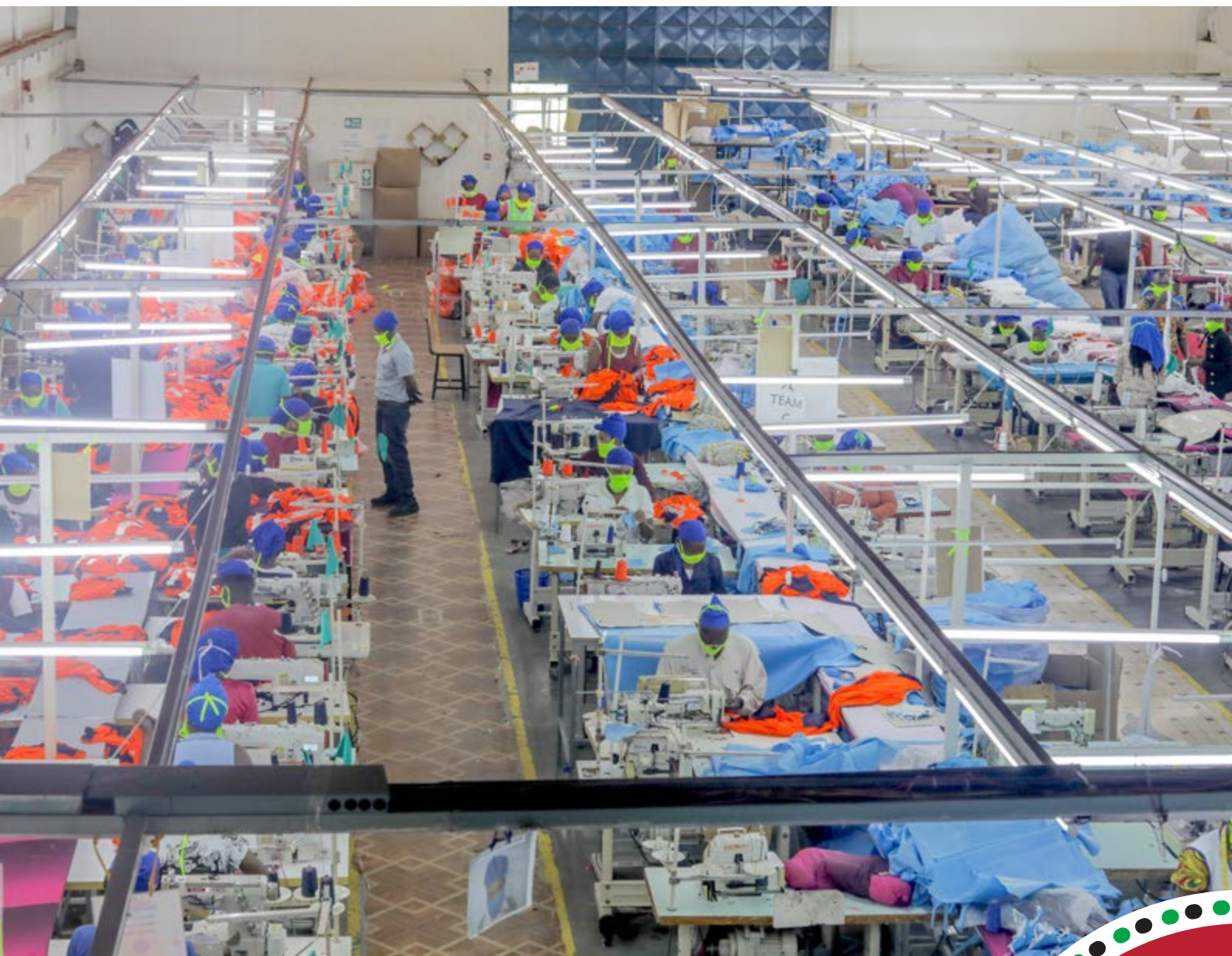


# EXPORT AGENDA



Buying Local  
Garments

'New Standards  
Gazetted to Stem  
Cotton Sub-sector  
Cartels'

Up-cycling....  
Births a global brand  
Journey

◀ **INSIDE**







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## KENYA EXPORT PROMOTION & BRANDING AGENCY



### Vision

To transform Kenya into a top global Brand



### Mission

Brand Kenya, Export Kenyan, Build Kenya

### Tagline


Inspiring Global Trade

The Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA) is a State Corporation established under the State Corporations Act Cap 446 through Legal Notice No.110 of August 9th, 2019 following the merger of the Export Promotion Council and Brand Kenya Board.

Core Mandate is to implement export promotion and nation branding Initiatives and policies to promote Kenya's export of goods and services.

A publication of the Kenya Export Promotion & Branding Agency (KEPROBA)


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**EXPO  
2020  
DUBAI  
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OFFICIAL PARTICIPANT - KENYA


**COUNTRY THEME: FEEL THE ENERGY**







**Dates:**  
1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

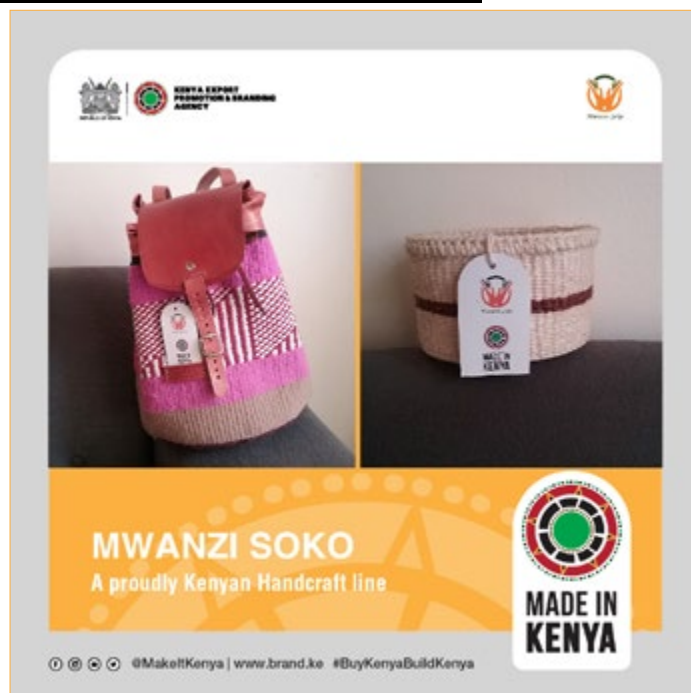
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# Editorial

Dear Reader,

Textiles play an important role in our economy and society. Apart from creating thousands of jobs, textiles form part of our culture by being an integral component of fashion. The Textiles and apparel industry is Kenya's second-largest manufacturing industry after food processing and contributes significantly to the country's export earnings.

This edition focuses on the textiles industry in Kenya, from the introduction of new cotton varieties, the innovations in the sector, success stories and well as consumer insights.

Kenya's textile industry has the potential to grow and become a key export earner. Each of us can support its growth by wearing locally-made outfits, a practise that KEPROBA has embraced.

*Enjoy!*

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## Dr Wilfred Marube, PhD

CEO KENYA EXPORT PROMOTION AND BRANDING AGENCY

The Textile Sector has experienced progressive growth over the years. During the period January -September 2021, textile and apparel accessories revenues grew by Ksh. 8 billion to Ksh. 33.7B in the period, with the Netherlands and the United States of America (USA) being Kenya's largest export markets. The textile sector is a significant component of Kenya's economy, due to its unique characteristics of being labour -intensive and linkages to other important sectors of the economy like agriculture.

The sector growth is anchored in the Integrated National Export Development and Promotion Strategy 2018, which seeks to develop and grow textile hubs. The textile and apparel, and leather and footwear sectors have been prioritized by the Government as enablers for industrialization, employment creation, exports development and economic empowerment agendas. It has also been prioritized in the Big Four Agenda and Kenya Industrial Transformation Program (KITP).

Kenya is one of 39 Sub-Saharan African countries that currently enjoy duty-free export status to USA for over 6,500 products through the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). AGOA, provides qualifying sub-Saharan African beneficiary countries

# FOREWORD

with non-reciprocal duty-free access to the USA market. Kenya is one of the largest exporters of apparel under this system with substantial world buyers, which has enhanced our competitiveness and diversified our markets.

Locally, the revival of Rivatex has been a major boost for the sector as it has created demand for locally produced cotton and created thousands of jobs. The introduction of Bacillus Thuringiensis cotton, Kenya's first genetically modified, insect-resistant cotton seeds, has been a game-changer for the textile sector. Currently, Kenya produces an average of 25,000 bales of cotton against a demand of 200,000 bales annually. The introduction of the genetically modified cotton variety is projected to bridge the production gap in the coming years by increasing output.

The Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA) has supported the sector by partnering with its key stakeholders including Business Membership Organizations (BMOs) like

Kenya Fashion Council, to maintain high production standards and create value added products that meet the global export market standards. Through KEPROBA's Product Development and Branding Programme, stakeholders have acquired various skills including market access, product development, packaging and branding that affect acceptability of their products in the export market. An integrated Marketing and Communication Strategy was recently developed, to increase the footprint of locally designed

and manufactured apparel, textiles, leather and accessories in the Kenyan market while inspiring Kenyans to Build Kenya by buying Kenyan apparel, textile, leather and accessories.

Finally, H.E President Uhuru Kenyatta is the sector's major Brand Ambassador supporting the locally Made in Kenya attires. President Kenyatta has on many occasions called upon Kenyans to support the Buy Kenya, Build Kenya Initiative by donning locally Made in Kenya designs on Fridays. Fashion Fridays give the local tailors and fashion designers a big boost as they create fashion pieces for the local market and beyond.

“Kenya produces an average of 25,000 bales of cotton against a demand of 200,000 bales annually.”



# TEXTILE SECTOR IN KENYA AT A GLANCE

By Josiah Mwangi

The sector has the ability to mitigate imports, save forex, create diverse and impactful jobs, boost Made in Kenya pride, earn forex, empower women as well as SMEs, grow cotton farming and eventually help do capacity building for KRA as the consumer market booms hence giving full return on investment in the sector to government of Kenya.

## Employment

47,000 workers employed on permanent basis within textile factories (Use cartoon image of someone sewing in a factory)

Kenya has opportunity to create 2.2 million jobs in 10 years and grow its market share in the United States to 5% by creating a competitive environment for the manufacturers.

70% of employees in the sector are women.



## Opportunities

- Contract manufacturing for global brands as they seek a manufacturing hub that offers end to end solutions
- Manufacture of PPE such as masks, face masks, coveralls, scrubs and shoe covers to meet the increase in local demand because of COVID-19.
- Growth of other industries such as packaging, design institutes, logistics, design institutes, and branding.

Source: Kenya Association of Manufacturers



## Export market

- Apparels is now the largest manufactured export from Kenya and it is the fourth largest export behind horticulture, coffee and tea. (Image showing Export happening)



## Branding as a driver of Kenya's promotion and marketing

*By Anthony Mugo*

**B**randing, or the assigning of a name, symbol, design or any other features that identify a company or services, has conventionally been a feature of commercial products and services. More recently, however, sectors that have traditionally been less bold about marketing themselves or their work such as non-governmental and non-profit organizations and even countries have begun taking branding as critical element of their outreach and marketing initiatives. These agencies and nations have adopted deliberate measures to set themselves apart visually, through messaging and imagery projected to the consuming public in order to enhance the appeal of products that they manufacture or even tourism offerings.

The aspiration for any brand, particularly for countries opting to take a creative and aggressive approach to marketing, is to have audiences, particularly potential consumers of those services, associating the organization or country with the ability to fulfill

their needs and self-interest. This is true of countries, when they need to present themselves favourite destinations for tourists or associate themselves with products and services that are already acknowledged as being superior or unique.

The packaging of Kenya as a brand renders itself well in this context. Fortunately, the country is literary spoilt for choice when it comes to positive attributes upon which it can ground its brand. Those that come to mind include sports, where Kenya's world-beating athletes have claimed a pride of place on the global market place. Another is tourism, with the Maasai Mara Game Reserve being recognized as the 8<sup>th</sup> wonder of the world in 2007 and subsequently as Africa's best game reserve due the annual wildebeest migration. In agriculture, the country's coffee and teas are in a class of their own.

When a systematic effort to brand Kenya as a country was mooted, the then Brand Kenya was set up and mandated to identify and refine key attributes of Kenya. The main aim then was to contribute positively to the image and reputation of the Nation in order to enhance the country's characteristics and create an authentic credible brand for the country that establishes Kenya's uniqueness in the global arena.

Areas upon which to build the brand were identified as athletics, culture, tourism, horticulture, information and communication technology and other aspects of the country's heritage. The slogan Magical Kenya emerged to give expression to Brand Kenya.

The Kenya Export and Branding Agency (KEPROBA) is building on this foundation set earlier by both Brand Kenya and the Kenya Export Promotion Council (EPC).



Established as a state corporation under the State Corporation Act Cap 446 following the merger between brand Kenya and the EPC, KEPROBA is mandated to implement export promotion and Kenya's branding initiatives in order to promote the export of the country's goods and services. It is with regard to its branding mandate that KEPROBA is looking to ensure all branding efforts conform with global standards, acknowledging the importance of establishing and keeping the Kenya brand promise.

With the country having so many options about the pathways it could follow to develop a brand that gains universal appeal, getting the branding process off the ground should be informed by tried and tested methodologies. A systematic process for creating, communicating and strengthening a brand constitutes for major phases. The first is to define how the country wants to be perceived. This seeks to answer the question about how we would like others to feel after they have visited and spent time in Kenya



or consumed some of its products or services.

This step is followed by organizing the country's offerings based on the brand promise. For example, presenting Kenya as a magical destination demands that

process that visitors go through to enter the country, move around the different attraction points and make transactions is as seamless as possible. After all, it is those experiencing the brand first hand who get to spread the word. Making sure that the initial customer experience meets the brand promise is therefore paramount.

The third important factor is communicating the brand. There are range of options about how a brand is experienced. For a country, national colours as presented on national symbols such as the flag, emblems and the Coat of Arms are an important reference points for branding. Brand expression can be through visual and audio means or most commonly, a combination of both. With the reality of near universal access to digital media, it is important that ways of harnessing communication opportunities presented by social media platforms and other mobile and internet-based media be tapped into to extend Brand Kenya's reach globally.

The fourth important consideration for

ensuring that a brand becomes entrenched and resilient is consistency. Elements like colours, images and slogans or even jingles, should be delivered consistently. Visitors should interact with a consistent brand character and different points throughout their stay in the country.

The same principles outlined above should apply when it comes to Kenya's products and services. Products should be packaged to global standards while services should be offered not only with a genuine smile but with consistency and adherence to set standards.

In addition to ensuring that the four main steps of branding are followed to come up with an enduring brand, it is important to ensure that the brand has universal appeal across demographics, cultural backgrounds and universal norms. As such, it is important that brand concepts be pre-tested with sampled audiences, market segments and nationalities. It is quite possible for teams to develop brand elements that resonate well with them but quite another to ensure that they will be perceived similarly by those who interact with them and who are in fact the most important targets for ongoing branding initiatives for Kenya.

It should be borne in mind that a branding process seeks to communicate a promise that motivates people, countries and audiences to act in ways that help a country to achieve its objectives of tapping into international markets. These range from increasing the number of people visiting the country as tourists or those buying its products or services to those watching Kenyan athletes in the international arena. The success of a brand must be closely tied with other success metrics including bottom lines of Kenyan manufacturing companies or targets of the Ministry of Tourism.

The writer is a communication consultant.

[ammugo2003@gmail.com](mailto:ammugo2003@gmail.com)



**KENYA EXPORT  
PROMOTION & BRANDING  
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# BUYING LOCAL GARMENTS..

*By Moses Muchoki*

**K**enyans' oneness is best revealed in the attire we wear. Our attire celebrates our diverse ways of life from our homes, workplaces to our religious and political leanings.

From the halls of parliament to the jubilations of a traditional wedding - the voice of our age-old roots echoes resoundingly through our choice of apparel. And as apparels become a sense of individual identity, Kenyans are fast embracing fierce competition to redefine their unique identity via clothes they don.

And there lies the gem that fuels the textile industry as only Kenyans understand Kenyans' way of life and choice of clothing. What does it really mean to buy local? What is the essence of the Kenyan fashion brand?

According to Fashion Practice, a design and creative process journal, about 55 percent of local fashion traders have no reason to smile as they face stiff competition from imported second hand clothes and ready made clothes.

The silver lining comes when special occasions demand uniquely made attire that only a one-on-one fashion designer-client meet can satiate the need.

According to Carol Gathoni, lead designer and tailor at Caronkara Designs, there is a gap for the conscious buyer seeking unique and Kenya-made items within the market awash with lowly-priced imports.

"If you buy a mass-produced imported item, the chances are everybody else will wear it to the same occasion you are going. That means you lose the chance for the special attention that goes with being unique hence a 'show-stopper'. With locally made products, customers get quality products that are not only unique but fit various occasions as opposed to the mass-produced imports," she says.



*Carol Gathoni, lead designer and tailor at Caronkara Designs*

Mr Maxwell Munene, who recently graduated from the University of Nairobi with a bachelor's degree in design(fashion and arts), adds that quality comes with a price and discerning Kenyans are ready to pay for it.

"Imported clothing are good to look at but wear off fast as opposed to Kenya-made products as the tailors know selling a poor quality attire could see them lose a client and a good quality product will yield a repeat buyer and a brand ambassador to their designs," he says.

In an interview, Mr Munene who trades in Nairobi and Meru under the 'Mafundi' brand says, he stocks the lowly priced imported suits and shirts while offering clients the locally designed suits and shirts that suit various occasions.

Kenya Association of Manufacturers chief executive Phyllis Wakiaga believes donning locally made attire is not only a sense of patriotism but boosts her personal confidence when she is attending C suite meetings within Kenya and abroad.

"I own up to being Kenyan and I readily attest to the quality of products that local fashion designers make. A lot of diaspora Kenyans order for clothes from Kenya even for their special occasions," she adds.

Under the 'Buy Kenya, Build Kenya' campaign spearheaded by the president in the past years, Kenya made attire continues to take centre-stage with politicians and civil servants discarding suits and ties in favour of the coloured shirts as well as gorgeous dresses and skirt suits.

Civil servants' mode of dressing has also been re-aligned with a directive allowing them to don casual Kenya made wear on Fridays.

Mr Munene welcomes revival of the cotton sector in Kenya saying Kenya-based factories are best placed to produce the kind of materials that suit 'Kenya-centric' occasions.

While foreign influences have crept into the local fashion industry and design hurting the local fashion industry, Kenya's fashion industry is far from dead owing to local tastes, especially religious and political leanings that inform various 'statements' that individuals want to make.

Various religious denominations have chosen to have unique attire like long coats and long dresses with pleats while others prefer a turban with a flowing white robe.

In politics, colours speak different preferences that Kenyans have and that means big business for local tailors that work overtime to meet tight deadlines that come as a result of rising demand for certain type of clothes.

"It's the vibrancy and the rich colors which characterise the culture and tradition of Africa in general. By incorporating this concept, Kenyan brands and apparel in fashion get to tell the African story." Ms Gathoni adds.

According to Ms Wakiaga, locally made attire is much better than imported attire since homegrown products address our unique tastes as compared to foreign made products that are just made for 'quick cash'.

She asserts that enticement towards local brands in fashion is directly connected to the idea of the Kenyan Identity. So, buying local is the equivalent of penning down your contribution to the Kenyan chapter of the African story.

For Mr Munene, hoodies, branded t-shirts, multi-coloured Kenyan shorts as well as snoodies are much sought after by the youth.

This keeps his team of five tailors and three salesmen busy as youths in universities and colleges prefer unique locally attire that suits their tastes.

To further deepen his reach in Kenya and beyond, Mr Munene is working on a virtual marketplace where local designers will have a chance to promote their wares to a wider audience seeking 'Kenya' made produce.

"A request I receive all the time is for clothing that speak for a Kenyan audience. I make hoodies that are decorated with the Kenyan flag colours, or images of traditional cooking items or images of a traditional hut or a traditional woman carrying a gourd," he says.



Maxwell Munene, a University of Nairobi with a bachelor's degree in design(fashion and arts) dones one of his shirts.



## INTERVIEWS BY

Nicholas Mundia



**KEBBY MWANGI, 20,**  
College student

**Q:**  
*Tell me about your personal fashion style. What words would you use to describe your style?*

**A:**  
Simple and stylish

**Q:**  
*How does your style fit into your lifestyle?*

**A:**  
Satisfying is the word. Makes me feel confident and that's why I do it.

**Q:**  
*What are you currently wearing? What items do you repeatedly wear?*

**A:**  
You will find me wearing a t-shirt most of the time and shorts, either khaki or cotton shorts.  
For my shoes I love low key sneakers, specifically white or black color.

**Q:**  
*How do you keep up with fashion trends and why? Social media/ Magazines?*

**A:**  
I don't think I follow so many fashion trends but if I do I get them from social media, Instagram mostly. Most times I just go shopping and whatever is cute and I like it, I'll probably get it for myself.

**Q:**  
*Tell me about any celebrity/ personality that you look up to for fashion trends? Who inspires you, and why? (Locally/internationally)*

**A:**  
Lewis Hamilton (F1 champion) is my favorite when it comes to fashion trends.

**Q:**  
*Where do you buy your clothes? Any favorite stores? What are the first items you gravitate toward when clothes shopping? What budget do you usually work with?*

**A:**  
I buy clothes from shopping malls and also second hand clothes which I can get from the streets.

**Q:**  
*Are you aware of any Kenyan clothing brands? If yes, any favorites?*

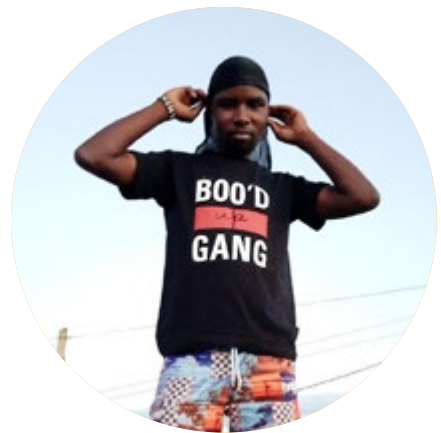
**A:**  
I don't follow them as much but I love what Denri is doing .

**Q:**  
*Are you aware of the Buy Kenya Build Kenya initiative to support local brands? Are you a huge supporter of local clothing brands?*

**A:**  
I am not.

**Q:**  
*What future trends do you expect in the Kenyan fashion industry?*

**A:**  
Kenya would be more accepting, there's no clothes when it comes to gender, you can rock what you want if that's how you feel confident in, and that's how we grow.



**MARVIN WERU, 25,**  
IT assistant

**Q:**  
*Tell me about your personal fashion style. What words would you use to describe your style?*

**A:**  
Simple and comfortable

**Q:**

*How does your style fit into your lifestyle?*

**A:**

I like a casual look like something easy to jump into or out of. I like to think of basic jeans and t-shirts, with this I won't have to take a lot of time into deciding what I want to wear and in most instances it fits with any occasion I go to.

**Q:**

*What are you currently wearing? What items do you repeatedly wear?*

**A:**

Currently I am wearing a khaki trouser and a t-shirt. Weekdays am either on khakis or jeans but on weekends shorts and sweatpants.

**Q:**

*How do you keep up with fashion trends and why? Social media/ Magazines?*

**A:**

Social Media plays a big role, with different celebrities wearing cool or attractive clothes, you kinda want to also buy, to either look like them or to have that specific clothing.

**Q:**

*Tell me about any celebrity/personality that you look up to for fashion trends? Who inspires you, and why? (Locally/ internationally)*

**A:**

I really like Patoranking fashion because for one he is tall like me and whatever he wears fits him well and I am always yearning to try some of his clothes.

**Q:**

*Where do you buy your clothes? Any favorite stores? What are the first items you gravitate toward when clothes shopping? What budget do you usually work with?*

**A:**

I don't have a specific place where I buy clothes, I usually prefer buying either in mitumbas or boutiques, so that I can be able to fit and also to be able to choose physically.

**Q:**

*Are you aware of any Kenyan clothing brands? If yes, any favorites?*

**A:**

I know of Vazzi and Be Knit by Njugush but my favorite one had to be Afrivazi.

**Q:**

*Are you aware of the Buy Kenya Build Kenya initiative to support local brands? Are you a huge supporter of local clothing brands?*

**A:**

Honestly speaking am aware of the initiative but am not a supporter of any local clothing brand maybe it's because of the high cost of clothing

**Q:**

*What future trends do you expect in the Kenyan fashion industry?*

**A:**

I believe history repeats itself and as a result the fashion trends of the 80's and 99's will be revived.



**JOHNMARK ODOYO, 26,**

Book Publisher

**Q:**

*Tell me about your personal fashion style. What words would you use to describe your style?*

**A:**

I dress casual smart, with leather boots either flat or raised types. For office wear, shirts are collarless types (Chinese) and trousers are both soft and hard khakis with an addition of long coats. For outdoor, I mostly wear long sleeved t-shirts with jackets. Khakis remain even for outdoors.

**Q:**

*How does your style fit into your lifestyle?*

**A:**

It makes my personality come alive. Wearing other types of fashion style like collar shirts either long or short sleeved does not complement my fashion outlook well. I need something that compliments my personality



**Q:**

*What are you currently wearing?  
What items do you repeatedly wear?*

**A:**

A blue soft khaki trousers, a checked collarless shirt and official burgundy collarless blazer with grey flat leather shoes.

**Q:**

*How do you keep up with fashion trends and why? Social media/ Magazines?*

**A:**

Both but mostly social media since it's readily available at a touch of a button. I also rely on fashion styles I watch on tv or movies of how actors are dressed.

**Q:**

*Tell me about any celebrity/personality that you look up to for fashion trends? Who inspires you, and why? (Locally/ internationally)*

**A:**

Samuel L Jackson – his fashion style complements his personality. It brings out his authority figure, and class without wearing the proverbial suit and tie.

**Q:**

*Where do you buy your clothes? Any favorite stores? What are the first items you gravitate toward when clothes shopping? What budget do you usually work with?*

**A:**

I have no favorite stores since most of my fashion style is not sold at one

place. I buy it anywhere. Be it at second hand places like Gikomba or Think twice stores or sometimes even at the mall or supermarkets whenever I find any desirable clothes that fit my fashion sense. I would prefer to have one place that would sell most of the clothes I prefer. For the budget, I don't have a specific figure. I decide the type of clothes I lack or need to add to my collection then set a rough budget before I go out to buy. This month could be 5,000 and next month could be 1000. All depends on my needs and wants.

**Q:**

*Are you aware of any Kenyan clothing brands? If yes, any favorites?*

**A:**

Not really. I'm only aware that some designers have been designing and making Ankara clothes though they are not my cup of tea.

**Q:**

*Are you aware of the Buy Kenya Build Kenya initiative to support local brands? Are you a huge supporter of local clothing brands?*

I'm aware of the initiative to support local brands but I'm not a huge supporter since most of the designs are still not top-notch and most of the clothing being sold are too expensive for a common mwananchi. If the brands can be made to be really appealing, good quality and affordable pricing, then I'll be all in.

**Q:**

*What future trends do you expect in the Kenyan fashion industry?*

**A:**

African wear. I'm expecting us to buy into the idea of African wear of the old days and not gear so much into the western fashion sense. We only have to make it accommodate the century we are living in to fit into the millennials.



**WANJIRU KAMOTHO, 26,**  
Communication Consultant

**Q:**

*Tell me about your personal fashion style. What words would you use to describe your style?*

**A:**

Simple, comfortable, elegant. I go for pieces that are comfortable and simple to put together aiming at an elegant look at the end. I also go easy on accessories, aiming for functional pieces that complement my look.

**Q:**

*How does your style fit into your lifestyle?*

**A:**

I like to keep things simple and comfortable. I want to be sure that if a child wants to play, I can play with them, if an elderly person wants me to help them cross the road, I can do that comfortably, if my friend is ill and needs urgent medical care, I can rush them to the hospital without worrying about how I am dressed. I enjoy the simple things in life and I like to make sure that I am comfortable as I do that.

**Q:**

*What are you currently wearing?  
What items do you repeatedly wear?*

**A:**

I am currently wearing a shift dress. I repeatedly wear dresses. I love wrap dresses and shift dresses. I find them easy to wear, they bring out the best in my body shape and I find them stylish enough to wear to the office and social functions.

**Q:**

*How do you keep up with fashion trends and why? Social media/ Magazines?*

I use Instagram and Pinterest. With Instagram, I am able to easily find and purchase unique cost-friendly dresses especially in thrift shops. I love Pinterest as I can easily find unique designs for my kitenge and Ankara pieces.

**Q:**

*Tell me about any celebrity/ personality that you look up to for fashion trends? Who inspires you, and why? (Locally/internationally)*

**A:**

I find Michelle Obama's style well put together. She can rock an Ankara piece or a simple dress and still look fantastic. I love how she communicates elegance and power in her style.

**Q:**

*Where do you buy your clothes?  
Any favorite stores? What are the first items you gravitate toward when clothes shopping? What budget do you usually work with?*

**A:**

I shop on Instagram- Mustard Dresses page- 80% of my wardrobe is from her. Whenever she has new stock, she sends me images of dresses I might love. I love shift and wrap dresses and they are often my first pick while shopping. I also do a lot of custom made Kitenge dresses for events and church. I have a tailor who does the stitching and I get my kitenges from Isebania. While I do not have a preset budget for clothes shopping, I tend to buy 2-3 pieces every month. I find it easy to shop intentionally to avoid buying pieces I don't need.

**Q:**

*Are you aware of any Kenyan clothing brands? If yes, any favorites?*

**A:**

Yes I do. I love VIVO and how their pieces and style are perfect for the modern Kenyan woman. I am saving up for a few pieces for my birthday ☐

**Q:**

*Are you aware of the Buy Kenya Build Kenya initiative to support local brands? Are you a huge supporter of local clothing brands?*

**A:**

Yes, I am aware of the Buy Kenya Build Kenya initiative. I am not intentional in supporting local clothing brands. That should be a resolution going forward no?

**Q:**

*What future trends do you expect in the Kenyan fashion industry?*

**A:**

There is the advent of Ankara/kitenge pieces in our fashion industry. In future, We may wear more Ankara and kitenge pieces to the office.







### CIRU MURIUKI, IN HER 30S.

BBC senior presenter and broadcast journalist.

**Q:**

*Tell me about your personal fashion style. What words would you use to describe your style?*

**A:**

My style is pretty minimalist. I like to have monochromatic pieces that I can mix and match, and I make my style statements with my accessories like my bags and shoes, and even my eyewear.

**Q:**

*How does your style fit into your lifestyle?*

**A:**

It fits in perfectly. Luckily, we are not required to dress formally at my job, and there is also a fair amount of travel required. So a minimalist style really works with my on the go life.

**Q:**

*What are you currently wearing? What items do you repeatedly wear?*

**A:**

Well, right now, I am dabbling in a

biker chic look. Think Nirvana meets the glam rock scene of the 90s. A current staple is a couple of leather jackets in black and grey, vests and leggings, graphic tees and biker boots.

**Q:**

*How do you keep up with fashion trends and why? Social media/ Magazines?*

**A:**

I really don't try keeping up with trends. I just wear what feels good for me.

**Q:**

*Tell me about any celebrity/personality that you look up to for fashion trends? Who inspires you, and why? (Locally/ internationally)*

**A:**

I love stars who are unconventional in their style. I'm currently loving Lil Nas X's gender-bending aesthetic. In terms of minimalist, clean lines, I love Victoria Beckham's style. She serves modern-day Jackie Onassis and I LIVE.

**Q:**

*Where do you buy your clothes? Any favourite stores? What are the first items you gravitate toward when clothes shopping? What budget do you usually work with?*

**A:**

I love Vivo and Siri Studio for pieces that bring me from the work day to the evening. Zia Africa and Bloom also have pieces I can mix and match. Also I'm obsessed with Michael Soi

Studio bags...I own a couple of those. I also do a fair amount of thrifting.



**Q:**

*Are you aware of any Kenyan clothing brands? If yes, any favorites?*

**A:**

As above J as well as Shop New Level and Sipdada and African Yuva.

**Q:**

*Are you aware of the Buy Kenya Build Kenya initiative to support local brands? Are you a huge supporter of local clothing brands?*

**A:**

I love seeing Kenyan designers striking out on their own and creating delicious pieces. So the answer to that is a resounding YES.

**Q:**

*What future trends do you expect in the Kenyan fashion industry?*

**A:**

I predict a lot more people going into the menswear side of things, creating unique, well-tailored pieces. I also see the scene slowly convening around a look that will soon be as Kenyan as Ketepa and I cannot wait.



**ORAY DAVID**

**Q:**

*Tell me about your personal fashion style. What words would you use to describe your style?*

**A:**

I can describe my style as eclectic, I wear everything that works for me, which is very important especially if you are on a style journey!

**Q:**

*How does your style fit into your lifestyle?*

**A:**

I see myself as someone who is not constrained by the walls of fashion

**Q:**

*What are you currently wearing?  
What items do you repeatedly wear?*

**A:**

Currently I'm into official wears and accessories like watches and designer perfumes

**Q:**

*How do you keep up with fashion trends and why? Social media/ Magazines?*

**A:**

I find lots of trends on social media, especially intstagram where I can scroll through fashion suggestions

**Q:**

*Tell me about any celebrity/personality that you look up to for fashion trends? Who inspires you, and why? (Locally/ internationally)*

**A:**

I'm not into following celebrities for fashion trends. I rely on what strikes my attention. There are plenty of individuals around us who are quite fashionable

**Q:**

*Where do you buy your clothes? Any favorite stores? What are the first items you gravitate toward when clothes shopping? What budget do you usually work with?*

**A:**

I don't have a specific store where I go shopping and I work with what I can afford.

**Q:**

*Are you aware of any Kenyan clothing brands? If yes, any favorites?*

**A:**

Yes. I know of Kaveke by John Kaveke. He's my favorite for his Gentleman Brand suits

**Q:**

*Are you aware of the Buy Kenya Build Kenya initiative to support local brands? Are you a huge supporter of local clothing brands?*

**A:**

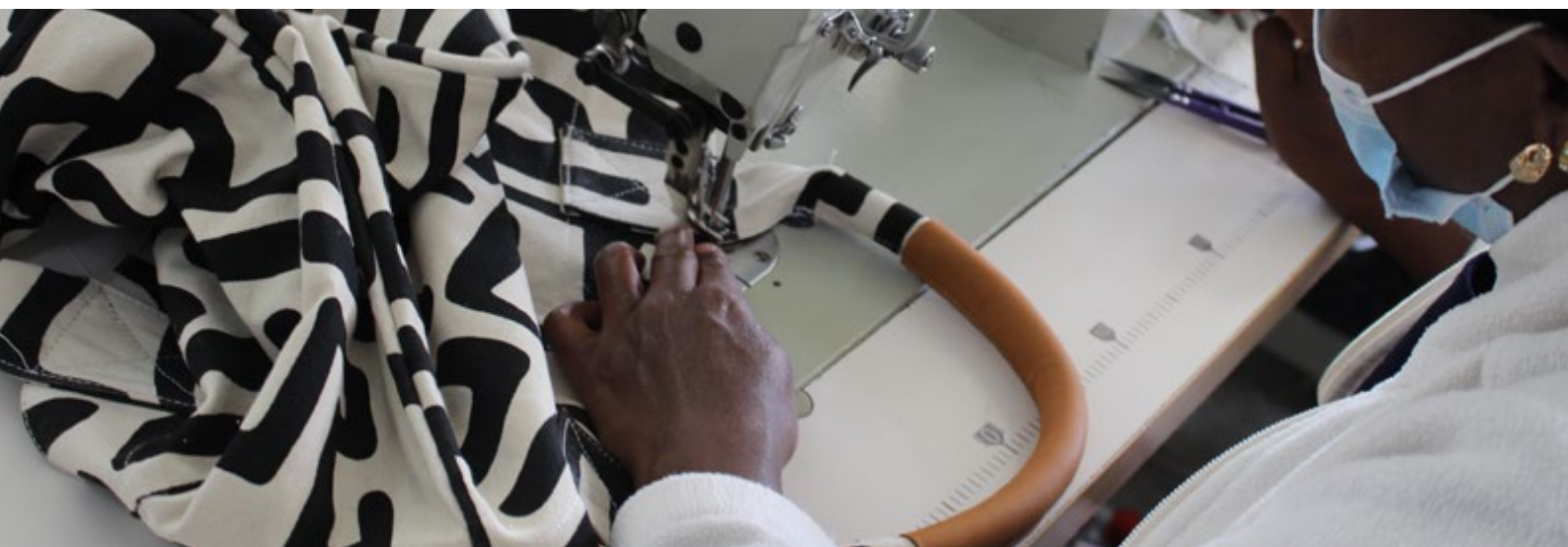
Yes. I have tried almost 10 local-designs; not only in clothesline but also accessories.

**Q:**

*What future trends do you expect in the Kenyan fashion industry?*

**A:**

Exotic uptake in designs.





# ‘New Standards Gazetted to Stem Cotton Sub-sector Cartels’

By James Kariuki



**Dr Agnes Mwatu**

*Manager Leather and Textiles department,*

**K**enya has introduced measures to ensure the revived cotton sub sector does not backslide to its dark days and farmers reap maximum benefits. The centrepiece of these measures is ensuring removal of unscrupulous middlemen.

This follows gazettelement of the 2019 Cotton Industry-Code of Practice(COP) that lays down strict regulations on handling various processes from site selection, land preparation, production, harvesting and postharvest management, ginning, lint classing, spinning, seed processing, fabric and finished products manufacture, transportation as well as marketing of cotton.

Kenya Bureau of Standards Manager in charge of Leather and Textiles department,

Dr Agnes Mwatu says the regulations provide safeguards at every stage and defines roles to be played by stakeholders at every level.

“Cotton seed nurseries, growers, factory owners, warehouse operators, export or import marketers must adhere to the laid down procedures at all times. Cotton regime should ensure farmers benefit from their sweat while operations across the entire value chain support improvement of quality of Kenya cotton ”she said.

Speaking to Export Magazine, Dr Mwatu said anyone establishing a cotton production industry must adhere to best practices as set out in the Cotton Industry Code of practice.

Implementation of the standard and adherence to the best practices gives farmers a foolproof mechanism that ensures cotton farming is handled in the most professional way. This enables farmers to reap handsome returns from their labour and investments rewarded via a merit based system,”she said.

Dr Mwatu said Kenya’s Textile sector, including cotton sub-sector is set for a major revival since there are over 500 developed standards to be observed at various stages in the Textile value chain.

“Kenya observes its approved standards for all cotton products and it is up to Quality Assurance & Inspection Department, market surveillance and other relevant

Government authorities to check all dealings, whether at the export or import level to ensure no substandard products are allowed into any market,”she said.

Dr Mwatu said the COP guidelines are aimed at improving the quality of cotton produced in the country enabling users of locally made fabrics to know that they are getting value for their money and to assure the exporters of quality cotton sourced and processed locally. The guidelines opens up the sub-sector to new investments across the cotton value chain from cotton seed nursery operators, ginnery, transporters, warehouse operators, factory establishment and operations as well as marketing.

“Our work as KEBS is to maintain standards at all levels. Application of standards ensures consumers and other stakeholders are not exploited by having products that are not consistently produced, and as result do not meet set specifications that textile manufacturers promised to produce, “she said.

The COP opens a transparent regime that ensures cotton is not only handled with care, but is also monitored from the farm during planting, harvesting, ginning, lint classing, spinning, seed milling, fabric and finished products manufacturer as well as transportation and marketing.

Dr. Mwatu said textile standards also aim at enabling cotton-made products from Kenya to access other markets regionally and abroad. The same standards apply to textile importers whose products must be tested on entry ensuring a fair playing ground for all. Stakeholders, she said, are at liberty to engage KEBS for development



of new standards for various textile products before they are introduced into the Kenya market.

Kenya first formulated its own textile standards in 1977 that were later reviewed in 1979 which introduced testing of samples within KEBS laboratories. “Maintaining the Kenya Standards safeguards our health, promotes safety and helps maintain product quality. Manufacturers and importers must adhere to

approved standards or else we risk having undercutting practices within the market,” she adds.

Planting materials approved by the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) are used and only mature cotton bolls should be harvested, says the COP. This ensures higher grades and farmers get better returns. All purchases of cotton seedlings are from a registered commercial nursery operator whose facility has been inspected by a county inspector to avoid instances where some unscrupulous individuals abet theft of cotton seedlings from rival farms for onward sales to farmers. All farmers are also encouraged to sell their produce at designated ginneries within the areas unless otherwise stated so as to avoid theft of cotton bolls and cotton lint in one county and the same transported to other counties for sale.

“Kenya has specific standards for Kikoi and Maasai Shukas, locally produced products, and standards have been developed for those that did not have. This is how as KEBS are able to improve the locally produced cotton goods and textile value chain. With emergence of COVID-19 pandemic, KEBS moved fast to develop standards for masks and other PPEs that were available to local textile factories for free, as a commitment to supporting innovation” she said.







## Impact of Textile, Fashion, Apparel and Accessories on Kenya's Economy.

*By James Kariuki*

One year after commercial farming of the genetically modified cotton (Bt cotton) was approved, Kenya has reported a 16 percent rise in cotton production amid a drastic drop in land under cotton farming by 45 percent.

According to the just-released Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) 2020 Cotton Production Report, distribution of 24 tons of Bt cotton seeds to 1,000 farmers in 23 counties fueled the rise in production to 3,495 tons. "Last year, most of the farmers were apprehensive of using the new Bt cotton seeds fearing its yields would be low. Some counties also suffered poor weather with Nyanza, Kenya's cotton hub reporting massive floods in highly potential

areas," adds the MOA annual report.

Bt Cotton yields between 75 to 100 cotton bolls compared to the traditionally applied local cotton seed varieties that produce between 15 to 20 cotton bolls. The sharp rise in Bt Cotton harvests has elicited new demand for Bt cotton seeds among small growers with the government hiring a firm to locally produce Bt Cotton seeds, currently being imported from India.

Kenya Agricultural Research and Livestock Organisation, lead GM cotton scientist, Dr Charles Waturu told Export Magazine that Bt cotton was safe for use and that it had no negative side effects. "Adoption of the genetically-modified variety with proven ability to resist the destructive African Boll worm will lower the cost of production by up to 40 percent. This breakthrough is a result of 18 years of research and trials of Bt Cotton on Kenyan soil," said Dr Waturu.

Demand for quality cotton lint by Eldoret-based Rivatex and Kitui County Government's cotton manufacturing firm (Kicotec), has re-ignited interest among

farmers, akin to the 80s when self help groups oversaw production at farm level, ginnery management to marketing.

The 'Buy Kenya Build Kenya' decree has encouraged local state agencies to locally source for apparels thereby creating a ripple effect across the cotton value chain. Among state agencies who placed orders with Rivatex, include the National Police Service, County hospitals, Kenya Power (KP), and Geothermal Development Company (GDC) while Kicotec has been producing PPEs, masks, uniforms for county governments as well as state agencies.

Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) chief executive Phyllis Wakiaga hailed gains made in the cotton sub-sector - from state approval of commercial farming of the high yielding Bt Cotton to the revival of Rivatex.

"Monetary support from the government remains quite low, energy costs are still high while incentives for exports should be increased to attract more investments in

setting up of export-bound factories within industrial zones,"she said.

"President Uhuru Kenyatta is the main promoter and brand ambassador of 'Made in Kenya', through his famous shirts that are locally made. Civil servants have also been encouraged to don Kenyan made clothes every Friday while various religious sects have taken to mooted their own designs to champion their cause,"she adds.



Social Media poster by KEPROBA encouraging its' audience to wear made in Kenya attires on Fridays.

According to the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPR), cotton farming which employed about 100,000 Kenyans in the early 80s, could

soon employ over 500,000 Kenyans while attracting investments worth Sh2 trillion in the coming years.

MOA says Kenya has been producing a paltry 25,000 bales of cotton largely blamed on use of poor cotton seeds and lack of adequate farm inputs compared to the expected 700,000 bales annual production. As quality and varieties of textiles made locally increase, an untapped market exists at the export processing zones where 24 cloth-making companies realised Sh 45 billion in sale of garments and apparel to America and Europe in 2019. The firms, now employing 49,500 Kenyans have traditionally sourced for textiles overseas that are then cut and made into various garments and apparels.

A survey by the Institute of Economic Affairs entitled, 'The State of Second-hand Clothes and Footwear Trade, Kenyans spent Sh197.5 billion in 2019 on clothes and footwear. 91.5 percent of households bought second-hand clothes worth Sh1,000 and below, while 8.5 percent purchased second-hand clothes worth Sh1,000 revealing an aspect of affordability.

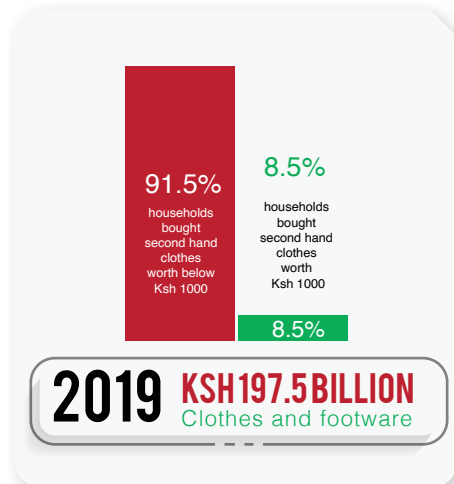
Due to scarcity of fashion designers and tailors in most rural areas, 79.2 percent of rural dwellers spent Sh1,000 on mitumba during the period, compared to 67.8 percent of households in urban areas.

74.5 percent of all households also bought new clothes priced below Sh1,000, while 25.5 percent bought new clothes costing above Sh1,000. Rivatex, which received Sh4 billion for its revival, with India government injecting Sh3 billion and Sh1 billion from the Kenyan government, has

modernised its plants and trained staff giving it ability to churn out 40,000 metres of finished fabric daily against a capacity to produce 100,000 metres daily.

Revival of the cotton industry has attracted unrivalled interest from county governments with Kitui County Government funding the establishment of a textile plant (Kicotec). Kirinyaga County Government is planning to revive Mwea Cotton Ginnery, Busia County Government (Muluanda ginnery), the Lake Basin Development Authority is working on constructing a cotton ginnery and oil press factory while Embu county government set aside Sh200 million for setting up a cotton ginnery on its land.

Hola Irrigation Scheme is set to become the largest Bt cotton farm, after a local self help group was facilitated to launch



a 1,000 acre cotton irrigation project with prospects of its expansion viable as returns from cotton lint sales grow.

The KAM chief executive said government goodwill had helped its customer-facing agencies to have the much-needed focus that promotes various economic activities at the grassroot level. Private investors,





says Ms Wakiaga, should also be actively engaged and facilitated to play an active role in the cotton sub-sector.

“As an Association, we kicked off a campaign dubbed, ‘Kenyan by Design’ to promote the uptake of local manufactured textiles and apparels. We dismantled stereotypes (briefcase companies) that peddled imported passed on as ‘locally’ made products. This has opened new markets for local manufacturers, mainly in performing arts and sports,” she adds.

KAM says Kenya must create an enabling environment for

businesses to thrive, especially having a predictable policy and regulatory regime, streamlining and unification of the multiple taxes at national and county government level in form of taxes, fees, levies and charges.

This, she says, impedes competitiveness of local products against imported products that enjoy hefty incentives.



*Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga joins KEPROBA staff, donned in ‘Made in Kenya’ attire, at the Kenya Pavillion during the ongoing Expo 2020 exhibition in Dubai.*

### Phyllis Wakiaga

Chief Executive Officer- Kenya Association of Manufacturers



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## IS THE TAILOR HEADING FOR EXTINCTION?

### Defining new roles for tailors and the rise of native wear

By Nicholas Mundia,

**A** tailor has since days of old been an expert who measures, cuts and stitches together garments.

Tailors have withstood various disruptions and are an ever-present figure in society since the 12th century when they made a name for themselves making undergarments during the trade of linen garments in Europe.

Enter colonisation and the race to clothe civilised societies in Kenya gained momentum with a new crop of self-taught tailors practising their trade outside rural shop windows under a makeshift shed, mostly made from cloth material wastes.

Small-time tailors mostly handled repair work with the occasional making of special occasion outfits and school uniforms but Kenya is witnessing emergence of a new crop of tailors (fashion designers) that define tastes based on age

groups, occasions and class status of their clients.

This has fueled customisation of well-fitting and attractive African themed outfits including shirts, shorts, pants, dresses, gowns and hats.

Well-to-do families choose fabrics of varied colours and quality to define their stature in society which has informed the rise of distinct and colorful African designs such as Ankara, Vitenge, Ekpe, Kente, Adire, and Kanga.

#### Neighbourhood tailors

Jane Adhiambo, a self-trained tailor in Langata, says her two decades-old witnessed spontaneous growth with the internet revolution that ushered in the social media era which see her interact with clients online as well as source for materials via online shops.

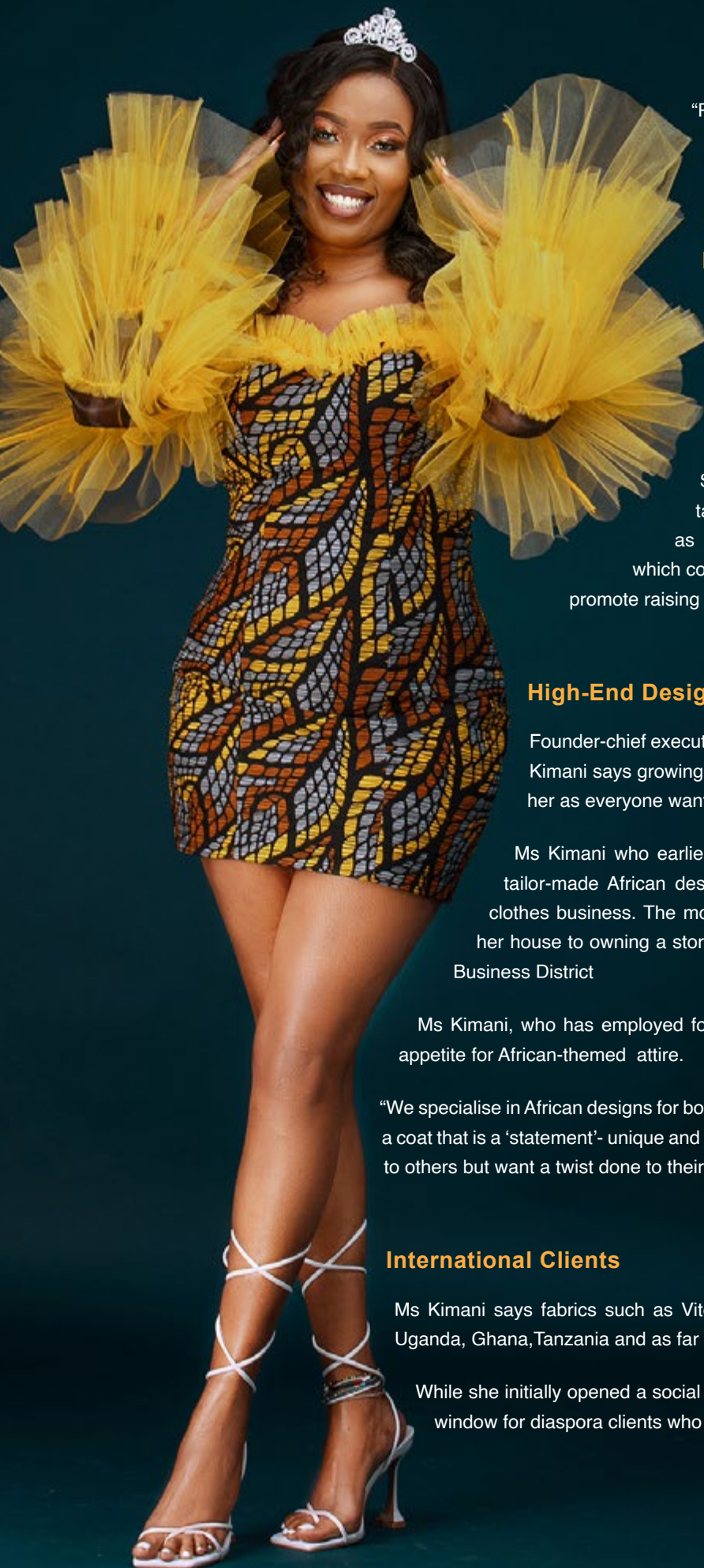
“There are so many sellers of fabrics on Facebook and this helps as customers’ tastes are varied. Once we agree on the price, we place the order, and it’s paid on delivery. I get most of my business orders via WhatsApp while payments are made via mobile money,” says the mother of three, as she makes finishing touches on a lady’s African attire.

#### Fabric Value Chain

D.R Congo and Tanzania is Kenya’s main source for high quality Africa fabrics that many have come to associate with.

She adds that the Covid 19 pandemic has had little effect on her business as she is constantly in touch with her customers on social media. On a very bad day, Ms Adhiambo takes home Sh1,000 with the school opening season and Christmas festivities earning her up to Sh10,000 daily.

She has also ventured into making uniforms for various companies and state agencies which sees her hire more workers to handle different assignments overnight to enable her meet the order deadlines.



“Police and Prison officers are some of my best customers due to their limited set of uniforms and therefore have to keep them in good condition.”

### Deficiency of basic skills

While she started off with a manual sewing machine and a charcoal iron box, which were handy in the past, Ms Adhiambo has evolved with the times investing in electrical sewing machines, hemming machines as well as cutting machines.

She feels in-service training would help her and other local tailors to manage changes being witnessed in the sector as well as prepare them for upscaling and partnerships which could assist them take up government contracts as well as promote raising of capital for expansion of their business.

### High-End Designs

Founder-chief executive of Lira Designs, an upmarket designer shop, Ms Ruth Kimani says growing patriotism among Kenyans has fueled new business for her as everyone wants their ‘local’ choice of attire to stand out in the crowd.

Ms Kimani who earlier worked as a public relations practitioner says selling tailor-made African designs saw her quit had day job to concentrate on her clothes business. The move paid off handsomely having started the business in her house to owning a store along Biashara Street in the heart of Nairobi’s Central Business District

Ms Kimani, who has employed four full time tailors, reiterates that there is an insatiable appetite for African-themed attire.

“We specialise in African designs for both men and women. Kenyans now want a shirt, a dress or a coat that is a ‘statement’- unique and well-fitting.No one wants to don apparels that are uniform to others but want a twist done to their suit,dress or shirt,”she adds

### International Clients

Ms Kimani says fabrics such as Vitenges, Ankara, and laces for ladies are imported from Uganda, Ghana,Tanzania and as far as China.

While she initially opened a social media account for her own private use, it opened a new window for diaspora clients who yearn for ‘Kenya’ designs.



“Most of my international customers view my work online through Instagram and Facebook and request for outfits. Others are referred by their friends and send money via mobile money with measurements sent via social media sites. Once we complete an assignment, we export the attire via courier companies,” she says.

One of the challenges that Ruth has experienced is pricing of her products that starts at Sh3500 to Sh20,000- a range that is not readily affordable for local customers. However, the prices are attractive to global customers.

“Diaspora customers say our prices are far much cheaper than prices of clothes

sold in their resident countries. We use high quality material for all products we make and this makes products to last four times longer than the cheap imports that are made of low quality material,” she adds.

### The Future of Tailoring

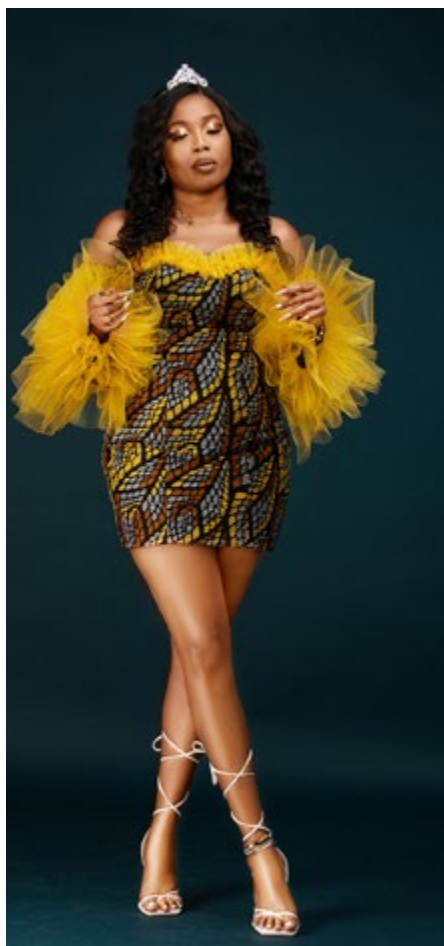
Ms Kimani adds that fashion designs have evolved and are leaning towards modern variations that celebrate African designs such as off-shoulder and mini dresses. Flowery shirts and dresses are also the norm.

“YouTube videos help us to get fresh inspirations and creativity. In addition,

new designs keep cropping up every day. As fashion designers, we have to continuously upgrade our skills.”

She adds availability of computerised equipment such as embroidery machines has helped local fashion designers to create unique products that speak of one’s ‘Kenyaness’. While in the past, one had to do embroidery by hand, using machines has made the process faster and efficient.

“Personal branding has become a major trend in the market right now. Native wear offers people a chance to be diverse, distinguish themselves wherever they go.”





# UP-CYCLING.... BIRTHING A GLOBAL BRAND JOURNEY

By Nicholas Mundia

*Pictures courtesy of Suave*

**T**he digital age has proved to be a lifeline for Kenyan clothing brands that have registered handsome returns from selling their products to diaspora Kenyans.

Brands such as Home\_254, Jok A Jok, Denri, El Afrique, Esko and many others that are now taking the world by storm with their unique items that define various tastes from a local perspective.

Kenya's fashion sector has been projected to reach US\$533m this year and a market volume of US\$795m by 2025(source) revealing the great potential of the sector.

Celebrities, media personalities and influencers have taken advantage of this situation to launch their clothing lines thereby expanding their revenue streams through merchandising of t-shirts, hoodies, sweat shirts and pants.

Suave Kenya has gone a step further to define Kenyan as the land of creativity and originality with their preferred choice of buying finished second-hand clothes that they rip and 'process' into new products.

Founder-owner Mohammed Awale says the journey of any product he makes starts at the flea market at Gikomba.

## How did you start your business?

I had this entrepreneurial idea that worked out when a cousin helped me start the brand while he diverted his bag making business to concentrate on shoe-making.

## Research has it that most Kenyan startups fail due to lack of enough funds among other factors. What were some of the initial challenges you faced and how did you maneuver ?

I did not have the necessary capital to even work with leather, my original idea and I opted to go for a raw material that is readily available as well as stylish, great looking and affordable.

That is how we ended up using second-hand clothes as a raw material for my products. It turned out to be the best approach as it would help people get rid of their old clothes and make something that could be reused.



**Suave Kenya designs various bags including messenger bags, backpacks, laptop sleeves, totes, and travel bags. These bags incorporate different materials such as tweed, wool, cotton, linen and denim. Where and how do you source your raw materials?**

I usually scout for this raw materials from Nairobi's Gikomba Market on a monthly basis. I have existing relationships with traders at the market who sell me their 'dead stock' at extremely low prices-which includes oversized jeans or items with defects that don't sell.

On a monthly basis, I am able to purchase on average 400 to 500 pieces of stock. This costs me roughly Sh 200 to Sh500 per item depending on the quality of the material.

A fun fact about my designs is that I do not use the same design twice which my clients have come to appreciate and this has led to the success of the brand. They are also a reflection of my style.

## After buying your raw materials, what happens next?

I have them sorted out and then cleaned. Denim is always our first choice but we are constantly experimenting with an array of fabrics. From silk shirts to leather jackets, if it's interesting enough, we'll definitely find a use for it.

The next stage is preparation, ripping and cutting. The aim is to creatively get the most out of the former (article of clothing).

This is then stitched and assembled into

new parts for the planned new products. This entire process is overseen by my dedicated team of 10 tailors.

### How many bags can your team produce at a time?

On average, we can produce at least 30 pieces depending on the client requests.



### In terms of marketing, what avenues has Suave Kenya invested in?

Suave Kenya concentrates on being visible on social media and fashion websites. I recall that in 2018, thanks to a Facebook video post by an online brand went attracting lots of traffic to my website and social media pages.

### What are your key markets?

Our key markets are Kenya, US and Europe.

We have been also lucky enough to have worked with local corporate companies such as Google, HMD Global and Hayat Kimya.

Rather than wait for orders, we make the bags and post what's available online. The clients choose what they want and upon payment, we ship the bags to them via international courier services,

which takes roughly three to five days worldwide.

### As a business, what are some of the lessons you learnt along the way?

Success takes time. I thought that consumers would immediately embrace my brand. I did not expect the ups and downs that came with building a business. There were months that I could not pay my bills and I had to realign my way of working.

### What challenges do you face as a Kenyan SME?

With the ongoing pandemic, the market has become quite unstable for us as a business. Most of our clients and constant partners have been greatly affected. This is in addition to some of our people not travelling or going out as much, which our products tend to address.

Being a startup, the lack of market access is also another challenge we continue to face. We hope to expand our business to bigger markets, post COVID.

However, we remain faithful that things will get better in the next year.

### Where do you Suave Kenya in the next five years?

We aspire to be a global brand - a Kenyan brand made for the world.

### Upcycling....births a global brand Journey

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## Role of Media in the Buy Kenya Build Kenya policy

*By Edgar Nyandong*

**‘Mitumba’.** This is a phrase that every Kenyan understands. Many Kenyans reading this article are probably wearing one right now. Several Kenyan YouTube content creators have gone further to make them popular through their “Gikomba Haul” or “Toi Market Haul” videos.

‘Mitumba’ is a Swahili term that literally means “bundles”. It refers to bundles of used clothing wrapped in plastic packages, mainly donated by people from western countries. These second-hand clothes have dominated Kenya’s apparel industry for years, and led to a hit on locally manufactured clothing.

The government has been keen to promote the local textile industry by discouraging importation of second hand clothes. It has also been working towards the complete revival of the country’s major textile factories in a Sh1 Billion plan including Kicomi in Kisumu, Rivatex in Eldoret and Mount Kenya Textiles in Nanyuki which it contends will generate close to 7,000 direct jobs and engage upto 1.3 million cotton farmers.

In 2015, President Uhuru Kenyatta gave a directive that all state agencies should reserve 40 percent of their procurement budget for purchase of locally produced goods and services. This led to the development of the Buy Kenya Build Kenya Strategy in 2017 which seeks to encourage Kenyans to prefer Kenyan goods and services as a way of supporting the country’s economy, while also boosting the revenue of domestic manufacturers. The Ministry of Industrialization, Trade and Enterprise Development has gone further to develop a list of 330 goods that government agencies must procure as part of the country’s local content policy.

To achieve increased acceptance of locally made apparel, the media remains a critical partner in helping the local textile industry to potentially achieve local content loyalty among

Kenyans. It is possible that many Kenyans still do not know what the Build Kenya Buy Kenya policy portends, and the media can help in highlighting the Government’s efforts aimed at creating an enabling environment for local manufacturers.

In an address to small and medium entrepreneurs during the 2021 SMEs Conference and Expo in Nairobi, Cabinet Secretary for Industrialization, Trade and Enterprise Development Betty Maina told the business forum that the Buy Kenya Build Kenya Policy has been formulated to address the issue of access to markets for local manufacturers, and provides an opportunity for industries to scale up production to eventually increase their efficiency and expand into regional and international markets.

Through sustained advocacy, Kenya’s textile industry is able to share the right information around the quality of the local goods which have often been misconstrued to be of inferior standards compared to the imports. This will enable the expansion to the regional and international markets if quality is guaranteed.

With the constant introduction of new fashion trends in the world arena, where fashion enthusiasts tend to copy the styles of their idols on the screens, we have to showcase what we have locally. The media can help in doing this by featuring more of the local fashion industry players and their designs.



Kenyan fashion designers have been displaying exemplary outfits in the local and international fashion arena. We have demonstrated that our apparel industry can compete at the global stage. Evelyn Akinyi Odongo of MEFA Creation, Ann McCreath of KikoRomeo, Nick Ondu of Ankara Vintage and Faith Migwi of Manciny Designs are just a handful of Kenyan designers that have brought regional and international focus to Kenya's apparel and fashion industry. By leveraging the media, a lot more of the Kenyan-made products will be known by Kenyans who can be encouraged to buy local.

President Kenyatta has led the way by wearing locally made colourful shirts that have caught the eyes of Kenyans and the media. The kind of media focus and coverage that the President's beautifully designed and stitched shirts have garnered is good for the local industry because it provides exposure to what local designers and tailors can do and demonstrates the level to which our apparel industry is growing.

The Buy Kenya Build Kenya strategy wishes to address consumer ignorance

on what is locally made by making them aware that when they buy locally produced goods and services, they contribute towards Kenya's economic growth, help prevent job losses and create job opportunities. Through the help of the media, the government can build attention to the proposed special shops for local products in selected outlets, the Buy Kenya Build Kenya business forums, summits, expos and thematic events, and address the negative mind set and stigma about Kenyan products.

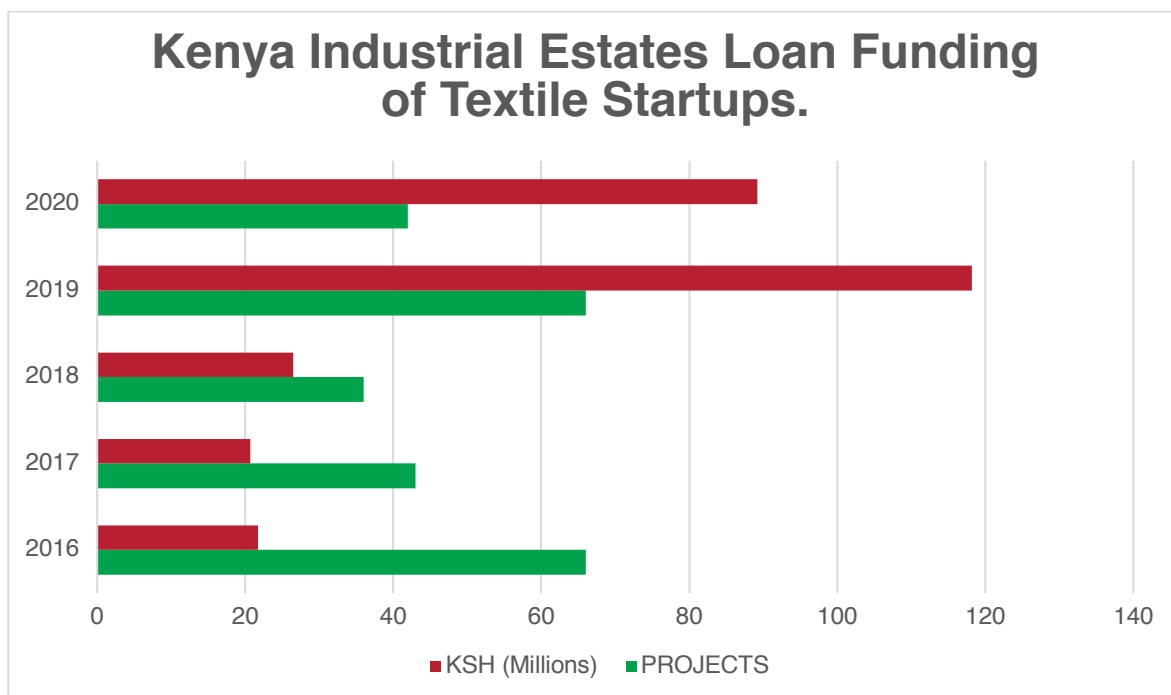
The locally produced shows on TV can also help in promoting the domestic apparel industry. If the producers can be encouraged to dress their characters in locally made products, rather than imports, this can go a long way in encouraging local purchases. For instance, Indian movies and soap operas have done a great deal in influencing the fashion trends of the masses in the country. Indian actors and actresses dress in the traditional Indian attire and fans spend great amounts of money to dress and like their favorite stars. Our local TV stations can also lead the way in awareness raising.

Commercial advertisements on TV, radio, billboards and other information education and communication materials like fliers, brochures and magazines, the local apparel industry stands to gain a lot in promoting local consumption. Advertising is no longer about trying to push people to make more purchases. It now seeks to respond to new consumer demands that revolve around what a brand represents and its ethical beliefs.

Achieving productivity through local production will not be easy, but the ultimate goal will be the elimination of competition from imported goods. The media will be at the forefront of helping local industries achieve competitiveness. The end-game will be preferential local market access by the public and private sectors for local products. This will create linkages that contribute to a strong integrated agricultural, industrial and service foundation, which are necessary for nurturing wealth creation and ultimately increasing job opportunities.



## Textiles in brief in the past 5 years

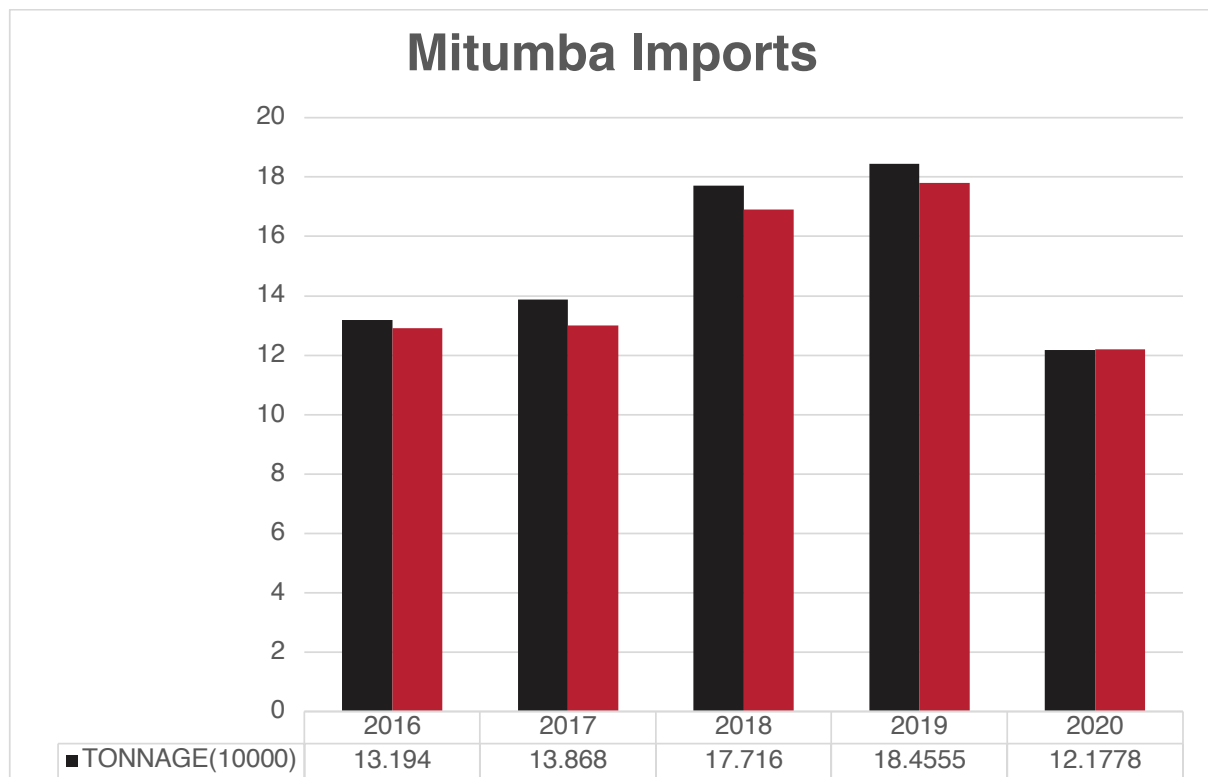


Source: 2021-Kenya Economic Survey.

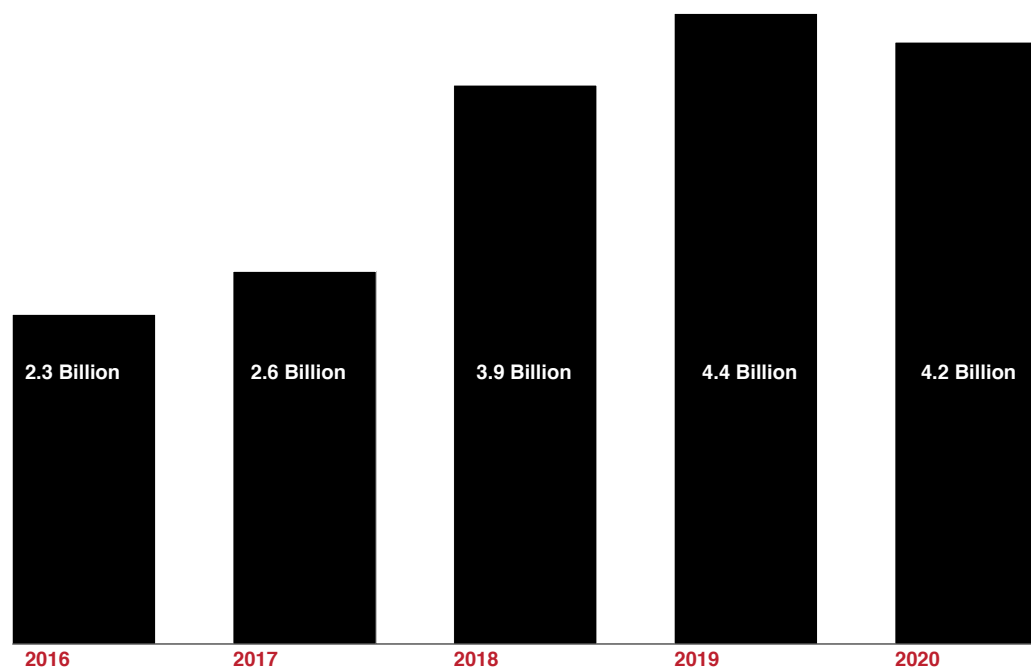


Source: 2021-Kenya Economic Survey.





## TEXTILE IMPORT DUTY COLLECTIONS



Source: 2021-Kenya Economic Survey

# Turning Mitumba into Raw Materials for Made in Kenya High-end Garments

*By Chrispine Onyango*

The concept of using secondhand clothes as raw materials for new products is slowly taking Kenya by storm where items made are sold in the export market at handsome prices. Upcyclers, as users of old items to create new products are called, have also perfected the use of digital media platforms to market their products to a global audience where payments are made online and products delivered to customers via courier services.

Ms Wangui Karanja, founder of Wangui Karanja Sustainable Fashion found her 'space in upcycling two years ago during her last semester on campus at Machakos University where she studied for a bachelor's degree in Fashion and Design. She shared the journey to becoming one of the voices in the mitumba upcycling business and provides a glimpse of the future of upcycling. As a crafter, she avers that the mitumba market is the ideal place for finding nice and high-quality fabrics for use in upcycling. Below is Wangui's take on mitumba upcycling business.

## What was the motivation behind your upcycling business?

I felt we had a lot of fashion waste that could be turned into cheap raw materials for new products. Then one day, one of my professors passionately taught about upcycling giving a global history of the same. He spoke very candidly about how we can be responsible for fashion waste. We discussed in class what fashion waste does to the environment. The

environment is harmed by big apparel and garment makers who ignore eco-friendly ways of manufacturing. So you will find clothes them producing more clothes than the demand. Sadly, most apparels are of poor quality and wear away fast and that is good for the fashion business. But a lot of the discarded clothes end up in landfills or are exported to third world countries as secondhand clothes. We also generate waste when we discard out-of-fashion clothes to get a new one. I learnt more about this through YouTube and the DIYs where I made new outfits from upcycled materials. My friends yearned for such items and that birthed my business.

## What are the final products that you make?

I mostly make ladies' wear, tops and dresses.

## What is the uptake of the upcycled products locally?

The uptake is not as good. People are still trying to understand what upcycling is since it is not a regular concept. But customers are embracing it since it ensures clothes they don are unique.

## Do you think this business model will stand the test of time?

Yes, we will forever have fashion wastes. The population is growing and people will forever buy clothes and dump clothes. What I think should be reduced is the

mass production of fast fashion, mostly low quality items. Upcycling is good for the environment as a new production of fabrics involves chemical processes that produce by-products that are harmful to the environment. We need to use or rather apply sustainable processes. So I do believe upcycling is a sustainable business model.

## Where do you source your raw materials from?

Second-hand markets like Gikomba, Toi Market and retail mitumba sellers on the streets.

## What is the upcycling process like?

Back-end research is very important to understand who are the people I am targeting, what do they wear, what kind of fabrics do they like, what patterns, colour etc. Once I have that clear, I can then source for the materials in the market because now I know exactly what I am going for.

## How many people have you employed to do this?

I have no permanent employees but I hire casual labour when demand for certain types of attire rises.

## How do the upcycled products compare to locally made products?

Their fabric quality is relatively good and unique. You are sure when you don such a piece of clothing no one in the streets has a similar one. It is the designer's responsibility to ensure that the quality is good. Select the pieces well and also use the parts of the clothes that are still in good condition.

**What raw materials do you use and which products have you made from mitumba material?**

Majorly it is ladies' wear, second hand men's shirts are good for making ladies' tops. I also use curtains that are now being phased out to make dresses, pillows and cushions as well as glittering pouches.

**What is the most expensive product you have sold?**

I could say Sh2,000 and that was a dress.

**What does it take to succeed in this fast-paced business?**

Learn and teach yourself new ways to create items that customers are looking for. Build your experience around fashion

by watching soap operas, fashion shows on YouTube and also look around in the streets for any piece of clothing that makes one stand out of the crowd.

Photos: Courtesy - Wangui



Some of the High quality Made in Kenya Products by Ubuntu, destined for the export market.





Kenya Fashion Council

## ABOUT US

The Kenya Fashion Council (KFCO) is a multi-stakeholder body mandated to design strategies and interventions to support and sustain the growth of the Kenyan textile and apparel value chains, while also creating opportunities for paths to global markets through strategic collaborations.

We work hand in hand with the wider creative industries to engage government and government agencies to ensure favourable policies and operational environments are being designed to ensure a flourishing creative industry within the country.

Our aim is to elevate the sector into a functional and vibrant fashion industry that can compete globally while being credible, dynamic and economically sustainable.

Some of our partners so far include: Fashionomics Africa, ACTIF, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of industrialisation, Strathmore University, the Office of the President, Brand KE, HEVA Fund LLP, SITA and UN Sustainable Fashion Alliance.

## VISION

We advocate for an environment; influence policy and standards; develop and promote industry players, and build local and international relationships.

## MISSION

We advocate for an enabling environment; influence policy and standards; develop and promote industry players and build local and international partnerships.

## VALUES

- ~ WE EMBRACE DIVERSITY AND ENRICH EACH OTHER ~
- ~ WE SHARE OPPORTUNITIES AND CELEBRATE EACH OTHER'S SUCCESSES ~
- ~ WE PUT ASIDE EGO FOR THE GREATER GOOD ~
- ~ WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO OUR MEMBERS ~



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## The opportunity

Kenya is the economic and creative giant of East Africa, rich in culture and skilled prime designers, yet poorly integrated into the global Fashion and Creative Industry. A National Fashion Council for Kenya results in maximization of the market share by best utilization of resources and ensure sustainable solutions to the Kenyan Fashion and Creative Industry, thus increasing its net value (through shared resources and finances) creating jobs for students, empowerment of industries through specialization and expertise in the various fields within the industry, as well as global recognition on a larger platform (A Kenyan Fashion Identity).

## Operational values

- ⬇ We embrace diversity and enrich each other
- ⬇ We share opportunities and celebrate each other's successes
- ⬇ We put aside ego for the greater good - We are accountable to our members





## The opportunity

The goals and objectives of the KFCO shall be to create programmes that embody the KFCO's primary objective and key focus areas with the goal of engaging members to build relationships with each other. Below are the Key Objectives amongst others:

## Goals and objectives

1. **Development of 'Fashion Law'** whose role will be to advise and guide Fashion Industry Players/ Designers with regard to Legal Matters.
2. Initiate **Market Research** and Analysis of the local and global Fashion industry and avail consistent 'Fashion Reports' in order to provide market intelligence and equip the designers with relevant information on trends and forecasts.
3. Establish a **'Designer Showroom'** to showcase designs by local designers in order to create awareness of their designs and build consumer relations. Operational values
4. Establish a **'Fashion Design and Textiles Hub'** where designers / Industry players can utilize cutting edge equipment, machinery and tools as well as access information on current technological inventions with regard to apparel, footwear, jewelery, textile etc.
5. Address manufacturing problems for independent designers by providing lower 'minimum production rate', allowing designers access to proper homegrown production.
6. Creating an avenue to brand the Kenyan Fashion and Creative Industry nationally and internationally.
7. Provide Financial Support Systems/ Schemes for Small, Medium and Emerging Entities (SME's) through working hand in hand with Micro Finance Institutions.
8. Create a Digital Archive Platform/Database to collect and analyze information of the Kenya Fashion Industry.
9. Education Foundation Initiatives to ensure accessible, sustainable and up to date Fashion and Creative Education system within Kenya empowering the youth to compete on the global market.
10. Create Mentorship/ Networking Platforms that allow the youth to interact with established Designers in the local and global fashion platform based on Fashion exchange programmes.
11. Create an Innovation and Technological Centre ensuring the industry is abreast with cutting edge technology affording it a competitive advantage in the international market.
12. Create a 'Kenyan Fashion Calendar' to ensure seamless worldwide promotion, highlighting fashion weeks and events, encouraging industry players (designers, suppliers, manufacturers, retailers, distributors, promoters) to come together to build knowledge, networking and international recognition.







## FASHION FRIDAY PICTORIALS

Staff at the Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency have internalized the Buy-Kenya Build-Kenya policy by donning locally-made outfits every Friday. This in turn supports the textile industry and express the rich culture of the Kenyan people in a variety of prints and jewelry.







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