



Driving Growth in Kwazulunatals-Natal's Fashion Business: Cultural Heritage, Innovation, and Market Expansion

Henry Prince Amankwah

Divine Clothing Sa, South Africa

Abstract

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) has the potential to become one of South Africa's leading fashion business hubs, combining its rich cultural heritage with modern design and market strategies. This study set out to investigate how local designers and entrepreneurs are blending traditional artistry—such as Zulu beadwork, indigenous textiles, and heritage-inspired motifs—with contemporary business models to compete in both domestic and international markets. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research incorporated semi-structured interviews with twelve fashion entrepreneurs, designers, and retailers from Durban, Pietermaritzburg, and coastal towns; field observations at fashion markets, cultural festivals, and manufacturing hubs; and document analysis of trade reports, tourism statistics, and online business data. The findings reveal that KZN's fashion sector benefits significantly from its cultural authenticity, tourism-linked demand, and increasing adoption of digital marketing. However, the industry faces persistent challenges, including limited access to finance, fragmented supply chains, and inadequate skills training in business management. Social media platforms have become vital tools for brand visibility, yet penetration into export markets remains minimal. Based on these insights, the study recommends strengthening fashion entrepreneurship programs that combine creative design with business acumen, developing collaborative retail and export platforms, promoting eco-friendly production methods, investing in local manufacturing infrastructure, and fostering government–industry partnerships to position KZN as a continental leader in the fashion trade. By strategically addressing these gaps, KZN can leverage its cultural assets and entrepreneurial talent to stimulate economic growth, enhance global competitiveness, and secure a sustainable future for its fashion industry.



International Conference on Social Sciences

Keywords: Branding, Cultural Tourism, Digital Marketing, Export Potential, Value Chain