences of some South African designers. Given that there has

been very little formal research on local fashion designers, this investigation is an attempt to probe and map this aspect of the industry, and to highlight areas for further comprehensive research. The information gathered in this study provide a sufficiently broad overview of the designers' activities and contributes to an understanding of the importance of fashion design itself to related industries, as well as the external and internal influences that impact on these enterprises.

5.3 Research Questions

The intention of this research is to grasp the essential elements of the environment in which fashion designers operate, and identify their common experiences. The focus is on understanding those designers who are commercially successful and identifying their key success factors. A further objective is to throw more light on their role in the value chain. Several studies have been undertaken on the role of manufacturers, buyers and retailers as components within the value chain, but there has been little investigated on independent designers and their role in the value chain.

In the context of globalisation, the value chain approach is useful as both a theoretical and methodological tool. Analysis of the value chain is used within the context of the clothing and textile industry to understand the relationship between its various role-players and stakeholders. Such an analysis provides space for further investigation and policy development, in order to provide solid recommendations for strengthening capacity within the local clothing and textile industry in the face of globalisation (Sturgeon 2001).

The interviews conducted with the designers afforded an evaluation of their relationship with suppliers, the commonalities of issues relating to imports, the role of the State, and the designers' opinions on the various factors involved in promoting locally designed content, such as fashion shows and fashion councils, as well as consumer behaviour in terms of the support for local content.

The design element of clothing is acknowledged as a vital part of the "creative industries" and is increasingly been seen as an important sector of academic study in relation to the analysis of policies and development within the clothing and textile industries (Cunningham as cited by Rogerson, 2006:4). Central to this emerging area of research is the recognition that fashion is a business and can be taken seriously for empirical study in terms of its economic, political, social, cultural and strategic positioning in a post-industrial context.

This dissertation aims to understand the nature of the design component of the clothing industry in Durban, and more specifically how designers are coping with changes in the national and global context of the clothing industries. In cognisance of the literature on globalisation, it is important to identify those who excel in this sector and what their formulae for success might be. The study will also propose some policy interventions.

5.4 The Identification of Participants

The choice of site was made on the basis of preliminary research for this project, during which the owner of the Durban Fashion Week noted that many of South Africa's famous designers started their careers in Durban, a centre that is increasingly regarded as a growth point for the design component of clothing manufacture. The selection of the designers interviewed for this study was done on the basis that they are independent designers with brand recognition.

The study used a formal questionnaire as a means to gain personal testimonies of the individual participant designers who granted in-depth interviews. (see Appendix 4) Semi-structured interviews were used to gain a range of perspectives on the industry from fashion editors and other figures in this sector who were not able to engage in lengthy interviews. In addition, observational methods were deployed at events such as fashion shows, to which the researcher secured access.

The initial process of identifying key informants was difficult, and numerous methods were used to find suitable candidates. The aim was to establish contact with independent designers making their own brand of clothing mostly within the locality of Durban, either working from home or in their own factories. No listings are available to facilitate this search; there is no central database of South African designers, and the designers are not specifically showcased in Durban's "Yellow Pages" telephone directory.

To solve this problem, the researcher placed an advertisement (see Appendix 5) in a local community newspaper outlining the research envisaged, and inviting designers who met the specific criteria to be interviewed. This exercise yielded five designers as participants. The same approach was used for an on-line appeal, posted on a South African website that provides news coverage and opinions on local clothing and fashion. Through e-mail responses, a further six designers offered to take part in the research. These 11 respondents were informed that they would be contacted once the interview questionnaire was finalised.

The owner of a new retail outlet in the suburbs of Durban that provides space for designers to sell their products was identified as an agent for sourcing possible candidates for interviews. She provided the names of the designers who stocked her store, three of whom were contacted and at their request, were provided with the questionnaire for them to complete independently.

The website for Durban Fashion Week was consulted extensively and details of all the designers who took part in the 2005 fashion event recorded. From a list of 31 designers, initial contact was made with 15, chosen at random through e-mail, introducing the purpose of the research and enquiring about their willingness to be interviewed. Seven designers accepted this invitation.

The Convenor of Durban Fashion Week was interviewed, during which the difficulty of establishing contact with designers and redundant contact details was discussed at length. The interview revealed that this hiatus in communication with designers is a crucial problem when organising fashion events, and that often "e-mail addresses are invalid, and responses to telephone calls and messages are not returned" (Interview, 2/6/06). The Convenor suggested that the best opportunity to make contact with designers would be during the Durban Fashion Week, which took place between 21st and 26th June 2006. The Convenor facilitated the researcher's access to the Durban Fashion Week and assisted with personal introductions to designers.

An event supplement for Durban Fashion Week, which provided a brief bio-sketch of the 73 designers taking part in the 2006 Durban Fashion Week, was used to identify more designers with whom contact could be established after the event. In all, 12 designers were contacted during the 2006 Fashion Week.

Whilst attending the Durban Fashion Week, semi-structured interviews were conducted with editors from various fashion magazines, and with one designer who had only 30 minutes to spare to discuss his work. Additional semi-structured interviews were conducted with the organisers of the planned Durban Fashion District and the Cape Town Fashion Council, as well as an owner of a private boutique.

Immediately after the 2006 Fashion Week in Durban, the researcher e-mailed a questionnaire (see Appendix 6) to all 73 designers who showed collections at the event. The same questionnaire was sent to the 16 designers who took part in the Durban Designer Collection in August 2006. To minimise and concentrate the time required to complete it, the questionnaire consisted of dichotomous questions - offering only two fixed alternatives

from which to choose. The objective of the questionnaire exercise was to gather designers' feedback on both the 2006 Durban Fashion Week and Durban Designers Collection.

Although all the designers initially contacted for in-depth interviews responded positively, when the time came for the interviews to take place, a number of them could not commit the time required for this process, as they were preparing for fashion shows in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Others did not return follow-up calls or messages. As the progress of this research could not be delayed, the researcher used the information collected to that point through formal structured interviews and semi-structured interviews as the primary source for this research.

As the study progressed, it became obvious that the perspectives of private boutique owners would be a vital component of the research. The establishment of private boutiques provides invaluable outlets for South African designers to market and sell their designs in the formal sector. Two private boutiques in Durban, one in Johannesburg and one in Cape Town were contacted, as well as a boutique-chain (Young Designers Emporium) owned by Truworths that stocks local designers' lines in stores throughout South Africa. Interviews took place with three of the five owners, while the fourth owner continually postponed the interview date. The management of the Truworths chain of boutiques declined to take part in the research. Another impediment to the research was the inability to get commentary from Vukanifashions, the organisation that promotes itself as head of South African Fashion Designers Association. Numerous e-mails and telephone messages to their office met with no response.

To extend the research, it was imperative to seek commentary from Design Colleges. Three design colleges (two in Durban and one in Cape Town) were contacted, with only the Cape Town College responding to questions sent by e-mail.

A request to do an interview with the Director of the SA Fashion Week was attempted a number of times, but this avenue of investigation was terminated after attempts failed to establish contact with the director. Contact was established with a major retailer that supports local designers (Woolworths) and a semi-structured interview took place, which assisted immensely in gaining a balanced perspective on the role played by large retail chains in this sector. The researcher was also invited to join a monthly meeting - initiated by the Durban Chamber of Business - to discuss, plan and implement a proposal for the establishment of a Fashion District in Durban.

The Natal Clothing Bargaining Council was contacted to obtain a list of registered clothing operations within KwaZulu-Natal, and the June 2006 membership list was procured as a critical resource for profiling Durban's clothing industry. The Durban Independent Newspaper Group's archives were also searched to gain a historical view through media reports on the clothing industry.

A total of 11 independent designers were interviewed. Four independent boutique owners and a management executive from Woolworths were also interviewed. Further interviews took place with editors of fashion magazines, as well as a fashion journalist and an internationally recognised, locally based commentator on fashion.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The researcher recognises that the qualitative nature of these research findings is susceptible to some degree of bias, with an interpretative perspective of the complexities involved in the topic being almost inescapably allied to one's subjective stance.

Even though the sampling size available to the researcher was enlarged through access to the database of designers taking part in the Durban Fashion Week, in general the response rate was low. This low level of response indicates that the survey outcomes need to be seen in the light of this limited coverage, but the clear commonalities of problems and accomplishments recounted by the participant designers reflects that this survey is useful as a credible representation of South African fashion designers. The sample size was big enough to produce new insights into this under researched segment of the clothing industry.

The low response from designers was not wholly due to an unwillingness to take part in the research, but more because of the timing of the fieldwork, and the nature of the industry under investigation, as many of the designers work alone, and finding time to participate in the research project was difficult for them. As one prospective respondent indicated: "I am so busy making clothing I just cannot find an hour or so for you, even though I want to assist you and realise how important this research is for our fledging industry - but I just can't do it now." The endorsement of the need for and significance of this research was received from everyone with whom the researcher was able to interact.

Ironically, although the Durban Fashion Week opened up unique opportunities for the researcher to engage with a range of sectoral practitioners in a concentrated timeframe, it was unfortuitous that three major fashion events were taking place throughout the

country between June and July, as designers were wholly focused on their show deadlines (obtaining supplies, making up garments, dealing with models and the organisers).

A further limitation to the process of investigation, with particular reference to the value chain, was the reluctance of respondents to provide details of their suppliers, and that competition for reliable CMT (cut, make and trim) services and textile suppliers is rife. In order to examine fully the links between and relationships with designers and external suppliers, the researcher would have preferred to be able to interview these specific CMT and textile merchants as well, but instead could only pose questions to the designers about their relationships with suppliers and the more general issue of competition in this regard.

CHAPTER SIX:

The Designers: Experiences and Comments

6.1 Introducing the Designers

This chapter provides an overview of the designers' interviewed for this study and reflects on their entry into the fashion industry and development of their respective businesses.

Most of South Africa's successful fashion designers started their careers from home, creating new designs and selling their product ranges within the informal economy. Through perseverance and clear vision, they have generated and sustained a local and international clientele and brand recognition. Some of these designers now own their own retail outlets that display their range of products and provide space for new designers. Some have their own manufacturing facilities while others still manufacture in an informal environment from home studios, supplying to the major retail outlets as well as to numerous private boutiques that are appearing throughout South Africa with the intention of showcasing local content (Roberson, 2006).

The 11 designers interviewed (figure five) are all independent designers and successful in their own right. Some have been in the industry for many years, while others are relatively new but are establishing their names and brands in the marketplace. All of these designers manufacture from their own *atelier* (design studio) or factory, either doing most of their own production or creating employment in their factories. As and when the need arises, some will outsource part of their production demand to external CMTs or home-based workers. Many have won awards for their work, taken part in Fashion Events and received coverage of their designs in the media. Many sell their designs in both the formal and informal economy, some sell from their own boutiques, while others sell through private boutiques and many of them have and do export their goods.

The 11 designers created employment for approximately 32 people and when necessary, employ extra temporary assistance to help with sewing. Nearly all of the designers said that in-house operations were preferable, as this ensured quality control and efficient oversight of production schedules and costing. It must be noted at this point that the designers interviewed did not offer the researcher access to their staff, nor to their factories.

Most of the designers produce two lines of garments, one being *haute couture* or high-end fashion for private clients, as this allows for personal branding within specialised markets and earning higher incomes, with clients being willing and able to pay premium prices for bespoke garments. Their other line is ready-to-wear clothing, for sale either in their own boutiques or through independent fashion stores. Ready-to-wear items are made in accordance with the demands of the broader market and fashion trends, and it is this line that generates brand awareness of their label to a wider consumer group. Furthermore, it is this line of garment production that ensures their success and sustainability, and facilitates the growth of the clothing and textile industries in South Africa.

All of the designers interviewed confirmed that the process of turning a design idea into a sellable commodity is lengthy. The first step is the creation of an idea. This can originate from a brief or from the designer's own research, artistic creativity or being in tune with future trends and demands by consumers. The designers take into consideration various elements at this stage of production. What is the target market, the design details of the fabric, the qualities of the fabric and availability of the fabric. Thereafter they do a cost analysis to identify the cost involved in producing a new line of garments as well as the final retail price. During the entire manufacturing process, quality control is maintained at every step to ensure that every garment produced after the prototype is consistent. During the entire process, the fabric is ironed to shape and finish the garment. The designer then decides on the kind of stitching and threads to be used as well as the type and density of embellishments. When the garment is finished, it is ironed once more before it is labelled, priced and packaged.

Six of the designers have their own boutiques and three are currently exporting stock. Four have their own mini-factories. One of these three, in addition to manufacturing his own products, produces for other designer brands. Most of the respondents supply a number of private boutiques, but none said they supply to the major retail clothing chain-stores.

All of the designers said that it was extremely difficult to get access to credit when they started their business as the banks did not see their line of business as secure enough. Therefore most started by financing their operations on their own. None of the designers interviewed have accessed any government facilities for help, either for exporting assistance through the Department of Trade and Industry or through local initiatives like the eThekweni (Durban) Municipality's Business Support Unit that has been established to assist small businesses within Durban. The designers stated that they find it very difficult to find the time to source such assistance, as their days are spent generating income through conceptualising and manufacturing their garment lines.

In addition, they have not embraced the electronic media by developing websites and furthermore, they acknowledge that their marketing skills are limited and erratically implemented. Irrespective of these failings, these designers are doing well, with many of them having being in business for several years, while the newcomers have created enough presence in the market and a loyal customer following that is ensuring the relative success of their operations.

The objective of interviewing these designers was to gain insight into their careers, the process of their success, as well as their experiences in competing with globalisation and the changing face of the clothing and textile industries. The interview questions were geared to elicit their views on the clothing and textile industries in South Africa. The interviews also served to illustrate their relationships with suppliers and to document commentary on consumer behaviour.

Figure Five

A synopsis of the designers

Designer Name	Period in operation	Product line	Operating facilities	Outsourcing	Staff Employment	Retail	Export
Shane Marais Label: Rising Sun	Six years	Men's wear	Home	Yes: On occasion	3	Informal economy (high-end craft markets) and boutiques	No
Robbyn Chesler Label: Made with Love	14 years	Men's and Women's wear	Home	Yes (finishing)	0	Informal economy (high-end craft markets) and boutiques	Yes
Kim Bromemead Label: Kika	2 years	Women's wear	Home	Yes – on occasion	2	Informal economy (high-end craft markets) boutiques	Yes

						and own shop	
Rozanne Immelman Label: Pushkin	1 year	Women's wear	Home	Yes - on occasion	2	Boutiques and own shop	No
Gideon Label: Gideon	10 years	Women's wear	Home	-	-	Own boutique	No
Marianne Fassler Label: Leopard Frock	30 years	Women's wear	Own factory	Yes - on occasion	-	Own boutique and other boutiques	No
Karen Monk Label: Karen Monk-Klinjnstra	5 years	Men's and Women's wear	Home	Yes - on occasion	1	Boutiques	No
Peter Bosman Label: Zion Exclusive	20 years	Women's wear	Factory	Yes - on occasion	2	Own boutique	Yes
Sifiso Mthethwa Label: Zuloe	3 years	Men's wear	Home	Yes - on occasion	1	Boutiques	No
Brenda Quin Label: Diva	12 years	Women's wear	Factory	Yes - on occasion	14	Own boutiques (x3)	No
Iqbal Hoosain Label: Jaxx	20 years	Men's wear	Factory	Yes - on occasion	7	Boutiques	No

* It must be noted that some of the respondents did not divulge the number of people they employ or any specifics details of their operations, such as to whom they outsource their manufacturing process; nor did they provide contact details of their partners in the informal economy for the embellishment of their garments.

Shane Marais (Interview: 10/6/06)

Marais is a white male in his early thirties, and has been an independent designer for six years. He has previous experience in the clothing industry, having worked in retail for nine years before he decided to start his own business. He creates men's wear that is very design-intensive. His clientele are between the ages of 16 and 35. He used his own finances to begin his business, employs three people, and they in turn support seven family members. At the time of the interview, Marais had created five different ranges, which take him about three months to produce from concept to delivery. His inspiration is drawn

from international magazines and everyday observation of clothing worn on the street. He sometimes outsources to CMTs, but most of his products are made from home. He sells within the informal economy at markets and through two boutiques in Durban. He has not exported and has not sold any of his clothing outside Durban.

Robbyn Chesler (interview: 15/6/06)

Chesler is a white female in her late thirties, and has been in the industry since 1992. She had no previous experience in the industry, despite qualifying with a Diploma in fashion design. She preferred self-employment, so as to have full control over the application of her creative skills. She used her own savings to start her business, making men's and women's shirts. Because she works alone from home, it can take her a month to finish a range (consisting of five to six new designs) from concept to delivery. She sells at informal markets and at private boutiques throughout South Africa, and has exported to the USA, England, Australia, Germany and Scotland. She currently uses two CMTs in Durban for the finishing of her shirts (sewing and cutting) while she focuses on the design element of her garment.

Kim Bromemead (Interview: 16/6/06)

Bromemead is a white female in her early forties. She started her own label in 2004 because she wanted to see her own designs on the shelves after having spent 20 years in the clothing industry as a designer and patternmaker. Her range, which she sells from her own boutique, focuses on elegant women's wear, and her clientele ranges from 15 to 65 years of age. She follows trends to a certain extent, but she designs classic garments that are unique and endure beyond faddish trends. If she works hard, she can produce about 100 garments a month with the help of commissioned CMTs. She also changes her patterns frequently so that her range is always fresh and this entices customers to return to her boutique where she employs one person. She also sells to shops in Cape Town and Johannesburg and, once a year, has clients who visit from Europe and America who often buy an entire range.

Rozanne Immelman (Interview: 18/6/06.a)

Immelman is a young, energetic white female in her early twenties who has achieved numerous successes. She has BA degree in fashion design, and has taken part in the 2006 Sanlam Fashion Week as well as in the 2006 Durban Designer Collection as an invited designer. She has her own boutique and also sells to several other boutiques across the country. As yet she has not exported. Immelman started her own label only a year ago but her work is already well-known throughout South Africa. She has invested her savings from prize-money won at fashion shows while still a student and by working as a waitress. Her

range consists of design-intensive, high-quality woman's wear, so she prefers to use expensive imported fabric. She is reluctant to outsource her work as she is concerned about loss of control over production. She also provides space for other designers to sell from her shop. Immelman works from home, employing one person to help with the design and sewing of garments, and another to assist in the boutique. Sometimes family members also help at the boutique.

Gideon (Interview: 24/6/06a)

Gideon has been an independent designer since 1996 and has won numerous awards in South Africa. He says his inspiration comes from ordinary people's forms of self-expression and the contemporary, local environment. He creates elegant women's wear from his own studio and sells from his own boutique. He does not advertise, as he finds that those who want his creative designs and want to be seen in his label seek him out. He has dressed the former Miss South Africa, Claudia Henkel, and numerous other celebrities. Gideon took part in the Durban MTN 2006 Fashion Week, and in September 2006, he was invited to the 2006 London Fashion Week.

- Due to time constraints, the interview with Gideon was brief and focused on key success factors for designers.

Marianne Fassler (Interview: 27/6/06)

Marianne is a white female with a BA Honours degree who started her label in the late 1970s, having done part-time classes in pattern-cutting and construction. She began by wearing her own range at University and by doing fashion shows at her home. She secured capital to start her label from her own savings and from a friend. She outsources some of her work, but most is done in her own factory. If some ranges include beading she outsources this to women in the informal sector. She has exported in the past, but in the main sells throughout South Africa from private boutiques and from her own shop. Her range of women's wear combines elements of European and African design. Cheaper imports from Asia were not a concern for her as she has an established clientele and serves their high demand for her unique, design-intensive lines. In the interview, she did not indicate the number of staff she employs, but it can be surmised that she employs a number of people through her factory and boutique. She took part in the 2005 SA Fashion Week.

Peter Bosman (Interview: 3/7/06)

Bosman and his partner, both white males in their late thirties, have been designers for the past 20 years. Their designs are based on African ethnic tradition and their clientele are all African women. Many of their garments are worn at traditional events and a number of

their clients are in government positions. Neither Bosman nor his partner have any formal training in the clothing industry. They began their business by selling their own range of clothes at informal markets and from street-corners before they had saved enough money to open their own boutique and purchase better equipment. They also sell their ranges through mail-order and export to Botswana, America and Namibia, to about 250 foreign customers. They source their fabric locally and produce all the work in-house at their own factory where they employ two assistants. They outsource requirements for beadwork to women in the informal sector. Bosman took part in the 2006 Durban MTN Fashion Week.

Sifiso Mthethwa (Interview: 4/7/06.a)

Mthethwa is a young African male designer in his twenties who started his own range three years ago while studying for his Fashion Diploma. He took part in the 2005 Durban Designer Collection, the 2006 Durban Designer Collection and the Sanlam SA 2006 Fashion Week. His range of men's wear is targeted to urban youth, produced from home and using his own savings to buy equipment. He currently employs one person to help him manufacture the garments, outsourcing only when he is pressed to meet delivery deadlines or when he is doing a range for a fashion event, but has to monitor the production process closely as the quality from CMTs does not always meet his standards. He currently supplies a number of private boutiques in Durban and Johannesburg and hopes that the exposure from the two fashion events will help to increase his business. He is currently looking for manufacturing and retail space in which to operate.

Karen Monk (Interview: 6/7/06)

Monk is a white designer in her thirties who launched her own label in 2001. She has a Diploma from the Durban Institute of Technology in clothing design. She worked in the corporate banking sector, but having always dreamed of designing and selling her own label, worked on her range during weekends and lunch-breaks. She gained experience in the clothing sector by working in the men's, ladies and children's department of a large retail outlet. She used her own savings to launch her range of clothing for males and females, with distinctive features of colour and design-intensity. She has designed for Lee Jeans and for an Italian sportswear company. She currently works from home and employs one person to assist her. For beadwork embellishments, she outsources to a local NGO supporting women affected by HIV/AIDS. Monk says it is extremely difficult to find good CMTs, as their quality and service tends to be sub-standard. She took part in the Durban Designer Collection, the MTN 2006 Durban Fashion Week and the 2006 Cape Fashion Week.

Brenda Quin (Interview: 8/7/06)

Quin is a middle-aged white woman who has been in the industry for more than 12 years. She designs mainly *haute couture* and ready-to-wear women's clothing, selling from her three boutiques and producing in her own factory. Brenda has no formal training in fashion design and is self-taught. She financed her factory and boutiques using some of her investments as collateral for capital, but repaid her bank-loan as rapidly as possible. Quin uses both local and imported fabrics and employs a total of 14 people. She does not outsource to CMTS at all, but does use crafters in the informal sector for beadwork requirements. She has exported her ranges to London but found that the time spent on administration outweighed her profit margin. She took part in the 2006 Durban MTN Fashion Week.

Iqbal Hoosain (Interview: 8/7/06)

Hoosain is a well known designer who has been in the industry for more than 20 years. He has won SA Black Designer Awards for his menswear and has been a judge at the SABS Designer Achiever Awards for several years. He has his own factory where he employs seven people, making his own range and also manufacturing for other designers. He sells his range at a number of private boutiques throughout South Africa. He studied Fashion and Clothing Design at the Durban Institute of Technology where he has also lectured part-time. He started his business with loans from family members, as he did not want to be obligated to banks. He started his business during the apartheid era and believes that if he could survive those hard years, young designers today can become a success if they are prepared to work hard, persevere and market themselves effectively as there are more opportunities for them now than before. He took part in the 2006 MTN Durban Fashion Week.

6.2 Success Factors

According to Aspers, the measurement of a successful designer is difficult, as "nobody knows the exact formula for a hit" (Aspers, 2006:809). A common theme emerges in terms of successful design practice in the local context, which is corroborated by a world-renowned commentator of the fashion industry, Mr. Dion Chang (Interview, 5/7/06): these designers grew their business gradually, being willing to begin with the lowliest of means and infrastructure, and working in relative obscurity, learning incrementally about the business of fashion and how to maintain control over their cash-flows.

Another critical success factor is customer relations keeping to delivery dates, maintaining regular contact with their clients and investing inordinate effort as to means to providing quality products. All the respondents said that they had increased their prominence in the

marketplace by taking the opportunities presented to them through Fashion Weeks and had created media opportunities for public exposure. Gideon, (Interview, 24/6/06a) who is nationally recognised for his high-quality, unique brand, said that it is vital for any aspirant designer to "start small"; he emphasised that successful designers do not "over-extend themselves, otherwise one would not be in a position to deliver, and this is devastating to a designer's reputation."

All the respondents' comments concurred that it was crucial to find the right suppliers and to nurture good working relationships with them. They said it was difficult to maintain the business focus of their enterprises while sustaining the personal touch in producing for their clientele, but they reiterated that achievement is based on hard work, requiring long hours, and that diligence, conscientiousness, passion and humility were essential. All of the designers agreed that it was imperative to start small, learn about the business of fashion, market themselves vigorously, and never give in to complacency.

Internationally known South African fashion journalist Admin Levin (Interview, 22/7/06) said that it was imperative for independent designers and the design industry as a whole to find a "critical balance between the top-end couture market and the bottom-end market which requires innovation, quality and price." Designers who have found ways to maintain this equilibrium tend to be successful.

The designers did not divulge their turnover or profit margins during the course of the interviews; for this reason, identifying in monetary terms which of the designers were more financially successful was not possible. However, it is clear that those designers who have been in the industry for some time are managing their businesses effectively, while the newer entrants have come to the fore through their participation in numerous Fashion Weeks, and consequently are recognised as individuals who propagate and set standards for locally designed content.

The respondents said that they had been aware of the conscientiousness required in the design industry when they embarked on their careers, and noted that many young people are lured into the industry by the glamour and celebrity status portrayed in fashion magazines, films and other forms of media. "I know someone who studied fashion because she did not want to carry books around University ... actually, in this industry you have to carry the biggest books if you want to be successful", said Rozanne (Interview, 18/6/06a). Two respondents, Peter and Karen, said that the real world of a successful fashion designer is far from frivolous: it is characterised by dedicated and skillful work,

combined with extensive business and marketing knowledge (Interviews, 3/7/06 and 6/7/06).

A respondent from a fashion college in Cape Town said that the gender make up for students entering their collage is usually 60% female and 40% male. The respondent was concerned that many of the students wanting to enter the fashion sector were "suffering from the misconceptions of glamour and fame that have fuelled the industry for so long" (Interview, 19/6/06). The same respondent made an interesting statistical observation: even though there was an apparent crisis in the clothing industry, they had seen a steady increase in student applications over the previous few years. According to the respondent, about 80% of their graduates enter the industry by joining retailers to obtain initial experience. Only about 20% of the students who have some form of available capital might start up their own operations, but most of these funds would be utilised in branding and marketing, as these are the fundamental pillars of any prosperous design business.

Most respondents said that many young designers graduating from fashion schools do not really know how to produce ranges, or are not prepared to work themselves on the machines, choosing instead to outsource their pattern and design ideas to CMTs. Karen explained: "Because my business is relatively small, I must know how all the equipment works, be able to make up my own garments and sweep the floor or make coffee for my staff. Unfortunately many of the people entering the industry think they are too glamorous to do that work" (Interview, 6/7/06).

6.3 Training and Establishing Independence

Concerning formal training in the industry or related studies, two respondents were self-taught and three had learnt the trade while working in the clothing sector. One of these three respondents, Kim, had also gained experience in business processes while travelling and selling her products at informal markets in London and New Zealand. Of the respondents who had studied formally, one had completed a part-time course in pattern-cutting and construction, two had completed a two-year Diploma in Fashion Product Development and Merchandising, and three had completed a three-year B.A. Degree in Graphic Design and Advertising.

The respondents with formal training through Design Colleges felt that the education they had received had provided them with knowledge of garment manufacturing, working with fabric, and colour co-ordination. All felt that their study programmes lacked components for business and marketing skills development, but as Rozanne said: "I have

learnt most of these by being thrown into the deep end and learning on the job" (Interview, 18/6/06a). Another respondent, Sifiso, said that he felt the course was "low on formal business training" (Interview, 4/7/06a). Rozanne felt that the course she studied, offered at an internationally recognised design school, should have its business module scheduled during the final year rather than in the second year of the programme. "At that early stage in the degree, the material relating to business - which, by the way, consisted of only two lectures - went right over our heads ... business lectures should be done in the final year, so that when we enter the big world, what we learnt would be fresher in our minds" (Interview, 18/6/06a).

All the designers had a desire to be independent: "I had an overwhelming desire to work for myself, to have complete control over my own creative expression," said Robbyn, (Interview, 15/6/06). Others knew from a young age that they had a flair for design and wanted to explore these opportunities as a solo career. One respondent, Marianne, started by selling her own designs and holding fashion shows at her parents' home; another respondent, Peter, began by selling his designs at craft-markets and as a street-vendor before he opened his own boutique.

The respondents who had been involved in the clothing and textile industry had seen it as important to gain experience before launching their own enterprises.

All of the interviewees reported that, even though fashion design was their chosen career path, launching their own range was challenging and a defining moment in their lives, but that on reflection, their current success was due largely to their years spent on learning the trade and persevering through the difficult times.

A finding common to all the respondents' replies (albeit in varying circumstances) was that securing financial assistance had been their primary obstacle. One designer, Kim, being a single mother with very few if any assets, said that banks were not inclined to lend capital for equipment, so she had to pursue a long process of producing what she could with what she had, saving and reinvesting profits in upgrading her facilities. She felt that this arduous course of events had, ultimately, been beneficial, as she did not have bank loans to pay off, and her cash-flow management is simple.

Sifiso, who sells his garments from home and at boutiques, said that he had used his own savings and profits to buy a better second-hand sewing machine; he sourced cheap but high-quality textiles, and reinvested his turnover into the business; after three years of following these measures, he was able to buy new equipment.

Brenda had ceded some of her assets as collateral in securing a bank loan, but paid off the loan as soon possible because "in this business, cash is king", meaning that one needs cash to buy fabric and other materials to make up the garments, as very few suppliers are willing to provide credit to independent designers (Interview, 8/7/06). Two respondents said that one advantage of being involved in fashion was being able to make money by creating and selling clothes while studying; they noted that there are further opportunities to earn money through competing in fashion shows. The prize-money they had earned was saved and used to purchase equipment and fabrics, and to cover the costs of marketing materials.

One respondent held as many jobs as possible, earning, saving and investing the money to build up capital to start her own business. Out of the 11 respondents, only one had obtained capital from family members, while another had received money from a friend to assist in setting up their business.

6.4 Designer Value Chains

Before analysing the relationships between designers and their suppliers, it is important to revisit the value chain concept as it applies to this study. Taking the designer as the central point of the value chain, four factors that make up a designer's value chain can be identified. The first is the design element, the second is the source input such as fabric, and beading, the third is manufacturing (designer doing own manufacturing, outsourcing to CMTs and crafters in the informal sector), and the fourth is retailing through informal markets or private boutiques. Particular to designers is the advent and growth of Fashion Week events. The Fashion Weeks provide added value to the branding and marketing of the designers' products, but they also challenge designers to meet the financial demands of participation. Producing *haute couture* garments in time to be shown on the catwalk at these events can compromise the efficient roll-out of their regular production runs.

In the literature reviewed in this study (Fakude, 2001; Dunne, 2000; Nordas, 2004 as cited by Morris, 2006) it is evident that it is the consumer who exerts the most pressure through the value chain by demanding design-intensive products at affordable prices. The retailers and private boutiques exert their own pressure on designers in different ways - formal retail chains are buyer-driven and are able to source design-intensive merchandise through foreign manufacturers (Doel, 1996 as cited by Kenny, 2003; Gereffi, 1999) at a price dictated by the buyers. This behaviour constitutes competition for local designers, who then have to compete with large corporations for the same consumer base. Furthermore,

designers seeking entry into the wider market-place through collaboration with the retail chains are not in a position to exert any discernable pressure on the retail buyers; on the contrary, they need to meet the criteria dictated by the retailers.

Private boutiques demand high standards of quality and delivery, as well as reasonable prices from designers who need these boutiques as points of sale and niche visibility for their designs.

It is in the informal economy that designers can dictate their own terms by insisting that informal operators producing beading and other creative embellishments which add value to their product, meet their specifications for price, quality and service, as well as design intensity.

6.5 Suppliers

All of the designers interviewed noted that consistency in quality is crucial. Karen noted: "You are only as good as your last garment" (Interview, {6/7/06}). All respondents said that, ideally, it was better to run production in-house so as to retain control over production schedules, delivery and quality. Outsourcing was seen as problematic because of having to relinquish this control: "If I hand the design to someone and never see it until it is delivered to me, and there is a problem, what do I do?" said Rozanne (Interview, 18/6/06a).

The linkage between CMTs and textile suppliers is a constraint for the designer. CMTs and textile suppliers are placed under pressure (Velia, 2004; Kaplinsky and Morris, 2001) to meet price and production demands dictated by the retail buyers. In turn, through their inflexibility, CMTs and textile suppliers - as is reflected through the interviews with the designers - place certain constraints on designers relating to production processes (in the case of CMTs), and the variety and quality of fabrics (in the case of textile suppliers). In addition, designers are often frustrated by poor quality outputs and late delivery of orders. This is collaborated by Velia's research on CMTs (Velia, 2004:14), and Kadwa's (2004:177) research relating to the paucity of textile designs.

The designers interviewed in this study indicated that it is extremely difficult to coerce price reductions on textiles for their products. All respondents described difficulties in acquiring high-quality, unique textiles at good prices. Iqbal highlighted the limited range of locally produced textiles as a problem for the entire sector: "The South African textile factories do not have the technology to supply a wide range of textiles, so this restrains you as a

designer, and then you see everyone else using the same fabric ... that is why most of the textiles are imported - they have to be" (Interview, 18/7/06).

In response to a question about the high cost of textiles, Iqbal replied: "it is unfortunate, but what can we expect? Textile owners or wholesalers can't import small quantities of a specific range of textiles for one designer - they have to import at least 1 000 metres of one fabric. They are in business, so they have to cost out their overheads in the retail price accordingly."

The designers concurred that payments to textile factories or textile wholesalers is conducted solely on a cash basis. "The suppliers tell me that the market is delicate at the moment and they cannot afford to supply credit lines" (Interview, 4/7/06a). Some felt that outlaying cash to complete an order places an extra burden on their business process, whereas if they had credit facilities, they could pay the suppliers once they had been paid. Peter had an alternative view: even though he and his partner had built up a good relationship with their textile supplier over the years, and had been offered credit facilities, they prefer to deal in cash "so that we are always certain of our own financial situation" (Interview, 3/7/06).

Rozanne Zimmerman saw the price of textiles from another angle, saying that she was prepared to pay premium prices for her fabrics, because she "could not afford to have customers come back when their garment has shrunk or the colours having run - my reputation would be destroyed. So, clients know that they are paying a little more for my designs, but they are getting quality finishing and quality material for that price" (Interview, 18/6/06a).

Commenting on these various constraints relating to the procurement of textiles, which is the foundation for the design process, Iqbal, (in particular to credit facilities) who has been in the industry for over 20 years, had no sympathy for such complaints. He maintained that these problems arise from want of a sound business plan and mainly from poor financial management. He said that most successful designers are faced with these issues, but overcome them through conservative business approaches. His perspective was that many young designers entering the market for the first time think that credit facilities are the norm, "... but who are they? Just because they might have won a fashion show, or taken part in a Fashion Week, doesn't mean that their business is solid and sustainable, or that they'd be able to repay their creditors." The respondent said that suppliers are bound to protect their own business interests first, "... so we as independent designers need to realise this and overcome these business challenges in a mature way" (Interview, 18/7/06).

6.6 Production

Further evidence obtained through the interviews points to a lack of efficiency among some CMTs. A common complaint was that delivery deadlines are not kept and at times, the quality of the finished products does not meet the specifications and standards of the designer. Until CMTs are managed effectively and the price of textiles is reduced to meet the small runs needed by most designers, the final cost of designer content will remain high.

There was also a general feeling that some CMTs cannot produce well-made garments or fulfill the designers' needs for timely output; also, many of the designers felt that CMTs were lacking in business administration skills. As designers, they can ill-afford the time and energy required to relentlessly track the off-site production process and follow up on deliveries.

Karen reported that CMTs often allowed their other clients - rival designers and manufacturers, and even retail buyers - to walk around their production rooms, with all the designs in full view, making them vulnerable to copying. Some of the designers had overcome this problem by starting their own CMT operations.

In response to a question as to why designers might be wary of releasing details of their suppliers (whether these be textile wholesalers or CMTs), most confirmed that the industry is so competitive that when one locates trustworthy, reliable, skilled suppliers, "one holds onto them and becomes selfish" (Interview, 6/7/06).

6.7 The Designers and the Informal Economy

The South African Department of Arts and Culture has partnered with the Sanlam South African Fashion Week by facilitating a total of 270 crafters from the informal economy to work with 27 selected designers, with the objective of creating innovative designs that marry the skills found in the informal economy with the formal retail clothing sector. The promotional material presents the programme thus: "South Africa has to find innovative ways to manage the realities of global competitiveness, with the design sector being considered to have a fundamental role to play in the long-term development of a sustainable textile and clothing industry."

By establishing contacts with the Sanlam SA Fashion Week organisers, the researcher was invited to observe their workshops in Durban; these fora, were convened to bring together

designers and informal workers with innovative designs for the Sanlam SA Fashion Week scheduled for July 2006. A formal interview was conducted with a local designer taking part in the workshop, as well as an independent consultant working for the Department of Arts and Culture who co-ordinates the informal crafters. A semi-structured interview was conducted with a representative of the Sanlam SA Fashion Week.

All respondents noted that when they need beadwork to complement their designs, they outsource this work either to home-based beaders or to co-ops within the informal economy. A respondent working with the Department of Arts and Culture in collaboration with a number of fashion designers said that her role was to close the divide in creative thinking between the designers and the crafters - or as she prefers to call them, artisans - as the skills of these women is "beyond craft as a hobby" (Interview, 18/6/06b).

The respondent said that the initiative of linking designers with the artisans is vital, and she hopes that it will "elevate craft and these skills to a new level." She said that it was imperative that the women working with the fashion designers receive due recognition for their input through fully annotated labelling that identifies the artisan individually. She maintains that there should be a policy of full transparency when it comes to traditional craft: "As a consumer, I should be able to trace the value or production chain in respect to a product that claims to have been made in South Africa by local artisans."

A representative of SA Fashion Week, Francis Andrew, referring to the project of designers and informal workers working together (Interview, 18/6/06c) said: "We are bringing humanness to the designs; not only are we creating an exciting new range of designs, but we are supporting poverty alleviation." The informant stressed that fundamental to this exercise "is that we market and promote the concept correctly and encourage South African consumers to buy into the project; in so doing, they can individually contribute to the upliftment of people in the informal economy." The vision of this programme is to "nurture an appreciation of local fashion in the minds of the South African consumer ... and to develop the growth and business potential of the industry".

The respondent working with the Department of Arts and Culture (Interview, 18/6/06b) argued that if the design industry, and the clothing industry as a whole, intend engaging authentically with the informal economy, and utilising the abundance of skills and innovation inherent in these artisans, such a process requires monitoring and evaluation. She had observed an increase in beading and African art-forms being integrated into clothing designs, and questions how one would validate that these designs had been made in South Africa. Her view is that the value chain should be tracked to endorse that

the clothing industry is indeed supporting the informal economy through employment creation, and that the "African" beadwork or artwork embedded in the clothing is truly African, and not manufactured by Chinese or Indian operators: "I have seen a shed [in China] full of Chinese women producing 'Ndebele' beadwork."

The issue of transparency is complex, and something of a "double-edged sword". Transparency - especially where traditional craft is added to embellish clothing as an indicator of authenticity - can also unwittingly give away valuable information to competitors. The challenge for designers and other clothing industry players is in operating the value chain with transparency but without relaying compromising information such as suppliers' details, production methods and the like to their competition.

One designer, Karen, collaborates with a Durban-based HIV/AIDS organisation called Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust, whose artisans create various forms of beadwork that complement her designs, and in turn, raise funds for HIV/AIDS care within KwaZulu-Natal. Being socially conscious, Karen states in her marketing profile that the beadwork attached to her line of clothing is made by women belonging to this self-help organisation. Her view is that there are many opportunities like this to network with organisations or co-ops in the informal economy, and that that she wished designers and private boutiques would expand their horizons to incorporate this wealth of cultural imagination and talent, to enhance South African clothing designs.

6.8 Experiences and Views on Competition

All respondents felt that competition, in one way or another, has increased due to changes in South Africa's trade policies. Some of the designers have experienced direct competition, mainly from China, while others have experienced a marked dwindling in their market, due to the influx of cheaper apparel. However, as one respondent from the Cape Town Fashion Council stated (Interview, 25/6/06):

It is important for the industry to get over the issue of China ... they are here to stay, they will remain here and their presence will grow. The industry needs to find alternative measures to compete ... the problem is, if it were not China, it will be India or some other country ... when all the quotas come to an end, there will be no one to blame but ourselves.

Interestingly, while they are aware of the increase in competition through globalisation, the designers say that as a force, it compels them to be more innovative, trying to keep one-step ahead of the cheaper products that flood the clothing market. The designers said that retaining a competitive edge would stand or fall on strong brand recognition, and that work on their branding as well as the quality of their products are the features that would ensure a loyal consumer following.

The respondents reiterated that they are successful because they have maintained strong branding, and also because they are able to price their products accurately, although the latter is a skill that is honed over time. There are risks involved: by creating a brand and marketing it extensively, the desired effect of their designs having a higher visibility in the marketplace serves to invite replication, as Asian operators, clothing retailers or other designers will note that an identifiable line is doing well, and will begin to copy it. One respondent said when this occurs, it is futile to waste time and energy analysing it, as this has become part of the cycle of fashion and the design environment, the solution being to keep working on innovation and quality.

Peter (Interview, 3/7/06) noted that as a designer, he experiences a considerable competitive threat from the informal economy; by this, he means women working from home in the rural areas, making clothing for their immediate locality. He said that these producers enter his boutique accompanying their own customers, openly making notes of his designs, and then returning to their premises to copy his unique designs. He said people have photographed the products shown in the display window from the street.

Peter, whose design partnership serves a customer base made up of African women, said that not only does competition emanate from the informal sector, but Chinese operators copy their clothing and sell it at ridiculously low prices: one of their designs was retailing in a Chinese shop in Durban for R70-00. His response is to create complicated designs using beading and extremely good fabric, so that the overall difference is clear to consumers; this is an expensive route to follow, but they are "fortunate that our customers understand this and they are seeking quality original designs" (Interview, 3/7/06). The growth in Chinese producers copying African designs is confirmed in the literature by Rogerson (2006), who argues that the only way to compete is through the use of "expensive fabric and complicated embellishments" (Rogerson, 2006:22).

Karen said that one of the greatest problems faced by fashion designers is "large retail chains taking an independent designer's concept, watering it down, having it manufactured off-shore and reselling it at a vastly cheaper price than the original"

(Interview, 6/7/06). The same respondent said that she had experienced her designs being copied by other designers, but agreed that one had to persevere to produce items that did not lend themselves easily to copying.

Robbyn (Interview, 15/6/06) told of intense competition from designers selling at craft markets, who copy her designs and sell them at cut prices, forcing her to create new designs in order to sustain her business. The respondent confirmed that even large retailers have copied her designs, as she has seen examples of her innovations stocked in a number of their outlets.

On the issue of design copying, Neil Roake, the owner of a private boutique (Interview, 24/6/06b) said that only about five South African designers had taken the time and effort to patent their designs. Jackie Burger, the editor of Elle magazine (Interview, 22/6/06a) said that technology has enabled the rapid copying of designs, such that often, the counterfeits or knock-offs are retailed before the original design is launched in the retail sector. This respondent observed that South African designers need to become more aware of this threat, especially at fashion shows where "cell-phone photography and digital cameras allow design information to be communicated to off-shore manufacturers, even before the model has left the catwalk."

Relating to the increase of under-invoicing as a form of competition, the Chairperson of the proposed Durban Fashion District (Interview, 26/6/06) indicated that Durban-based clothing manufacturers have offered to assist Durban customs officials in creating a pricing schedule for imported clothing, but no progress had been made on this front. Iqbal said that high levels of corruption and fraud prevail around imports through under-invoicing; his view was these actions are myopic, as by underpaying on import duties, these importers are in effect defrauding the country, and severely damages the very industry of which they are a part (Interview, 18/7/06).

6.9 Views on Consumer Behaviour

The designers recount in their interviews that the market, even for their ready-to-wear lines, is not large enough to sustain their operations, and that consumer behaviour modification in terms of promoting the desire for and commitment to locally designed content should be addressed. Therefore, for designers and the industry to focus on higher-end products in the value chain will not alleviate the threat posed by competition from China and other cheaper producing localities, because the wider South African consumer base either cannot accommodate or support the inevitably premium prices for local content. What is

imperative is for designers and manufacturers to find ways of producing higher-end garments that would meet the demands of consumers wanting design-intensive stock that is affordable.

All respondents held that price determines the buying behaviour for most South African consumers. They understood that, for the vast majority of South Africans, the influx of cheaper, low-end fashion clothing and its accessibility through retail outlets like Mr Price is highly beneficial for the ordinary citizen's pocket. At the same time, they claim that there is a market of consumers who wish to choose from and purchase products of distinction and high quality; these consumers look for originality, innovation and creativity, as they seek to create an individualistic image for themselves and it is this target market that designers believe can be stimulated and propagated.

All respondents agreed that the majority of consumers would not care how or by whom their clothing was made, and that there are very few consumers who would actively look for the label to determine where a garment is made.

6.10 Comments on the Clothing Industry in South Africa

Zola (Interview, 12/6/06) who was retrenched from a clothing company is setting up a Section 21 Company for retrenched workers where they will be offered skills training in both manufacturing and business. The respondent indicated that because of globalisation and consequent restructuring of the clothing industries over the past few years, she now has over 2 900 retrenched workers from Durban on her books who have not found work in either the formal or informal clothing or textile sector. The respondent said that 95 percent of these people were women. The same respondent was hoping to network with local designers in Durban in order to offer them CMT production services.

All respondents regarded as a travesty the fact that the government had allowed the erosion of the clothing and textile industry into a confused and weak sector, casting about for means of survival. They also felt that industry leaders and unions should be held accountable for not working cohesively and proactively, and only bemoaning the decline of the industry once the damage had largely been done. Many of the respondents felt that the industry could re-invent itself and become competitive if certain measures were put in place: (see recommendations).

Iqbal (Interview, 18/7/06) was outraged at the conditions of the industry, saying that government Ministries, particularly the Department of Trade and Industry, and the unions,

contradict and undermine each other and misinform the public. He could not accept that South Africa could have so rapidly opened the gates to cheap imports when the local clothing sector had so much potential to support and grow opportunities for mass employment. He substantiated his argument by saying that many South Africans, mostly women, have a single, marketable skill – sewing - and that through this, they could earn an income sufficient to provide for their families; however, with the State allowing foreign countries free reign to decimate this base of employment was counter-productive.

The same respondent said that the labour unions were responsible for the apathy within the industry to create employment, as the unions' demands for enterprises (whether small or large) to pay higher wages while productivity is diminishing, were unreasonable. "Eventually, the unions will have a small base of members earning high salaries, but with little or no improvement in productivity, there will be no membership base left in this sector." He felt that it was unfair for unions to demand that local businesses within the industry comply with current labour legislation, while turning a blind eye to foreign operators exploiting these same laws. The respondent cited a case of a Chinese-owned clothing company in KwaZulu-Natal refusing to provide the staff with chairs that have backs; the owner told the respondent that the workers "are here to work, not to relax".

The representative from the Cape Town based fashion school closed the interview by saying, "the industry is so overly unionised that it has unionised itself out of the market" (Interview, 19/6/06).

This respondent – and his view was upheld by comments from all the respondents - felt that the retail chains dominating local industry and the value chains that served them need to be curtailed in their outsourcing process. The respondents said that retail chains are making disproportionate profits and causing devastating levels of unemployment in South Africa's clothing industry. Karen said that, whilst she realises that Mr Price is geared towards a particular mass market, with the size of its market share and overwhelming brand presence in South Africa, the Mr Price group should be doing more for the local industry by helping local designers to create brand awareness for their unique designs. Her concept involved Mr Price stocking South African designer lines, made entirely in South Africa and "tweaking the retail price just a little" so as not to do any injustice to the designer (Interview, 6/7/06). For the 2006 Durban Designer Collection, Mr Price was the main sponsor promoting new young designers.

Iqbal said that while upgrading of technology could, and probably should, be effected in the textile industry, this was not relevant for the clothing industry, as the latter is far more

"human-intensive ... at the end of the day, it's hands that make the garments" (Interview, 18/7/06).

Most of the respondents held the view that in calling for higher productivity, they were not advocating for South African manufacturers to operate under sweatshop conditions or to exploit labour, but rather that workers who performed well should be compensated for their ability and work ethic; they believe that this would create a knock-on effect, such that others in the industry would strive to produce more, and more efficiently, in pursuit of similar incentives and rewards.

On the issue of labour, it is important to give credit to the unions who have successfully negotiated on behalf of workers' wages, which are legislated by the Bargaining Council. The concerns and comments in regard to labour must be viewed as personal responses by the designers, and such views exemplify the complex industrial and political environment in which South African designers operate.

The respondents collectively acknowledged that the problems in the industry were so intertwined and of such magnitude that even though they kept abreast of developments in the sector, in general it served them better to focus on their own craft and, in so doing, to contribute as best they can to stimulating job growth and promoting South African-made clothing within the local market.

6.11 The role of Fashion Events

The South African design industry is currently promoted through four major annual events. These are the Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg Fashion Weeks and the Durban Designer Collection. The Durban and Cape Town Fashion Weeks are owned and controlled by Leisureworx, a specialist event management company of which Naspers, a multi-media company, has joint control. The Johannesburg Fashion Week, which is branded as the SA Fashion Week, is privately run, with Sanlam being its current sponsor for the next few years. The Durban Designer Collection has a number of sponsors including *The Mercury*, a Durban-based newspaper.

These events run concurrently between June and July and August. In April 2006, Leisureworx announced that it would be launching two new Fashion Weeks in 2007 to capture the autumn and winter collections. The two new Fashion Weeks, scheduled for February and March, will take place in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

Media reports in July 2006 indicated that Leisureworx and the Director of the SA Fashion Week are contesting for control of the design industry in South Africa (Hawker, 2006). This intra-industry conflict arises from the Director of SA Fashion Week's comment that the increase in Fashion Week events does not help the industry, but rather is "detrimental to the creative fashion design industry in South Africa" (Hawker, 2006). At the launch of the Cape Town Fashion Week, the owner of the Sanlam SA Fashion Week accused the owners of the Cape and Durban Fashion Week events of sowing confusion within the industry by having two disparate fashion shows in Durban and Cape Town (Robbins, 2006).

This view is also exemplified by the comments of Mr. Dion Chang:

Launching more and more Fashion Weeks around the country will only end up further dividing an already polarised industry. The organisers should all be consolidating their resources to provide a stable and credible platform for designers to work from ... at the moment we are the laughing stock of the international fashion arena. We have one of the smallest, fledging design industries in the world, yet we have three separate Fashion Weeks (Interview, 05/7/06).

A number of people interviewed indicated that the design arm of the clothing and textile industry, (in other words, designers, fashion event owners and the like) is deeply fragmented, with a marked lack of cohesion in the industry and "everyone doing their own thing," said the editor of *Elle Magazine* (Interview 22/6/06a).

The balance of the respondents in this study (except for one, who agreed with the comments of Dion Chang about a single fashion event) rejected this view, stating that the proliferation of Fashion Weeks provides them with multiple settings within which to promote and exhibit their products, as well as giving consumers more opportunity to see South African-designed content. To promote locally designed content, it is necessary for the country to create as many opportunities for South African designers as possible to showcase their talent.

It is also imperative that fashion events are not convened merely for the sake of staging a fashion show. It is important that any event promoting local content, which inherently assists independent designers in establishing their names and businesses, is run effectively. The business strategies and marketing plans underpinning all these events should incorporate business skills training for designers, as in The Fashion Eye "Planning for the Future" workshops that took place at the three 2006 Fashion Week events. Experts

specialising in different aspects of the clothing, textile and design give presentations to these fora, and the workshops target both established and emerging designers as well as students of fashion. During the 2006 Durban Fashion Week, approximately 100 people registered for the talks, although only slightly more than 40 attended. The session programmes should also include a module for consumer education about the importance of supporting local content.

The Durban Fashion Week was implemented in 2005, with South African Airways sponsoring the first event. According to details obtained from Durban Fashion Week management, 31 designers took part.

The 2006 Fashion Week was sponsored by MTN, and 73 South African designers participated, with eight designers coming from Nigeria, Ghana, Burundi, Botswana, Namibia and Tanzania. According to the organisers, just over 10 000 people visited the Fashion Week. Fashion journalists from Paris, London and India attended, and a total of 17 designers exhibited in the Designer Exhibition Hall.

During the 2006 event, the researcher discovered that no buyers (representatives of retail stores), either local or international, were present. In an interview with Ms. Amanda Gowan, the editor of *Glamour Magazine* (Interview, 22/6/6b) replied to a question on this point: "They (the buyers) didn't want to come since the designers would not be able to supply any large orders, due to their lack of capacity and problems with supplies of textiles." The respondent said that nonetheless, it was a "disgrace that there were no local retail buyers representatives from the large South African retail outlets, or even from the smaller boutiques, as this is an opportunity to see new designs and create business opportunities with designers."

The organisers of the Durban Fashion Week concurred with these views, saying that in 2005, an international buyer from a large retail outlet attended the Durban Fashion Week with an allocated budget and placed a large order with one designer who could not deliver for lack of capacity and access to fabrics. Ms Gowan said that overseas retail buyers consider visiting fashion events as part of their business. She confirmed that the lack of support from buyers for retail outlets is not unique to Durban, but is also prevalent in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Now in its fourth year, the Cape Town Fashion Week promotes itself as the "largest gathering of fashion talent." According to information obtained from the relevant website, 72 designers took part in this year's event and a further nine in a special associated event.

The promotional material for the Nokia Cape Town Fashion Week states that its objectives and goals are to "seek alternative niche markets and alternative unique selling points in order to stimulate job creation." The organisers feel that it is the fashion designers that "are the future of the ailing clothing and textile industry, and the only way forward is compete through creativity and individuality."

Privately owned and now sponsored by Sanlam, the first South African Fashion Week took place in 1997, with fewer than 20 designers taking part and an audience of only 2 500. In 2006, the organisers report that over 100 designers took part in the event, yet their website provides the names and bio-sketches of only 39 designers. The contact details of the designers taking part in 2006 are not provided. This paucity of designers' contact details could be attributed to organisers wishing to retain control over external communication with the designers.

6.12 Comments on Fashion Events

Evaluating the promotional material of these events, all offered similar viewpoints, and most prominently, advocated that the designers focus on the higher end of the market in other words design intensive, unique products that are different from what can be seen in the clothing retail chains. None addressed the problem of counterfeiting, and none had considered composing a concept document outlining how they through Fashion events might develop, create jobs and catalyse efforts to sustain the local clothing and textile industries. Amanda Gowan, Editor of *Glamour Magazine*, corroborated this lethargy: "They [the stakeholders] talk about cohesion and the importance of the industry, but they never formally mobilise or activate anything tangible to take the industry forward" (Interview, 22/6/06b).

Another weakness observed in relation to the Fashion Week events is the lack of follow-up and evaluation of their areas of success or failure. Two respondents with a national media voice in the industry (Jackie Burger, Editor of *Elle Magazine* and Amanda Gowan) said that South Africa's Fashion Weeks are still "immature." They felt that the shows do not actively promote the designers, and that the public imagination is narrowly focused on "half-naked models." Both of these respondents agreed that statistical follow-up after each event is needed in order to evaluate "the financial returns and added value the Fashion Weeks offer the designers" (Interview, 22/6/06a and 22/6/06b).

Ms Gowan (Interview, 22/6/06b) remarked that "South African Fashion Weeks are not considered as business opportunities, but rather as one big party", whereas overseas, the

focus is on the inherent financial return from, and optimal profitability through, these events. The owner of a private boutique (Interview, 9/6/06) felt that the Fashion Weeks were not much more than a playground for "egocentric designers" and that the events do not stimulate real development for the clothing sector. This respondent also commented that if the government were serious about developing and establishing a vibrant industry, they should collaborate with the corporate sector in underwriting only one premiere Fashion Week.

To obtain a retrospective view of the 2006 Durban Week, as well as the 2006 Durban Designer Collection from the point of view of the designers that took part, the researcher disseminated a questionnaire via e-mail (see Appendix 6).

A total of 66 e-mails were sent to all the designers who took part in the Durban 2006 MTN Fashion Week. Only eight responded to the questionnaire, while a further six of the e-mails provided on the Durban Fashion Week website proved to be inoperative. Six of the designers who responded felt that the Durban Fashion Week helped in promoting local content and local designers to South African consumers. Regarding levels of support for the Fashion Week by consumers, four felt the response had been moderate. A total of five of the designers had established new and prospective customers (individual consumers wanting to place orders), while a further four said that individual consumers had placed orders with them on the basis of what they had seen at the Fashion Week.

Responding to a question relating to input from the government towards promotion of independent designers through more fashion events and other such mechanisms, five responded that it was poor. With regard to competition six felt that competition from Asian imports was affecting their business, while five said that design-copying by formal retailers was prevalent, and two said that they had experienced competition from other designers replicating their work. Six of the respondents wish to see more fashion events, while seven said that it was imperative to have a mechanism of quality control for entrants into fashion events. Seven of the respondents said that they would support a body that would provide training for fashion designers in business skills, exporting and promotion of their designs, while all said that they would value a designers' convention to formulate collective approaches to local content promotion in South Africa and abroad. Mrs. Vanashree Singh, the convener, said that she experiences immense difficulty in communicating with designers and was disappointed at the poor response, as such research is imperative for her to gauge the value of the Fashion Week according to the answers provided by the designers.

To investigate responses to the 2006 Durban Designer Collection (DDC), the same questionnaire was e-mailed to 16 designers, to which a total of 12 responded. All respondents felt that the DDC had added value to their skills and exposure levels. On the question of support from South African consumers (in Durban) for the event, five said it had been good, four said it had been fair and three said it had been poor. Ten of the respondents said that they had established new client prospects (individual consumers), while six said that they had sold some of their range directly to consumers after the event.

Regarding support for local designers by the government, two said it was good, while eight said it was fair and two said it was poor. South African consumers support for local content was gauged as fair by eight of the respondents, while four said it was poor. Responding to the question about competition, eleven of the respondents replied that the greatest form of competition was from cheaper imports. Nine said that the retail sector constituted a form of competition through copying of their designs and by importing cheaper clothing, while an astounding 10 said that there was unfair competition from other independent designers. Ten of the designers said that they would like more fashion events to be hosted, and 10 said that they would support a national body set up to assist them with business skills, exports and promotion. Just over half the designers said that they would like some form of quality control to govern entry to fashion events, and 11 of the respondents would support a conference bringing designers together to devise means of jointly promoting local content.

Many of the respondents did not elaborate on their answers, but in reviewing the completed questionnaires, it is clear that fashion events are seen as effective in promoting local content, and that there is reasonable support for these events from South African consumers. Regarding competition, analysis of the responses relating to imports from Asia is difficult, bearing in mind a possible bias arising from the extent of media reportage about the impact of such imports. However, responses about competition from retailers who copy local designs warrant deeper investigation, for instance: which retail outlets are doing this and whether the designers can prove such claims. The high percentage of designers willing to support a body that would assist them with business skills, exports and promotion is important and worth scrutiny by industry leaders. The collective support for a conference convened to draw up a structured plan for the sustaining of South African fashion design is also a very important recommendation that deserves urgent and focused attention.

6.13 The Role of the Internet

The organisers of the Sanlam SA Fashion Week, in conjunction with *Pursuit Magazine*, which is owned by Johncom Group, have plans to develop a web-portal for the industry, which will serve as a marketplace and network platform for the local industry. This initiative is significant, but the creators of such a website with these objectives would do well to bear in mind that any communication conduit is only as good as the content that flows through it, and that its content must be supported by functionality. Maintaining and sustaining such a website would involve rigorous and frequent checking of all independent designers and suppliers' contact details, and compiling an exhaustive list for registration on the site. As a first point of entry into the South African fashion design, it is essential that this proposed website be well planned, developed and managed; anything less would convey a negative image of the industry.

In reviewing the *Pursuit* website (www.pursuit.co.za), the researcher noticed some weaknesses. The most recent media articles on the clothing, textile and fashion industries stored on its Media Updates page date back to 16 January 2003. Also, there is a section on the site for members to subscribe to an e-zine magazine (electronic newsletter or magazine) for "the latest news, events and general happenings in the industry, right there in your own inbox"; the researcher subscribed to this e-zine in April 2006, but at the time of writing had received no response

The only other existing website in the web presence established to complement *Pursuit* fashion magazine, is named *iFashion* (www.ifashion.co.za). This is an interactive web-portal that allows people in the industry to discuss issues and provides a platform for job advertising in the clothing, textile and fashion sector, archiving up-to-date information procured from various South African media sources. It also issues regular updates of site developments to subscribers. The website is financed through virtual advertising and is privately owned. Approximately 40 500 people visit the site monthly.

The purpose of reviewing these two websites is to determine whether or not these, as the only current Internet presence covering the design sector, contribute positively towards the South African clothing design industry's global image. Usage of the Internet is an extremely important factor in marketing for designers as a doorway to their merchandise. Designers can advertise their latest designs before these are launched in retail outlets, and can publicise such purchase points for their merchandise while compiling a personal database of regular and potential clientele.

In analysing Internet presence for the three Fashion Weeks, as well as the Durban Designer Collection, it was noted that for Durban, each designer had a bio-sketch and their e-mail address was provided (if they had one). The Sanlam SA Fashion Week website provided only bio-sketches, without contact details, and the Durban Designer Collection website had bio-sketches for the participating designers including their e-mail addresses. For the Nokia Cape Town Fashion week, the website carried designers' bio-sketches. It was noted that this was the only website that provided any website links for designers. Of the 53 designers cited, only 20 had their own websites.

In their paper on fashion shopping over the Internet, Miller and Muller (2001) argue that the Internet provides the designer with a 24-hour shop, seven days a week. Naturally, there are certain limitations to this channel, one being that customers cannot try on the clothing. While clothing cannot be custom-made through the Internet, pipeline technological innovation might well reverse this obstacle in the foreseeable future. For example, a recent IT development that is yet to be commercialised is the concept of individual avatars, which enable on-line consumers to try on different items of clothing in a virtual fitting room and enjoy a 3-D view of their image.

South African designers are yet to embrace the Internet as an important marketing tool. Those that have done so are realising the dividends; a case in point is The Habits Fashion Store, an electronic store that complements the owner's boutique. The virtual shop provides electronic images, detailed descriptions and pricing of the garments designed by the owner. It also allows customers to interact personally (if not in person) with the designer, which in turn creates customer loyalty and excitement, and increases the designers' presence in the market.

6.14 Private Boutiques

For the purpose of this study, three owners of private boutiques were interviewed to assimilate a better understanding of their relationship with designers and their interlinked role in the clothing and textile sector. The interviews with the boutique owners reiterated that the majority of new upcoming local designers lack business skills. There was also consensus that designers very seldom listen to the feedback from the boutique owners on the sales of their products.

The establishment of private boutiques provides space for independent designers to gain access to both national and local consumers. New designers were cautioned by Neil

Roake, the owner of SPACE - a private boutique with outlets in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town (Interview, 24/6/06b), as well as the owner of a private boutique in Cape Town (Interview, 20/6/06), to investigate various existing boutiques and analyse which ones (a) complement their designs and (b) target their desired consumer market population. Private boutiques can accommodate and encourage designers' development of their distinctive ranges, without the restrictions and constraints imposed by formal retail groups, which often dilute the designers' original concepts in order to align with benchmarks for shareholder returns (Azuma and Ferrie, 2003).

Competition from cheaper imports was also considered to be problematic, which the three respondents felt could be overcome if South African consumers supported local content; however, this would only occur if local designs were more affordable. The respondents expressed concerns about the value chain: the cost of textiles and the inability of suppliers to produce shorter runs at reasonable prices for designers lead to the final product being priced out of the reach of the broader consumer market, particularly when in competition with cheap Asian imports. The findings of Doeringer and Crean (2004) corroborate that this difficulty in producing shorter runs is also faced by designers in the USA.

Some of the designers remarked that the private boutiques were responsible for overpricing by placing a 100% mark-up on local designs (Interview, 6/7/06).

Others noted that in supplying boutiques, they are paid only once their merchandise has been sold, so that their cash inflow is not always steady, but their need for reserve cash to pay for fabrics is vital and if this income is available only once their garments are sold, their productivity is compromised. Dion Chang said that private boutique owners should desist from taking designer labels on consignment and should "simply buy the stock" (Interview, 5/7/06), as this would alleviate the cash flow problems experienced by many designers.

The owners of Big Blue, a private boutique chain (Interview, 9/6/06) with 15 stores countrywide, started selling in 1991 at flea-markets, establishing the brand and building a customer base before opening the first retail store. Ninety-five percent of the clothing stock is made in South Africa. The remaining 5% of the merchandise is imported from India, due to their ability to manufacture designer wear at affordable prices. By this the respondent means that heavily embellished designs that consisted of a lot of delicate work such as beading etc was cheaper in India than if they relied on local bead makers. The respondent (one of the partnership) explained that they had tried having their designs manufactured in China, but discovered that some of the designs they had commissioned

had being copied by the Chinese manufacturers and sold independently in the United Kingdom and Australia.

Relating to their experiences with local textile suppliers, this respondent, the owner of Big Blue (Interview, 9/6/06) felt that local merchants are "inflexible" in not allowing designers to order smaller quantities. His observations on the keys to successful design practice were the need for business knowledge, acknowledgment of boutique-owners' feedback on customer responses to their designs, and deeper understanding of their markets; "Younger start-up designers in this country expect to be spoon-fed and have very little business sense." Whereas for those designers that are established he experienced no problems when it came to service, delivery, quality or design content. He felt that the government should clamp down hard on illegal garments being "dumped" on South African shores, as these under-priced items create unfair competition for the smaller, private fashion outlets.

One boutique-owner from Cape Town who obtained finance from her family to set up her business (Interview, 20/6/06) reiterated the problems faced in dealing with designers. She felt that her business, and the industry more generally, suffered because designers do not keep to delivery dates, and that once she realised that her efforts to maintain business agreements with designers were one-sided, she "surrendered and stopped chasing the designers." She now sources garments offshore so that she can "fill the gaps" in her shop.

This respondent wishes to export locally designed clothing, and has established tentative overseas contacts, but is fearful that if local designers "cannot supply a small boutique, how will they fulfill a larger order for the overseas market?" She felt that there was a need for designers to form partnerships with independent consultants who could support the marketing and management of their businesses, freeing the designers to focus on their creative work. The respondent felt that ready-to-wear fashion events, marketed directly to buyers for formal retail outlets as well as independent buyers from private boutiques, should be conceptualised and launched. She believed that such events would compel designers to understand and concentrate on the under-developed local ready-to-wear market.

As for fabric supplies, the same respondent reiterated the view that textile suppliers should re-evaluate their business and production methods to meet the demands of the independent designers if they wished the industry to grow. She observed that there was also a market niche for CMTs and designers to collaborate in creating new design lines, with the CMTs' production being geared to accommodate smaller and faster runs.

A new development in retail space management is the advent of private retail outlets in suburbs. Victorian and Edwardian homes have been bought and renovated to offer consumers an interesting, intimate and unique shopping experience in an environment of varied and distinctive character. One such outlet EUPHORIA, chosen for study by this researcher is a Durban-based shop, set in a converted house and complemented with a small in-house delicatessen, while providing space for 14 local designers to market their products.

The owner (Interview, 20/5/06) heading up this establishment said the business policy is that the shop takes 35% fee on the sale of garments, which covers the cost of the space taken by the designer, administration costs and the marketing of the retail outlet. In addition, the owner provides the designers with 14 years of experience and knowledge in the clothing industry. The owner explained that most of the designers renting the space had come from the informal sector by selling their clothes at craft-markets, and that this was their first step into formal retailing.

The aim of the project is for designers to use the retail outlet as a platform to expand their market and learn about retail business, beyond which "hopefully, they will outgrow the provided space, which would then offer opportunities for new designers to enter the retail market." The owner sets firm criteria for the tenant designers in terms of pricing, quality and sizes.

The owner remarked that the corporate retailers are responsible for the volumes of imports (mostly from China but also from other Asian countries), as the buyers for retail chains work with an allocated budget, and if local suppliers cannot meet the pricing benchmarks, products are sourced offshore. Furthermore, all buyers try to undercut suppliers in order to reflect savings on their budgets reports.

The owner observed that most South African consumers "succumb to the foreign fashion trends and what is portrayed in the fashion magazines, and it is this market that the big retailers are able to target with trendy, contemporary fashion designs at affordable prices." She said that most consumers are not seeking unique South African-made designs, and that this is an area on which fashion designers and buyers, clothing manufacturers and textile suppliers need to focus. She contends that this sector needs to position itself to supply consumers with trendy designs made locally at affordable prices.

The owner said that the designers utilising her retail outlet complain about CMTs overcharging for their services, and that "the cost of locally produced cloth is prohibitive",

resulting in the designers finding it very difficult to manage their pricing such that they could realise a profit but not "scare away" customers.

6.15 Retail Chain Stores

Many of the designers interviewed feel that the retail outlets can do more to support a broader base of local designers, and that, currently, only those designers who already enjoy brand recognition are receiving such support. The view is that large retailers should promote smaller designers who are barely known. These unknown designers need to demonstrate that they have a stable business and proper business and marketing plans in place this view was confirmed by the respondent from Woolworths.

A representative from a Cape Town based Fashion Design School (Interview, 19/6/06) felt that local retailers are supporting South African designers only because "they need to be seen to be doing so." Mr. Smit a senior executive from Woolworths (Interview, 8/6/06) maintained that until South African clothing manufacturers and even designers can produce efficiently, retailers would have no choice but to source from foreign suppliers. Taking this argument further, Dion Chang (Interview, 5/7/06) said: "We need to sort out our labour problems. If it is going to be cheaper to manufacture elsewhere, business will always move to where the bottom line looks good."

Marianne stated that the value chain of these retailers supporting local designers should be transparent, so that consumers and the industry in general could trace the origins of products (Interview 27/6/06). The same designer said she was "shocked to hear that the entire Edgars Young South African Designer range was developed and manufactured in China". This was corroborated by two other respondents. The representative from the Cape Town Fashion Council commented that retailers now carrying local designs have been "coerced into doing this by the unions" (Interview, 19/6/06).

Iqbal said that the large retail chain-stores should be compelled to attend the various Fashion Week events to create business opportunities for at least 10 percent of the designers who take part in these shows. The same respondent confirmed that the "hype" around the large retailers supporting local design was inauthentic, as there was a sense that these corporates had to "be seen to be doing it". He said that the retail chains "dictate the terms to the designer. They will approach a designer and say, we'll carry your label but we'll only pay you X, because we need to make Y profit on it, and the only way to make Y profit is to have your designs made in China or India or some other developing country. Their attitude is that if the designer doesn't like this, they'll find someone else.

There are many designers who think that getting into bed with the big retail chains is their ticket to success" (Interview, 18/7/06).

Mr. Smit of Woolworths (Interview, 8/6/06) a national retail outlet that supports local designers said that this initiative, as evident in their flagship stores, has been reasonably profitable. The respondent stated that they run about 200 units of each design, and that production is "100%" South African, with the response from their customers being very positive.

In response to a question posed about what designers could do to make themselves more competitive in a globalised economy, Mr. Smit suggested that designers should come together to combine their skills or outsource production and business management collectively, and use economies of scale to meet the price demands dictated by the global economy and consumers.

Responding to a question about the criteria designers need to fulfill in order for the retailer to support them, Mr. Smit said that designers need to have brand recognition, proven business skills "professionalism and a reputation." His view was that all new designers should strive towards these goals if they wish to gain mass-market penetration through South African retailers. Successful designers who have grown their business over many years and have a solid reputation of quality and service would benefit from these market opportunities.

In summarising the experiences and comments of the designers who participated in this study, a number of related issues are highlighted in this chapter. All the designers concur that it is imperative to strike a balance between their creativity and the commercial imperative of design to become successful within the South African market. Gert van Zyl, the Executive Director of the Cape Clothing Association sums up this view when he stated "speed, flexibility and value added will make the clothing industry competitive" (Pursuit, 2006: 23). Through feedback gleaned via fashion events, they also confirm that there is a need for business skills, or a training body that would support and assist them in acquiring and updating these skills, as well as in marketing and growing their labels.

With regard to suppliers and the manufacturing aspect of the value chain, the designers are unanimous about the lack of variety as well as the expense of textiles available. They agree that when they do outsource to manufacturers, mostly CMTs, they experience problems with standards of quality and service from these operations, and so try to retain

as much of the production in-house. Most of the designers would like to see more opportunities created in the form of fashion events for space to market their brands.

The designers' views on the role of the government and labour unions are very passionate and subjective, so it must be clarified that the comments cited in this study are the designers' own opinions; nonetheless, such commentary highlights the difficult and diverse concerns that affect every individual, and in many cases, collective groups, of independent designers in South Africa.

Given the various hurdles they have faced and conquered, the designers who participated in this study are noteworthy for having established brand recognition within their target market group, in a fiercely competitive business environment. Their experiences and expertise can be used as positive case studies for aspirant designers wanting to enter fashion design, both in South Africa and in the wider world.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The designers researched in this study appear to have achieved success because of common attributes and approaches: they all have a clear understanding of the business of fashion; they spend resources and time on cultivating and developing their brand in the market, and more broadly, in establishing a reputation of reliability and quality craftsmanship. They have also identified their niche markets and created brand recognition within such spaces, where consumers tend to be less price-sensitive and prefer to acquire uniquely designed garments.

Collectively, they overcame similar hurdles when first embarking on becoming independent designers. As established practitioners in their field, they confront ongoing contextual challenges such as local and global competition, limited access to affordable supplies and to key markets, and the difficulty of finding some equilibrium pricing of their merchandise within reach of local markets while rendering reasonable profit margins.

Through interaction with these designers and encouraging them to critically think about and discuss their views and concerns for the South African clothing and textile industries, as well as the roles of those actors that contribute to the clothing value chain, this study reveals that there are designers with tangible and productive ideas for a more cohesive local industry. It has also yielded evidence to suggest that the creation of an iconic South African fashion aesthetic that would be financially accessible to a broader consumer market is possible.

However, it is also imperative that designers find ways to produce for a larger market base that wants to be identified by the uniqueness of the clothing they wear. South African designers need too move into the *prêt-à-porter* (ready-to-wear) market where design and quality of the garment is preferential and the price is not low but not too high (Santagata, 2002:2).

The designers in this research sample find themselves falling prey to in-fighting and territorial positioning between the owners of the three primary national Fashion Week events hosted in Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg. This reality, in and of itself, is an indicator of the

perceived commercial value of this terrain by the relevant stakeholders, but if such a divisive environment prevails in the contest for control of South Africa's fashion designers and the industry that revolves around them, these event-owners should take at least some responsibility for the decimation of a still nascent South African design industry.

Within the clothing design sector, there is acknowledgement that finding mechanisms to address the various challenges facing the broader industry is imperative. Yet, while energy and resources are misdirected towards gate-keeping and shifting of responsibility, no-one with influence in the industry has developed or opened up for consultation any strategy proposals for integration of the key role-players and areas of endeavour for sustainable growth.

The intention to establish a Fashion Council through the Cape Clothing Cluster to represent the fashion sector as a whole and to guide policy development and implementation is promising, but mobilisation towards the set-up of such a Council must be effected transparently and thoroughly. Government representation in its membership should be complemented with that of organised labour; a national survey or other means of broad consultation would be critical to its authenticity, as would ensuring that independent designers have a voice in its deliberations.

Similarly, the creation of fashion clusters or hubs in different cities - and within different parts of the same city - could advance and accelerate the progress of the clothing and textile sectors, and indeed, of many other industries servicing them, whether these be based in and derived from the formal or the informal economy. However, in the early stages of this concept being applied, competition for limited resources in the form of sponsorship, funding and markets could be increased. This would necessitate the various clusters collaborating, networking and using economies of scale to influence buyers, suppliers and the consumer market. Otherwise, following the regrettable example set by the owners of South Africa's Fashion Week events, they could end up tussling amongst and against each other for these resources, while the designers, who constitute the kernel of the present and future industry, suffer the consequences, and a potentially flourishing industry could be turned "**inside-out**".

It is this disturbing prospect that inspires the designers interviewed for this study with a vision for their industry that involves turning the idea of "**inside out**" into a strategic foothold for evolution, i.e. working proactively from within the industry to face down external threats to the survival of their own businesses and the clothing and textile industry as a whole.

For example, some of the study participants believe strongly that designers should not become complacent by relying on the State or industry role-players to support growth, but that they should rather take charge of forward progress, by pooling resources and harnessing the advantages of partnerships, supported by the assistance of business and marketing experts. It is important for designers to create these partnerships so systems can be put in place to meet the demands of an agile supply chain that can produce garments quickly and efficiently without diluting the quality or their designs.

Policy Recommendations

7.2 Suppliers

In discussing the issue of textile supplies and outsourcing to CMTs, the researcher mentioned during an interview with one nationally recognised designer, Karen (Interview, 6/7/06) that, through his research, he had identified a possible gap in the market, as an opportunity to overcome the problem of high costs for good-quality fabrics and CMT services in producing small runs. The researcher questioned whether it would be feasible for a group of designers as a consortium to set up their own CMT facility, geared specifically to their production needs, and to approach textile houses and wholesalers on a partnership basis for the supply of fabric. The designer agreed that this could be feasible and elaborated thus:

I think the major textile houses should not look at designers merely as customers, but as potential business partners who could market their range of products for them. Textile houses should be courting designers - allow the popular fabrics to go to the retail chains as they can and do place large orders, which are viable business for the textile houses, but use the designers to market and grow their not-so-popular ranges.

When I say "unpopular", I mean the fabrics that you do not see in the retail chain shops. Get the local designers to make up garments from these fabrics and have them stocked in private boutiques. As for CMTs, there are so many skilled people who have lost their jobs - why can we not collaborate to start a mini-CMT factory?

I know there is an issue with competition and design copying, but this is going on already. If designers collaborated, we could come to

some agreement not to infringe on each other's designs or even, for that matter, we could create unique joint fashion lines, creating a new co-operative brand label. Everyone talks about the need to create employment in this industry, everyone talks about the need for the industry to collaborate, but no one is willing to go out there and market the idea and get it into motion. You (the researcher) have very quickly seen this gap; I have to think why others who have been in the industry for a long time have not seen it, or are not prepared to do something about it.

7.3 Manufacturing

This study has found that there are opportunities for designers to network and establish CMTs that could meet their production needs efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, networking opportunities exist between designers and the textile industry, such that designers could create fresh fashion trends using non-commercialised fabrics. South African designers need to research global trends, such as in New York and Australia (van Acker, 2001), where designers are themselves initiating networks that relieve them of the burdens associated with outsourcing and access to marketing agents, thus freeing them to concentrate on creative ingenuity and conceptualisation of ranges.

This policy recommendation was endorsed by Marianne, a well-established designer who said it was imperative for designers to study strategies adopted in other countries such as Italy, Portugal and Israel to cope with the globalised environment and the influx of imports from Asia (Interview, 27/6/06).

7.4 Government and Skills Upgrading

Iqbal, (Interview, 18/7/06), listed three crucial aspects in his view for the revitalisation of the industry: the first would be to upgrade the skills of labour so that quality products could be speedily and efficiently produced; this would be dependent on industry leaders' willingness to devote money to skills development, bearing in mind the prevailing practice of simply outsourcing the work to operations in developing countries and reserving the "finishing" of garments to their South African work-force. Despite the fact that it undermines job growth, this route still entitles local manufacturers to claim that their garments have been "made in South Africa".

The second critical intervention would be to upgrade South Africa's textile industry with major financial investment in both skills and technology, so that a wider variety of competitively priced products could be made available; however, this would involve a longer-term vision and be contingent upon the leadership's willingness to commit to it. The third area for intervention relates to labour regulation, and finding ways to both protect workers' rights and support commercial imperatives, in an effort to ensure employment growth in the industry.

7.5 Cluster Initiatives

The cluster concept is the coalescence of various enterprises that make up the informal clothing sector, including traders, manufacturers, suppliers, and contractors for equipment maintenance (Rogerson, 2000).

Clusters can also provide advantages, such as easy accessibility for training and healthcare, which could be done *in situ*. Local government, NGOs and tour organisations could promote and provide opportunities for tourists to visit these clusters and purchase locally made products. A challenge would be to prevent, or find ways to circumnavigate, the replication of products or saturation of the market. Some researchers of the cluster concept have noted this type of challenge as being typically overlooked, as clusters tend to "focus on the passive benefits" (McCormack, 1998:11, as cited by Gannon, 2002:17).

7.6 The Johannesburg Fashion Cluster

The development of the Johannesburg Fashion District is a primary example of fashion development in South Africa. Utilising abandoned office buildings in the inner city the creation and objectives of the Fashion District was not only to promote South African fashion, but also to create opportunities for new designers to enhance their skills, provide space for them to exhibit and sell their products (Rogerson, 2004). Many of the entrepreneurs that took this opportunity were "black South Africans who had started their clothing businesses in a township or the inner-city flatlands of Johannesburg" (Rogerson, 2004: 20).

Since 1998, a number of initiatives have taken place to support this cluster of "formal and informal clothing producers and suppliers" (Rogerson, 2004:23). In the study, Rogerson identified the following concerns for new designers entering the fashion business.

There was limited support services available to micro-enterprises located in Johannesburg. Serious deficiencies were that few training

institutions, either in the formal or informal sector, were available to these enterprises; no business advice or quality control centres existed to provide support.

(Rogerson, 2001, cited in Rogerson, 2004:24)

Having identified these concerns, the Fashion District found ways to address such issues through the development of SEWAFRICA, which provides training for new designers over a period of one year, thereby providing them with enough practical knowledge to enter formal fashion tertiary institutions to enable the designers to obtain formal qualifications. In 2006, SEWAFRICA was one of the 39 finalists in the 2005 Proudly South African Homegrown Awards. In 2004 the Fashion Shack was developed within the Fashion District as a retail space for new designers, giving access for designers to the various facilities provided within the Fashion District, such as pooled machinery and administrative assistance for a period of two years (Davie, 2004).

7.7 New Fashion Clusters in South Africa

A new fashion district is being planned for the eastern side of Johannesburg (Wilson, 2006). Called the 'Fashion Capital', R24 million has been allocated to create retail outlets, an outdoor fashion ramp, restaurants and economic links with the 100 CMT operations already existing in this locality.

The City of Tshwane's Economic Development Department has created a new project called Fashion in Africa that assists in the promotion and development of young fashion designers (www.tshwane.gov.za).

In Durban, a group of designers and clothing manufacturers have come together to work in conjunction with the Durban Chamber of Business, and have plans to establish a Durban Fashion District called "Freshly Made in Durban". The aim is to bring all the "various sectors that make up the industry in Durban together.

The growth of clusters targeted towards the functional element of design within the clothing and textile industries is an indication of the importance of design to the South African economy. The formulation of clusters is one method of creating a cohesive environment for the growth and promotion of clothing design in South Africa, but it is important that these clusters are operated and managed efficiently, to ensure that they become profitable incubators for the designers and auxiliary service providers necessary for their work.

When interviewed about the promotion of Durban-based designers, the Chairperson of the planned Durban Fashion District (Interview, 26/6/06) said that the Durban Board is engaged in talks with the "city fathers" on this concept, and that the estimated cost for the development of the Durban Fashion District would be in the region of R35- to R50-million. The respondent said that the plan, when implemented, would create employment not only for the designers but for the various businesses and individual service providers linked to the clothing and textile industries. The respondent said that the Fashion District would also create business opportunities for the tourist, restaurant and general retail industries.

The sudden plethora of fashion districts and a battery of councils intent on representing the industry are certainly welcome developments, as these could stimulate impetus for local talent and content, potentially providing more resources, space and opportunities for designers to gain local and international exposure; however, they could set up a paradoxically negative impact on the industry.

These "incubators" have to be managed and maintained under sound business principles if they are to provide tangible and meaningful assistance to the designers. They cannot be created for the sake of establishing "mini-fashion kingdoms" for individuals - as seems to be the case when owners of the various Fashion Weeks publicly spar for control of industry turf, or at least control over these showcase windows. "The industry needs to get over their territorial control and look at the entire industry and see what the best solution is for everyone", said the representative from the Cape Town Fashion Council (Interview, 25/6/06).

Karen concurred that there were plans in place to develop a Durban Fashion District and other fashion clusters in Johannesburg. However, developing this takes time and a lot of money, whereas the ideas we have discussed could be done relatively faster and cheaper than trying to create a large cluster, and in the meanwhile, the industry continues to suffer, more jobs are being shed, and people remain unemployed.

In evaluating the feedback from the designers who took part in the Durban MTN Fashion Week and the Durban Designer Collection, the high percentage of designers willing to support a body that would assist them with business skills, exports and promotion is important and worthy of being taken forward by industry leaders. The collective support by the designers for a conference (see Appendix 8) that would create a working

document that would outline a structured plan for the future of South African fashion designers is also a very important recommendation that needs to be investigated further.

7.8 The Business of Fashion

It is important for designers to realise that they are running a business. Tungate, says, "all successful designers understand that they are running a [creative] business", (2005:56). Agins reiterates this view when she says famous designers that have both a successful business and brand recognition such as Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger "have business strategies that are methodical and painstaking in detail" (2000: 86). Designers also need to find suitable business partners so that while the designers focus on creative work, their partner drives the commercial and marketing arm of the operation.

Brand development is internationally recognised as a key factor in business success, and this was reiterated in the interviews as a primary means through which designers can assure market penetration. It is important that designers grasp the opportunities that their name or brand offers and follow the trends of European fashion designers who license their brands with various fashion accessories such as sunglasses, cosmetics, jewellery, cell-phones and alternative clothing lines.

Regarding the copying of designs, it could do well for the clothing industry to push for some form of legislation that protects South African designers. The idea could be to emulate a British and European concept: in the United Kingdom and the European Union, designers are offered "unregistered protection" for a limited period of time. In the European Union, cost-effective design protection is offered for a period of three years, starting from the date that the design was first made available to the public (World Intellectual Property Organisation, 2005:16).

Designers should use labelling as a marketing tool. It is important for designers to cite all their contact details on their labelling as a means of "silent marketing", enabling brand recognition through the usage of innovative, eye-catching logos and range-specific motifs and slogans.

Innovation and networking could bring designers from elsewhere on the continent to South Africa to work in collaboration with their local counterparts in the creation of a unique range of Pan-African products. Another promising avenue is the concept of "Country Fashion Weeks", events during which each African country would promote its local designers at various locations throughout the country and the throughout Africa, using

these festivals as opportunities not only to showcase design innovations, but also as a means of creating networks for exports to the European market.

7.9 Retail Space

Some of the designers who participated in this study populate the burgeoning intersection of formal and informal economic activities, and possibly even exemplify transcendence of the two discrete sectors. In this context, there are opportunities for designers to set up joint outlets for selling their garments and entrenching their label identity, without being shackled to either the large retail chains or even the fashion boutiques that currently monopolise the value chain and the vital flow of cash that is required by all designers to sustain their enterprises.

One example is a new retail co-op located in a rapidly developing Durban suburb, offering consumers an unusual shopping experience that is culturally diverse with an intimate ambience, close to a variety of stand-alone restaurants, a gallery and convenience stores. Other designers could follow this concept and unite to establish retail outlets that afford them direct control over pricing and merchandise, and enable them to leverage their combined talent and capacity in marketing their own products and the outlet. Designers could host their own fashion events in these spaces, thereby expanding their market on their own terms. In so doing, they could stake a claim for local clothing design as a force for erasing the imprint of globalisation on their industry, particularly by drawing on the agency of the consumer to support locally designed content.

Retailers can also contribute to the visibility of local content by creating specially demarcated space in their stores to house only South African-made apparel. Local content can be promoted through in-store advertising, using their websites and other marketing campaigns as tools to convey innovative messaging around local content.

7.10 Consumer Support

A further policy recommendation to shift consumer behaviour towards locally designed content would be through increased transparency in the value chain. The designers interviewed named the media sector and academic institutions as potentially powerful contributors to this process, through multi-layered investigation and interrogation of the retail sector about the sourcing of products and the working environments of foreign clothing factories. Moreover, they felt there should be greater quality and quantity of

media reportage around the challenges faced by independent South African designers in the wake of globalisation and trade liberalisation.

Another alternative to ensure the survival of the clothing and textile industries through support for locally-made products is by means of civil society mobilisation (beyond the activities of unions). Designers should collaborate with other key stakeholders in the clothing industry to engage with the consumers through creative means that would entice consumers to support local content. For example, designers could form links with bodies such as Proudly South Africa, the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union's "Save Jobs – Buy Local Campaign" and the Save Jobs Coalition. Numerous global organisations promote local content through ethical buying campaigns. The aim of these organisations and the activities they undertake is to educate consumers about the origin of the products and the conditions under which the imported clothing is made and in doing, they endeavour to encourage local consumers to support local clothing designers, which in turn supports the local clothing and textile industries of the respective countries.

Appendix One

Letter by the researcher, published in three South African newspapers

Embrace the Clothing Quotas

I think it is imperative that the clothing, textile and fashion designers as well as the retailers embrace the opportunity presented by the government's decision to implement clothing quotas from China. If all the role-players do not utilise the two-year period of grace and collectively work on mechanisms to improve the sector then it will be the right of the government to wash its hands of these industries.

The suggested increase of 20 – 25 percent of clothing alluded by the retailers will affect a certain sector of the consumer market but it could enhance the various clothing sectors within the informal sector. In this sector, there are many creative and skilled clothing designers and manufacturers of which the quotas on imports will be welcomed. These operations need to exploit this opportunity and encourage the consumer market to support them. Furthermore, it is vital that fashion designers take advantage of this period to promulgate support for local designed content.

Written by: Renato Palmi

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Sunday Independent: 17 September 2006



Appendix Two

The following micro-case study indicates that price is dictating the purchasing motivation of retailers and brand managers, even when the merchandise is a localised brand. While undertaking field research in April 2006, the researcher discovered a range of South African rugby merchandise being retailed in a clothing shop in Durban, all made in China.

RUGBY MERCHANDISE NOT PROUDLY SOUTH AFRICAN

A collection of the Sharks (KwaZulu-Natal rugby team) clothing merchandise is not "proudly South African". The merchandise, which includes fleece-throws, caps and beanies sporting the famous Sharks logo are all made in China. The labels attached to the merchandise have details of SA Rugby as well as a Vodacom logo, which are the sponsors.

Vodacom and the retailer Pick 'n Pay link to this range of clothing is of concern. It is common knowledge that South Africa's clothing industry is in crisis due mostly to the influx of Chinese clothing imports flooding the South African market, creating a situation where many clothing firms have had to close down, retrench workers or alternatively casualise their labour.

Why would Vodacom and Pick 'n Pay, both being members of Proudly South Africa and punting a positive reputation for social responsibility, endorse these products? Is price the deciding factor governing the importation of this specific range of merchandise from China? This range is marketed towards a particular clientele that, possibly, would not object to paying a little more if they knew that their purchase was supporting the local industry.

Vodacom's Corporate Social Investment programme states that "it's about building trust and relationships, so that people get excited about Vodacom because they see how the company has helped develop their communities." Pick 'n Pay claims that they "strive to fulfil our economic, social and environmental responsibilities ... in supporting local communities." Further research reflects Pick 'n Pay's stated commitment to selecting suppliers who demonstrate "product quality and respect for labour."

Retailing clothing brands made in China such as the Sharks merchandise does not align with Pick 'n Pay's philosophy of ensuring that the value chain is ethical. China's clothing industry is reputed for its abuse and exploitation of labour so as to produce merchandise that is cheap and appealing to global brand and retail buyers.

The Sharks rugby management, Vodacom and Pick 'n Pay need to review their creative buying and marketing strategies. There are many small clothing enterprises based in the informal economy within KwaZulu-Natal that could produce the Sharks merchandise, and

endorsement by economic giants such as Pick 'n Pay and Vodacom to support local clothing enterprises would result in a verifiable "proudly South African" business proposition. Furthermore, creative labelling is vital: consumers could be informed that by purchasing the Sharks products, they would be supporting a local clothing enterprise. Creative labelling helps to create consumer awareness and encourages in the consumer a sense of doing the right thing for the local economy.



MADE IN CHINA Most Springbok supporters' clothing on sale at provincial club shops is manufactured in China

PHOTO: JOHN WOODFOOT

SA rugby fans caught offside over gear

MARGIE INGGIS

Durban - Patriotic South Africans are supporting their rugby side sporting merchandise made mostly in China, rather than in South Africa, where it would help retain jobs in the clothing and textile industry, which has lost 60 000 jobs over the past three years.

The clothing is on sale at The Shark Cage in Durban, as well as at certain Pick 'n Pay outlets.

Much of the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks' supporting gear is also produced in China. A lot of the clothing that is not marked "Made in China" has no country of origin labelling, which Keith Robson, the corporate affairs director for SA Clothing, said probably indi-

cated that it was not made in South Africa.

The discovery was made by Renato Palmi, a masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, who is doing his thesis on the clothing and textile industry.

Carrie-Ann Truter, the manageress of The Shark Cage, said the shop was "stuck between a rock and a hard place", as it had to choose between giving its customers affordable gear and being Proudly South African.

"These days, I think people would prefer the merchandise to be affordable."

However, Truter said The Shark Cage had started buying Proudly SA for its children's and ladies' ranges.

The imported apparel is labelled "Official licensed

product of the SA Rugby Football Union" and displays the Vodacom logo.

Vodacom, a Proudly SA member, said it had the right to display its logo on the merchandise because it sponsored the Super 14 series, but that it had nothing to do with where the merchandise was manufactured.

David Robins, the deputy chairman of Pick 'n Pay, another Proudly SA member, said it was a "bit of a pity" that the merchandise was made in China, but that the chain was licensed to retail and not to manufacture the products.

Miles Mowat, the national sales agent for Musgrave Agencies, which provides between 60 percent and 70 percent of the merchandise for The Shark

Cage, said about 75 percent of merchandise was imported, mostly from China, while 25 percent was made locally. "The quality, styling and price of garments from China are far superior," he said.

The issue raises concern about the opportunities that could be lost from the 2010 soccer World Cup.

Adrian de Souza, the sports marketing manager for Adidas, the official licensee for the soccer World Cup, said the Bafana range of clothing would be made by Vimal Enterprises in Durban, which usually makes all the Bafana apparel.

The ranges for overseas teams would be produced in the Adidas factories all over the world that usually supplied these teams, he added.

Appendix Three

The following is an example of how South African designers are using South Africa's political history to portray social activism in their designs.

Political Fashion

An example of creative innovation using a quintessential South African theme is the launch in 2005 of the Hector Pieterse range of clothing by three local designers. The photographic image of Hector Pieterse being carried away from the centre of the 1976 Soweto riot by comrades became iconic of the youth's role in the liberation struggle, and has been emblazoned onto "cloth[ing] to tell a story" says designer Zuza Mbatha. "We want national upliftment where the youth buy into a brand name after someone who [has] made their mark."

The 26-year-old Mbatha, with Tshepo Moropa and the half-sister of Hector Pieterse, Sina Molefi, came together to start Abasha Innovations (*abasha* being the isiZulu word for "youth"). After making contact with the Hector Pieterse Museum in Soweto, Mbatha was put in touch with Pieterse's mother, to whom he pitched his idea of using the image and name of her son for a range of clothing. After six months, he gained permission. The range, which is aimed at the youth market, consists of T-shirts, sneakers and beanies for men and women. Images on the T-shirts reflect one of Hector Pieterse's school report-cards in black, and among the list of subjects and marks is "Afrikaans" circled in red with a failing mark.

Royalties from the usage of Pieterse's name and image go towards funds for a new orphanage called the Hector Pieterse Orphanage. Mbatha feels that he is not exploiting Hector's name. "The youth must come up with their own ideas to create jobs." This start-up business has created employment for five people. Their range of clothing was exhibited at the SA Fashion Week in July 2005 and will be shown at the Old Mutual Vukani Fashion Festival during May 2006 to celebrate the 1976 political events. The Hector Pieterse range is displayed in various private boutiques in Johannesburg.

(Govender, 2005)

Appendix Four: The Questionnaire

Questionnaire Number:

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Name of Respondent: _____
Company Name: _____
Telephone Number: _____
E-mail address: _____
Website address: _____

Overview of the Industry:

- How would you characterise the changes in the clothing industry since you first became involved?
- Given the changes in the national and global environment that this industry now operates, those who are doing better in South Africa what are they doing differently?

1. How and why did you enter this industry?

- What training did you have?
- Where did you do the course and how long was it?
- In retrospect what was the strengths and weaknesses of the training you received?
- Once you had completed your training what did you do?
- When did you start your own business?
- What made you start your own business?
- What was the difficulties you experienced in starting your own business (access to capital, markets, etc)

2. Please tell me about your production process and designs.

- What products do you sell and who is your target market?
- Where do you source your textiles (local suppliers / import or both)
- Are there any problems with the supply of textiles? If so what?
- Who manufactures your products? (your self / employed staff / CMTs / home-based workers)
- How has your production outsourcing changed over time?
- Do you collaborate with any crafters in the informal economy?
- Do you export? If so where and how many units?

3. Marketing and Competition.

- Do you think you gained enough business / marketing skills in your training to assist you in your business?
- What difficulties do you experience in running your business and the marketing of your products?

- How and where do you market your products?
- How would you characterise the relationship between designers?
- How did you go about creating brand recognition?

4. Commentary on the Fashion Industry.

- Have you taken part in any fashion shows and what was the result for your business?
- Do you think the fashion industry is doing enough to support local designers?
- Do you think the big retailers are doing enough to support local designers?
- What difficulties are there for new designers to get access into fashion shows and gain market exposure?

5. Commentary on the Clothing Industry and Consumers.

- How are cheaper imports having any effect on your business?
- What is your comments on the clothing manufacturers – do you think they are meeting the global challenges (upgrading of technology, skill development etc)?
- What do you think are the three most important interventions the state should make to support this industry?
- Do you think there should be more transparency with the buying behaviour of the retail outlets? Should consumers be in a position to track where the products they purchase have been made?
- Do you think that the average South African consumer cares where or how the product is made or is price the deciding factor?
- Do you think there is enough support or interest by South African consumers for local designed content?
- What do you think should be done to create more awareness and support for local deigned content?

Appendix Five

Advert placed by the researcher in local community newspaper:

"University of KwaZulu-Natal based Renato Palmi is undertaking a research study on fashion designers in Durban. Anyone who is designing, manufacturing, out-sourcing and marketing their own range of clothing who wish to take part in this study is asked to contact the researcher. The objective of this research is to gain an understanding of the design element and the role played by independent designers within South Africa's clothing industry"

(Berea Mail, 14 April 2006)

Appendix Six: Feedback Questionnaire

This was sent to designers that took part in the Durban 2006 MTN Fashion Week and the 2006 Durban Designer Collection

Answering the Questionnaire.

A = Good. B = Fair. C = Poor.

Respondent's Name:

1. What were your impressions of the DDC? (A / B / C)
2. Was the administration and communication from the administrators(A/ B/ C
3. Was the media coverage at the event (A / B / C)
4. Was the support from the public (A / B / C)
5. Was the pre- event advertising and marketing (A / B / C)
6. Was the facilities provided by the administrators (A / B / C)
7. Do you think the DDC created more awareness for the fashion industry?
(Yes / No)

Your own results

8. Did you sell any of your products from your show? (Yes / No)
9. Did you get any media / publicity exposure during the event? (Yes / No)
10. Did you receive any orders? (Yes / No)
11. Did you establish any new prospective clients? (Yes / No)
12. Were you happy with the publicity or sales you gained? (Yes / No)
13. Do you feel that you gained valuable experience and knowledge by taking part in the DDC – 2006? (Yes/No)

General Comments on the Industry

14. Do you think the national market exposure for local designers is (A / B / C)
15. Is consumer support for local designed content (A / B / C)
16. Please highlight any forms of competition you have experienced:
 - (1) Cheap imports.
 - (2) Design copying from retail outlets.
 - (3) Copying from other designers.
 - (4) Other forms – please elaborate.

17. Are you supportive of more fashion events / weeks etc throughout the country? (Yes/No)
18. Do you think there should be a national body that represents all South African designers that sets criteria for quality control on fashion designers before they can participate at national fashion weeks? (Yes/No)
19. Would you like a national body that represents and assists designers in marketing, exports, legal and business matters – would you find such a body beneficial to your business? (Yes/ No)
20. Would you support a conference that brings all role-players involved in the fashion industry to develop a working document that the industry can use as a platform to address specific problems in the industry to promote its growth and sustainability in a unified manner? (Yes/No)
21. Do you think there is enough support / mechanisms in place to assist, nurture and promote new designers entering the industry? (Yes/No)
22. Do you have any further comments you would like to make?

Appendix Seven: Interview List

Primary Interviews with Designers

Date of Interview	Name of Respondents
10/6/06	Shane Marais
15/6/06	Robbyn Chesler
16/6/06	Kim Bromemead
18/6/06a	Rozanne Immelman
27/6/06	Marianne Fassier
3/7/06	Peter Bosman
4/7/06	Sifiso Mthethwa
6/7/06	Karen Monk
8/7/06	Brenda Quin
18/7/06	Iqbal Hoosain

Secondary Interviews

Date of Interview	Description of Respondents
20/5/06	Owner of private boutique in Durban called EUFORIA.
2/6/06	Mrs. Vanashree Singh: Convener of the Durban Fashion Week.
8/6/06	Mr. Smit: Senior Executive of Woolworths responsible for locally designed content
9/6/06	Owner of BIG BLUE, a private boutique with 15 stores throughout South Africa
12/6/06	Zola: Director of new Section 21 Company formed to help workers retrenched from the clothing industry. The company upgrades their skills and assists with finding employment opportunities.
18/6/06b	Mrs. Tracy Collier. Consultant working with the Department of Arts and Culture. Co-ordinating project with informal sector and designers in creating new fashion designs.
18/6/06c	Ms. Francis Andrew. Consultant for the SA Fashion Week.
19/6/06	Mr. Allen LeRoux. Academic Director of Design College based in Cape Town.
20/6/06	Owner of BEMUSE, a private boutique in Cape Town.
22/6/06a	Mrs. Jackie Burger: Fashion Editor of ELLE Magazine. National magazine on fashion.
22/6/06b	Ms. Amanda Gowan: Fashion Editor of Glamour Magazine. National magazine on fashion.
24/6/06	Gideon: Independent Designer
24/6/06b	Neil Roake: Director of chain of private boutiques. – The SPACE
25/6/06	Committee member of the Cape Town Fashion Council
26/6/06	Greg Wallis: Chairperson of the planned Durban Fashion District.
5/7/06	Mr. Dion Chang: Internationally renowned fashion commentator.
22/7/06	Mr. Adam Levin: Internationally recognised South African fashion journalist.

Appendix Eight

SA designers need to link up with business to market their wares

October 22, 2006
Business Report
By Margie Inggs

Durban - The South African fashion industry is a fragmented sector with an uncoordinated approach to business that has not strategised to take advantage of the two-year window period granted by the quotas on Chinese textiles and clothing.

This is according to **Renato Palmi**, a researcher at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, who said this week that fashion designers needed to partner with business people who could market their work, giving them the space to focus on their creativity. This is common practice in Europe and the US, where the industry is flourishing.

"It is also important for designers to form an industry body which can speak with one voice for the sector and for designers to get together to form co-operatives," Palmi said.

This would get around the problem of selling to boutiques, which only pay the designers on the sale of products and make huge mark-ups.

Palmi called for a national conference that would include key stakeholders in the industry, including the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (Sactwu), manufacturers, hair stylists, make-up artists, modelling agencies and the media.

Palmi said: "The conference needs to come up with a working document that outlines how to take the industry forward in a cohesive way."

The fashion weeks don't tend to attract international buyers because the designers don't have the capacity to make up the orders they want.

Some designers make their clothes, others outsource to manufacturers and sell the articles to flea markets, boutiques or retailers that are willing to support local products.

Palmi suggested that retailers set up "buy local" stands where local designers could be given publicity.

"There should also be more engagement between textile and clothing manufacturers and designers," he said. "Municipalities should start promoting local designers throughout the year and the various fashion shows should focus a lot more on the business side."

Igsaan Salie, the president of the Textile Federation of SA (Texfed), said the department of trade and industry (dti) customised sector programme document would be able to play a role in aligning the value chain.

"Designers have to be able to look each other in the eye and find common ground. A conference may help and Texfed would support any strategy that would bring strength to the sector," Salie said.

Gavin Rajah, the founder of the Cape Town fashion week, said the problem in the industry was that too many egos and politics got in the way of business.

"People have their personal motives at heart and no one is really interested in gaining cohesiveness," he said. "Everyone is very quick to complain about China, but if we had a proper strategy that focused on turnaround times, maybe we would not have felt the brunt of their imports so much."

Stuart Gottschalk, the vice-chairman of Clotex, a non-governmental organisation that helps small

clothing and textile businesses in the Western Cape, said the provincial government made a breakthrough by starting a fashion council that was trying to unify designers.

"The industry has changed and the future lies with smaller, vibrant companies run by young people."

Gottschalk said fashion weeks were targeted at local buyers but that one of the solutions was to run one that would target overseas buyers. One of the subjects that would need to be tackled, though, was the issue of bridging finance.

Stefanie Vieira, the acting manager of the Cape Town Fashion Council and assistant director of the clothing and textile sector of the Western Cape provincial government, said the council project had been started at the end of last year. She said it was an initiative of designers and Wesgro - the trade and investment promotion agency for the Western Cape - to address the frustration caused by fragmentation in the industry.

"It is amazing that the South African government invests in the development of [small businesses] but we can't expect them to be experts in every single sector. At some stage, the dti needs a unified voice or advisory body which represents the industry they are supporting to maximise the outcome of their investment," she said.

Vieira said a panel was needed to advise the dti on what kind of trade fairs to hold and what kind of indicators designers should meet before representing South Africa abroad.

The council comprises five designers, seven industry players, one manufacturer, a representative of Clotex, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, a retailer, the editor of Elle magazine, a provincial government representative and a representative from Wesgro.

The council is promoting joint ventures between designers and manufacturers who undertake the business side of the deal. Networking opportunities are provided and Vieira said the council would be very interested in bringing business people and designers together to form partnerships.

If the councils work as they are intended to, representatives from each of the councils of the provinces will hold discussions and take decisions together at a national level.

The fashion council's aim is to assist other regions to establish their own forums and networks. "We are happy to share our first experience, structures and projects with them," Vieira said.

"It is crucial that South Africa gets a national body to fight against fragmentation and to be able to represent a unified industry to the rest of the world.

"Fashion design can be seen as the creative component in the whole clothing and textile value chain. South Africa cannot compete with price points from 'sweat-shop economies'," Vieira said.

"By focusing only on domestic markets, it will capture a decreasing share of the market because of free-trade agreements. South Africa's strength lies in creativity and we should make use of it and invest in it."

Vieira concluded: "One other key for success is the understanding of market requirements and the professional promotion of local design. Next to Italy, Brazil and France, South Africa has the best potential to create its own look in the global industry."

Neither Sactwu nor the Clothing Trade Council of SA could be contacted for comment.

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Local designers wow at fashion week

BEREA MAIL

30 JUNE 2006



DURBAN became the mecca of fashion when the MTN Durban Fashion Week was held at the ICC last week.

More than 60 local couturiers presented their preview of their spring and summer collections.

Karen Monk Klijinstra, Haroun Hansrot and Lindiwe Khuzwayo were some of the designers who wowed the audiences with their show stopping designs.

Gavin Rajah's breathtaking swimwear collection was a hit while Hansrot's lingerie had temperatures racing with his exclusive and daring range.

The highlight of the fashion week was definitely the show done by Eastern Mosaic called, *An Indian Summer*, where two top international designers showcased breathtaking designer wear.

Tarun Tahilliani enthralled the crowds with his romantic eastern gowns while Malini Ramanini presented sassy cocktail dresses.

"MTN Fashion Week has a vision to make it desirable to buy locally designed and manufactured brands. Durban is a centre for fashion excellence and talent, by supporting our local designers we have provided an international creative and business platform for them to showcase their talents," said convenor and director of the Durban Fashion Week, Vanashree Singh.

Model Linda Mkhize shows off a South African Zion creation.
• Social photos on page 8.

Photo: Waheeda Peters