



# DRIVING THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY

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# BACKGROUND – ABOUT FASHION AND THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Fashion is a broad umbrella term for the artistic expression of beauty through clothes and apparel. Fashion is expressed by the way people dress, behave, and perform with their clothing. In simple terms, Fashion is all about self-expression. The Fashion Industry is arguably one of the fastest-growing sectors in the world. Africa is the continent most widely acknowledged for its variety of fashion products. Most of the cotton used in fashion across the world comes from Africa. The patterns, designs, materials, and metals or colors usually speak of African history and culture. Nigerian fashion products also have an essential significance in spreading information and communication within their communities. Central to the huge flair for fashion in Africa is Nigeria with its huge primarily young population, Nigeria is home to Africa's fastest-growing fashion industry.

The Nigerian fashion business is booming and doesn't appear to be slowing down anytime soon. Rising internet broadband access, the ease with which young people can buy their favorite fashion style online, and unquestionably rising income levels are all elements that have been recognized as contributing to the industry's rise. The fashion industry in Nigeria plays an important cultural role and contributes significantly to the country's economy. Casual attire is commonly worn but formal and traditional styles are also worn depending on the occasion. Clothing incorporates a variety of colors, fabrics, and embellishments (often beads).

Many of the component cultures of Nigeria wear styles that are unique to their tribal society and customs. Nigeria is known not only for its fashionable textiles and garments but also for its fashion designers who have increasingly gained international recognition. It has the capacity to create more jobs. Nigeria's fashion industry has grown in size and sophistication in the last decade, attracting global attention. Entrepreneurship in the fashion industry represents a huge opportunity since the fashion industry has a very broad value chain and has continuous ever-evolving opportunities. It is dominated by big players of the industries who put upon trends, and drive consumer preferences and the fashion core on a global scale. However, there is a great variety of small actors who compete in the fashion industry and contribute original concepts and ideas to the industry, and they are the subject of this research.

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This white paper seeks to investigate the challenges that female entrepreneurs experience in the Nigerian Fashion Industry, identify the critical success factors for being successful in the fashion industry, and finally identify the huge opportunities available for female-led businesses in the Nigerian Fashion Industry. This white paper seeks to address the following questions.

- 1. What specific opportunities in the Nigerian Fashion Industry exist for Female Entrepreneurs?**
- 2. What are the challenges and critical success factors for female-led businesses to be able to thrive in the Nigerian Fashion Industry?**

For this research, I employed a mixed-method approach. I did some desktop review to understand the Nigerian fashion industry context and I also carried out some interviews with five (5) female fashion entrepreneurs who are operating across different parts of the fashion value chain to discuss female fashion-specific issues and opportunities.

## UNDERSTANDING THE FASHION INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

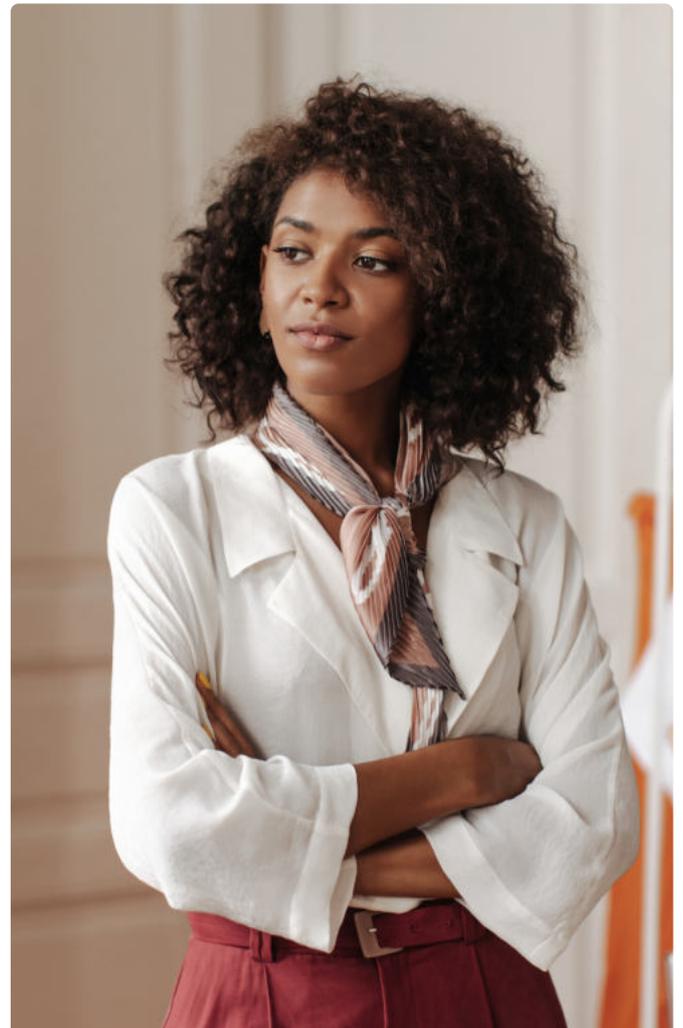
The Fashion Industry globally is a multi-million-naira business and the industry employs about 300 million people. In Nigeria, revenue in the Fashion segment is projected to reach US\$1.70bn in 2023. Revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2023-2027) of 10.72%, resulting in a projected market volume of US\$2.56bn by 2027. (Statistica, 2022). The Nigeria Export Council in its 2022 report estimates that the Nigerian Fashion Industry is responsible for 375 of the E-commerce revenues in Nigeria. From the 1960s till the early 90s, Nigeria was very much influenced by European fashion, and more specifically British fashion since the British colonized us. However, since the 90s, the Nigerian fashion industry has experienced tremendous growth and has made/is making a major impact in the fashion world.

**“The Nigeria Export Council in its 2022 report estimates that the Nigerian Fashion Industry is responsible for 375 of the E-commerce revenues in Nigeria.”**

Nigeria is a country that has a large population base, 62% of whom are under the age of 25. About 40% of the population are urban dwellers, including a rich upper class and a growing middle class with considerable spending power. Nigerian consumption patterns are changing. People know and love fashion from their travels, social events, and online media. The Nigerian fashion industry's growth potential is high, and with the right investment and support, it could become the engine of growth for the national economy.

Nigerian fashion is diverse, showing the different religions, ethnic groups, and cultures in the country. Nigeria has a unique heritage with fashion as traditional craftsmanship and textile heritage passed down the generations, together with the emergence of creative designers and entrepreneurs, are boosting the fashion industry and the wider economy. The fashion industry tends to be concentrated in the largest cities, such as Aba, Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, and Abuja in Nigeria, where the population's broad fashion interest is making for a flourishing industry.

The fashion industry in Nigeria has evolved into a very big industry with new structures, earnings, and exposure for the clothes, carving a new set of fashion professionals ranging from fashion designers and fashion stylists to fashion make-up artists and hair stylists, journalists, and fashion models. The potential for the fashion industry in Nigeria will always be huge and far-reaching as the desire for Nigerian and Nigeria fashion has always been there because of culture and heritage.



Nigeria's fashion industry will continue to thrive because of its huge population dynamics. The Nigerian young population plays a dual role in the growth of fashion. It is both a consumer and producer of fashion. Social media and E-commerce platforms have given African companies and people the opportunity to purchase from retailers with no physical presence on the continent and allow small fashion houses to showcase their collections to a global audience. E-commerce websites such as Jumia and Konga give global access to fashion and offer on-trend fashion at all price levels with products that are just beginning to gain well-deserved visibility.

With the advent of fashion journalists, many magazines are dedicated solely to fashion and carry interviews with Nigerian fashion designers and models. Nigeria is gradually getting a strong reputation for creative fashion. A couple of Nigerian fashion designers are showcasing on world runways, winning acclaim by dressing celebrities including Beyoncé and Michelle Obama. These designers include Maki Oh, Duro Olowu, and Jewel by Lisa.

Fashion weeks, online media, and social media are helping fashion designers in Nigeria to promote their brands and clothes to a wider market; in addition, new retail shops, local multi-brand boutiques, and online shops are being developed to showcase Nigerian fashion design.

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## UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Some of the unique defining characteristics of the fashion industry include the following.

- **Fashion is Cyclical**

Fashion cycles are expected to repeat themselves every twenty (20 years). The trends show that most of the popular styles reappear. It is just a matter of time before a once-popular fashion style becomes popular once again.

- **Fashion has a Shelf life**

Fashion mirrors the latest trends and it is moving very fast, faster than ever. What is fashionable today, achieves its peak of popularity and then disappears.

- **Fashion is an Artistic Expression**

Fashion is Art. Fashion encompasses many other things in our everyday life, other than clothes and accessories – you can be fashionable in your choice of home, car, decor, and even the places where you eat and relax.

- **Fashion is Lucrative**

Fashion offers huge lucrative and entrepreneurial opportunities for everyone. Entrepreneurs in fashion employ numerous people across the fashion value chain making the fashion industry one of the fastest-growing sectors in national economies. This makes the fashion industry such a very lucrative industry.

## Value Chain Analysis of the Fashion Industry

S/N	Aspect of the Value Chain	Components
1	<b>Design Aspects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ready to wear Fashion</li> <li>• Fast Fashion</li> <li>• Niche Fashion</li> </ul>
2	<b>Raw materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural (Cotton, Wool, Silk, Leather)</li> <li>• Synthetic (Natural, Gas, Oil)</li> <li>• Weaving, Knitting, Plaiting, Finishing</li> <li>• Garment Factories</li> <li>• Contractors</li> <li>• Sub-contractors</li> </ul>
3	<b>Production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garment Factories</li> <li>• Contractors</li> <li>• Sub-contractors</li> </ul>
4	<b>Logistics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apparel Companies</li> <li>• Buying Companies</li> <li>• Trading Companies</li> </ul>
5	<b>Marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product Placement, Celebrities</li> <li>• Fashion Events</li> </ul>
6	<b>Sales and Distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department Stores</li> <li>• Merchandizes</li> <li>• Discounts, Factories, Outlets</li> </ul>

## FASHION INDUSTRY ECO-SYSTEM ACTORS AND KEY ROLES

### ● Fashion Designers

Fashion designers are those responsible for the creation of clothing, and related accessories like shoes and handbags for clients and consumers. The specialty of a fashion designer can range from knowledge in clothing, accessory, jewelry design, etc.

### ● Fashion Stylists

The fashion stylists work for individuals, fashion houses, and clothing brands. Their main responsibilities include providing fashion advice; choosing and coordinating outfits for models in photo shoots or actors in television and film; choosing props and accessories and preparing them for shoots.

### ● Fashion Consultants

The fashion consultants advise clients on personal style. You may also advise companies on style-related topics. Your primary responsibilities center on using clothing choices to enhance your client's public image.

### ● Fashion Writers and Bloggers

The fashion blogger writes articles about fashion and style in his/her blog and publishes photos of outfits and videos of fashion shows.

- **Textile Designer**

Textile designers create fabric designs and patterns for woven, knitted, and printed materials for clothes and interior furnishings.

- **Fashion Trend Analyst**

A fashion trend analyst looks for information about apparel design. The Fashion analyst's duties focus on predicting trends based on current consumer data, market research, and knowledge of the fashion industry. The analyst also uses information about marketing plans, retail industry sales, and pop culture trends in your analysis.

- **Fashion Merchandiser**

Fashion Merchandisers are the people who are involved in the production of fashion designs and distribution of final products to the end consumer. Fashion merchandising is the buying, selling, and marketing of the fashion industry. Fashion merchandisers oversee the style design of garments and accessories in retail clothing stores, costume suppliers, or fashion houses.

- **Fashion Illustrator**

A Fashion Illustrator is someone who creates drawings, sketches, and other works of art which pertain to the fashion industry. Fashion Illustration is the art of communicating fashion ideas in a visual form that originates with illustration, drawing, and painting, known as Fashion sketching. It is mainly used by fashion designers to brainstorm their ideas on paper or digitally.

- **Fashion Public Relationship Officer**

Fashion Public Relationship Officers are involved in the promotion of clothing and accessories brands via a range of marketing and media channels including social media, online outlets, print, and broadcast. The main role of the fashion Public Relations Officer is to build and maintain a good public image for a brand.

- **Garment Technologist**

A Garment Technologist is a clothing or textile technician who has the responsibility for choosing the right fabrics and designs for manufacturers to make clothes at a set cost.

- **Fashion Brands**

Fashion brands refer to all the brands in the fashion industry. The fashion brands are owned by key fashion item producers. In the fashion industry, branding is everything. Fashion brands tend to represent the identity of the fashion designer. In the fashion industry, branding is everything. Consumers buy branded products to display that they identify with the brand and the connotations that the brand represents.

Across all of the fashion roles that have been listed above. Each position can be filled by a female comfortably and this is testimony of the opportunities that the fashion industry and ecosystem can create for female entrepreneurs to add value to this thriving ecosystem.



# KEY LEARNINGS ON SPECIFIC FEMALE CONTEXT ISSUES IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Based on the Research, some of the female-specific issues we have learned are critical to the success of female entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

- **Female Clothing and Fashion is a big market.**

Population statistics suggest that the ratio between male to female is in the region of 1 to 7 and this buttresses the point that there are more opportunities within female fashion than male fashion. Female fashion entrepreneurs and designers would have a better understanding of what women want to wear and are best suited to take care of female fashion needs.

- **Female Fashion offers a huge variety in Nigeria.**

Female fashion is so trendy and offers a huge variety. Some of the trends in female fashion range from Oversized Button-Down Shirts to Moonbow shirts & Bralette Set to Blazers to Women Button Detail Pink Blazer Dress to Bold Shoulders. Pink Tee With Shoulder Pads to Chunky Jewelry etc. Female fashion offers so much variety in product offerings. Most of the female fashion entrepreneurs sampled in Nigeria offer products ranging from Afrocentric female fashion to corporate female fashion to luxury and high-end female fashion and also to fast fashion casual wear.

- **There is a thriving entrepreneurial environment for female entrepreneurship.**

According to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Nigeria has the highest number of women entrepreneurs in the world. There are a couple of reasons for the huge involvement of female entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Many entrepreneurship development firms prioritize supporting female entrepreneurship in Nigeria as a panacea for national development.

- **Female Employment in the Fashion Industry is Huge**

According to the C&A Foundation Report (2017), female employment in the fashion industry in Africa is as high as 80%. Most of the female employment is in small workshops and small fashion retail outlets.

- **There is a cultural element of Fashion that is synonymous with Confidence.**

Most female fashion entrepreneurs attribute fashion to confidence building and so many ladies feel a bit more expressive of their confidence and personality through the choice of their fashion outfits.

- **Rise in fluid fashion**

The lines are getting very blurry between female and male fashion. Most male fashion apparel and designs can now pass off for female high-end. Unisex fashion items are taking center stage.

- **Green and Recyclable fashion**

The sustainable development goals and the emphasis on sustainable fashion have opened a new vista of opportunity for female fashion. In a bid to curtail climate change issues and health hazards associated with fast fashion. Many fashion designers are creating reusable fashion products and multi-purpose fashion products. Many common female fashion wears can be produced to allow for dressing in multiple formats. Detachable parts of the dresses and in some cases, a mother and child matching outfit. All of these are creating new fashion products for female entrepreneurs. Consumers and clients are seeking more bargains with their fashion demands as there is a lot more discretionary spending and hazards increasing demand for resale, rental, and off-price retailers.

- **Huge Fashion entrepreneurs playing in the global space are Nigerian female entrepreneurs**

Amongst several other successful female fashion entrepreneurs, Honey Ogundeyi, the founder of Fashpa is a perfect example of a successful female fashion entrepreneur. She has always had a passion for both technology and fashion, so she eventually decided to work on an idea she had been passionate about for a very long time, and that was how to make fashion more accessible for Africans. Her company is using technology to create an online one-stop fashion shop.

Fashpa.com is Nigeria's premier online fashion retailer. Vertically integrated Fashpa designs, manufactures and distributes its own clothing line. Fashpa is focused on bridging the access to fashion gap using technology, by creating an online fashion platform targeted at style-conscious consumers who want quality, variety, and convenience, at affordable prices. Thus, her company's idea of solving the problem of access to fashion has evolved into a powerful business model that offers a new solution. Currently, Fashpa is a marketplace retailer that produces its own line, like Zara, H&M, Steve Madden, Topman, and a few others.

- **Female Fashion is easy to learn**

The interviewed entrepreneurs are of the opinion that female fashion is a lot easy to venture into and learn as opposed to male fashion. Most of the female fashion wear is very straightforward in terms of design and concept.

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## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR FEMALE FASHION ENTREPRENEURS IN NIGERIA

**To promote a very strong female fashion industry that will allow female entrepreneurs, the following critical success factors are needed.**

- Increase the number of formal and informal fashion education centers. Most of the efforts geared towards fashion education are private sector-led. There has to be more involvement by the public sector and increasing private-public partnerships.
- Development of targeted Finance and blended funding mechanisms clearly targeted at stimulating female fashion entrepreneurs.
- Improved access to market opportunities for female entrepreneurs that allows them to showcase their products to a wider audience.
- A unique Business model is needed to thrive and grow in the Nigerian fashion industry and more importantly as a female fashion entrepreneur. The business model can incorporate schemes like apprenticeship, and mentorship schemes.
- Innovation and Creativity are required attributes for those entering the world of fashion. Female entrepreneurs are expected to harness their creative instincts to come up with innovative designs.
- Access to skilled artisans and informal fashion workforce.
- Adoption of technology. Technology is accelerating the rise of digital fashion and online fashion platforms that allows for access to fashion wear and products.
- Discipline and Consistency on the part of the female entrepreneur.

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## OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALE FASHION ENTREPRENEURS

The Nigerian fashion industry has the potential to diversify its economy and become one of its main drivers. Most of the opportunities in the fashion industry are culturally attractive to the female gender. The Fashion Industry comprises the following specific opportunities for female entrepreneurs. In order to achieve this, the growing importance of young people should also be taken into account, especially women who experience low levels of education and high levels of unemployment to harness and exploit its huge opportunities which include:

- Nigeria has a strong huge population and this can impact the Nigeria fashion industry in becoming one of the main drivers of the economy. The millennials and Gen Z have found great expression for themselves through fashion.
- Dressmaking is a significant activity anywhere in the world and in Nigeria, we have a huge local artisans involvement acting as social change agents in the development of Nigerian fashion. Their importance and impact on clothing production and local trends are to preserve traditional know-how, which needs to be taken into account in any fashion company's business models in Nigeria.
- Nigeria has a huge cultural heritage with a flair for arts and culture. Continuous training to up-skill the craftsmen to be able to produce world-class products and increase their employability.
- Historically, Nigeria has had very strong textile and wool production factories that have been responsible for producing garments and apparel over time.
- Global recognition of Nigerian fashion entrepreneurs who have given the Nigerian fashion industry global recognition.
- Nigeria has a huge concentration of fashion designers, textile and garment creative professionals, and small to medium-sized businesses—including craft workshops and sewing camps who are interested in the formal establishment and successful promotion of the fashion industry. Luckily, the interest in Nigerian fashion shown by some designers has opened up opportunities for some women in the sector. As entrepreneurs, they have not only created successful businesses at the international level, but they are also offering improvement and development opportunities for many other women who work in small local businesses

Female-led opportunities need to be communicated, harnessed, and exploited because this can address global sustainable goals and targets such as gender equity in terms of employment and job creation.

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## CHALLENGES WITH FASHION IN NIGERIA

Currently, fashion represents an essential part of the economic activity in Nigeria. The growth of the fashion industry in Nigeria has largely been driven by the intensive activity of the young demography and existing fashion entrepreneurs. In spite of the vast prospects, of the fashion industry in Nigeria. Some of the challenges include.

- **Access to funding and capital:** The development of an industry that thrives and produces products with high added value requires financing to start the business, innovate or train its workers. Investment both in machinery for product development and in ICT is required to favor the entrance of Nigerian fashion companies into the digital environment.
- **Fashion skills acquisition centers:** Despite the growth in the fashion industry in Nigeria, there are no schools or training centers to help designers learn more about tailoring, cutting, styling, marketing, and public relations. There are no government or official bodies providing funds, and the infrastructure is weak, which slows down production with high costs. With the enhancement of the fashion industry in Nigeria, the economy will flourish, and more employment opportunities will open up, particularly for female entrepreneurs.
- **Infrastructural challenges** such as lack of power, the high cost and poor quality of the internet, the lack of good road networks/access, low penetration of online payments, and lack of logistics networks make it more expensive for e-commerce companies to operate and compete with global counterparts.

- **The lack of an international presence** is also significant for Nigerian fashion entrepreneurs. Fashion designers, mostly find their fabrics, textiles, and prints being showcased in the international market by Western designers. The promotion of Nigerian fashion outside of Nigeria has begun to inspire interest and its propensity to produce quality brands and its potential from an interactive marketing standpoint.
- **Industry-related education is another major challenge:** Specialized training in the fashion sector is essential, taking the sector's growth potential into account. For women, this training is an opportunity to start a professional career, and in certain areas, it would offer opportunities for social and economic growth. However, none of the Nigerian universities offer a fashion program because they do not see the need for it. Nigeria's fashion industry needs traditional and digital promotional efforts both within and outside the continent, strategic initiatives of mutual benefit to stakeholders, and supply chains and distribution networks that connect and inspire creativity and innovation. The creation of schools and universities offering specialized training in business management and fashion product manufacture would alleviate the problem of the poorly qualified, especially female, workforce.
- **Sustainability and Climate change issues:** The fashion industry has a huge negative impact on the environment. The fashion industry is the world's second-biggest polluter, due to its complex global supply chain from the farming of cotton to the manufacture, dyeing, printing, and bleaching of fibers, all of which use chemicals. Cotton production uses a great deal of water and high percentages of fertilizer and pesticides to increase output, which contributes to air and groundwater pollution, and soil degradation. Each year, a large quantity of textiles is sent to waste, because of the production of non-conformities, most synthetic fibers do not decompose, and wool releases methane after a year's decomposition in a landfill (Stecca and Ndachengedzwa 2016).
- **Government Policies and Recommendations:** The Fashion Industry despite its huge promise has little or no government policies geared towards making a huge impact on the sector. There are no tax incentives or policies that can support small and growing entrepreneurs in this huge sector.

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## THE HUGE CONTRIBUTIONS THAT FEMALE FASHION CAN PROVIDE TO THE NIGERIA ECONOMY

- **Promotion of Entrepreneurship.**

Fashion by its nature stimulates creativity and innovation and this can open entrepreneurial opportunities for a creative individual with an eye for fashion, creativity, and color to generate income locally by opening stores and internationally through the Internet.

- **Facilitates Job creation.**

Fashion facilitates and stimulates the local economy by employing talented dressmakers, textile artists, models, and support staff to showcase collections.

- **Sustainable Business Models.**

Fashion can provide and act as a sustainable business model based on the hereditary clothing and apparel industry. Many women and young people work in the labor-intensive fashion industry, helping to improve their underdeveloped and developing countries' competitiveness. Through their work in this sector, women are increasing their independence and making progress toward gender equality.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS IN SUPPORTING FEMALE LED FASHION BUSINESSES TO GROW SUSTAINABLY.**

The following recommendations are suggested to help position female entrepreneurs to thrive in the fashion industry in Nigeria.

- Standardize the fashion ecosystem by recognizing organized associations that bring together the critical fashion stakeholders in the country.
- Invest in Annual fashion weeks, fashion trade shows so as to increase access to market opportunities.
- Intensify the ban on second-hand fashion products that are smuggled into the country.
- Introduce a non-gender discriminatory policy that will lead to the promotion of more female entrepreneurs.
- Ensure constant town hall meetings and dialogues with the key stakeholders in both the private and public sectors charged with a mandate on how to grow this sector.
- Partner with the existing organizations and regulatory bodies making investments in the Nigerian fashion space.
- Local industry development creating jobs and training for local craftsmen and artisans and reducing unemployment in their communities.
- Creation of Technology fashion parks to drive innovation and creativity in the fashion space.

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## **CONCLUSION.**

Fashion is a thriving industry because it addresses one of the most fundamental basic needs of humanity which is clothing. Fashion is one of the biggest and fastest-growing sectors in the country and is similar to most emerging economies globally. It is an antidote to achieving economic diversity and prosperity as a nation. The fashion industry has the capacity to create thousands of jobs annually and the female gender because of their natural instinct to embrace beauty, creativity, and nurture are best suited to be cardinal points to the growth of the fashion industry.

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