

**Measures driving the internationalisation and adoption of African
luxury fashion brands**

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of Master of Philosophy (International Business).**

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ABSTRACT

The study identified the lack of academic attention on the internationalisation and marketing of emerging African luxury brands. While the luxury category is growing globally, African luxury brands were gaining prominence and experiencing steady growth. However, they were not well covered in luxury goods studies and were not substantially represented in global trade. In order to identify the gaps, the study aimed to investigate how African luxury brands internationalised and marketed themselves when expanding globally. The study sought to understand the preferred modes of internationalisation, the motivations behind expanding outside of their home countries, the strategies used to create demand in unfamiliar markets, and the marketing capabilities developed during the internationalisation process. Additionally, the study aimed to identify the challenges faced by these brands in differentiating themselves from international competitors. A phenomenological qualitative approach was followed for the study. Overall, the study focused on the internationalisation and marketing of African luxury brands so that the body of knowledge could be enriched for academics and assist other emerging African luxury brands.

What emerged was the importance and role of global connectedness in facilitating exposure to international consumers; and the importance of different stakeholders such as facilitators, strategic partnerships and policymakers' involvement.

KEYWORDS

Internationalisation, Brand adoption, Fashion brands, Luxury brands, African fashion

DECLARATION

I, declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy – International Business at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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November 2023

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

B2B	Business-to-Business
B2C	Business-to-Consumer
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DTC	Direct-to-Consumer
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
IJVs	International Joint Ventures
IB	International Business
IR	International Relations
LVMH	Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy
MBFW	Mercedes Benz Fashion Week
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
NDA	Non-Disclosure Agreement
PR	Public Relations
SAFW	South African Fashion Week
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Background to the research problem

The fashion industry uses a range of classifications to categorise brands based on product end use, such as sports apparel; group or segment of customers, e.g., wholesale or retail; price based, inter alia. Within the price-based classification, the highest tier was the luxury fashion category. Fionda & Moore (2008) defined luxury brands as those that provided a distinct experience to their consumers in the form of high-quality craftsmanship, exclusivity, and the related status symbol. The luxury fashion goods market, comprised of apparel, jewellery, and accessories, as a subcategory of the luxury goods category, was estimated to be worth approximately US \$305 billion and is dominated by European brands (Deloitte, 2022).

1.2 Research problem

The growth of the luxury category had resulted in the number of luxury brands of varying sizes increasing in value due to the global increase in consumers and consumer spending over the last few years (Ko, Costello & Taylor., 2019; Singh, Shukla & Schlegelmilch 2021). According to Benissan (2022) and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2021), African luxury fashion brands were gaining prominence in terms of great export potential and had subsequently enjoyed steady growth with a rebound post-pandemic. Albeit the growing number of emerging luxury fashion brands that were enjoying success at home and internationally they were not well covered in luxury goods studies (Bai, He, Shi et al., 2020) nor were they substantially represented in global trade (Deloitte, 2022). According to the latest luxury goods report by Deloitte (2022), the personal luxury goods market was dominated by Europe, with France leading at 34% of the overall sales globally, China and India were the only emerging markets recognised in the Top 100 luxury brands then.

According to Deloitte (2014), emerging markets luxury consumers contributed a combined 19% of international luxury goods purchases in 2013, with an anticipated increase to around 25% by 2025 in Asia Pacific, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa.

Several emerging market luxury brands had emerged over the years, however, very few such brands had been able to grow or scale internationally (Bai et al., 2020; Ko et al., 2019). To address the potential to grow, emerging African luxury fashion brands had pursued penetration of the international luxury scene. Organisations such as Birimian were exploring this potential by providing necessary support such as investment funding, production and distribution of luxury brands into foreign markets to help scale up African luxury fashion brands (Maguire, 2021). In most cases, African luxury fashion designers had internationalised by collaborating with international luxury fashion designers to increase their exposure to international markets with a limited investment burden (Schoeman, 2022).

The modes of internationalisation of emerging market luxury brands were poorly documented due to the limited academic attention to luxury brands (Bai et al., 2020; Ko et al., 2019). Several studies had been conducted on the internationalisation and marketing of luxury brands but focused on established developed market brands. A few nascent studies were focusing on the internationalisation of emerging market luxury fashion brands from an Asian perspective, but relatively few studies had explored how African luxury fashion brands internationalised or marketed themselves in new markets. There was a lack of academic studies that provided knowledge on which modes of internationalisation best suited African luxury fashion brands, the driving factors that contributed towards penetration of foreign markets, what marketing strategies the brands adopted, and the lessons learnt that could potentially assist other emerging African luxury brands.

1.3 Research question

The primary questions that this study wished to explore, were: Which modes of internationalisation and marketing strategies are adopted by African luxury brands when

they internationalise, and what are the related challenges encountered in their attempt to distinguish themselves from international brands in a global context?

1.4 Research purpose

The study aimed to explore the modes of internationalisation and the marketing strategies adopted by African luxury brands when they expanded internationally. The study also aimed to identify the challenges faced by these brands in distinguishing themselves from international brands in the global market. The research questions focused on understanding:

- the **preferred mode(s) of internationalisation** that these brands embark upon to enter new markets;
- the **motivations that drive them to seek expansion** outside of their country of origin;
- the **strategies used to create demand and market their offerings** in international markets where consumers may be unfamiliar with their brands; and,
- how and what **marketing capabilities** they develop pre- or during internationalisation to drive business growth.

1.5 Research contribution

The findings of this study were intended to provide insight into successful endeavours that could be used to develop guidelines or a model that could be applied by emerging African luxury brands to succeed in the international luxury space. Organisations such as Birimian recognised that African luxury brands were not adequately represented in the global luxury market hence the organisation's focus on championing the growth of African luxury brands through investments. The findings of this study were intended to additionally aid such organisations, government entities, investors and other emerging African luxury brands with relevant insights to change the status quo (Deloitte, 2022; Maguire, 2021).

1.6 Theoretical contribution

The underrepresentation of African luxury fashion brands in academic studies had led to a lack of understanding of how these brands approached internationalisation (Bai et al., 2020; Ko et al., 2019), hence this study aimed to address the gaps in the literature concerning luxury brands from emerging markets, specifically in the African continent. The limited academic attention that was previously paid to luxury fashion brands from emerging markets had limited an understanding of how different African luxury fashion brands had internationalised to date and how they had penetrated international territories (Ko et al., 2019). Specifically, the study sought to understand the internationalisation modes that African luxury fashion brands adopted when they internationalised, the challenges they encountered, and their potential to establish themselves globally.

1.7 Structure of the Report

The following was the summary of the chapters contained within this report:

- **Chapter 1 – Introduction to the research problem**

This chapter of the research report provided an overview of the background to the research problem that had been identified concerning the phenomena of internationalisation of African luxury brands and also how these drove demand and adoption in foreign markets. The chapter further provided an overview of the research objectives and aims and what the researcher aimed to uncover from the study.

- **Chapter 2 – Literature review**

Chapter 2 of the report covered the literature review pertaining to relevant academic coverage of the phenomena as per the constructs of the study. The literature started by covering the broad aspects of the different modes of internationalisation before zoning in on what seemed to be most relevant for emerging market brands. Due to limited academic coverage of the internationalisation of African luxury brands, generic literature on internationalisation was covered and supported by literature on what constituted luxury brands and marketing capabilities or techniques often utilised.

- **Chapter 3 – Research questions**

A summary of the research questions derived from the research problem and literature review was presented.

- **Chapter 4 – Research design and methodology**

The methodology followed in conducting this study was presented with a detailed outline of the approach of identifying the population and how sampling was conducted, the type of data collection that was used and how the collected data was analysed, including how the researcher ensured rigour, trustworthiness and reliability of the study.

- **Chapter 5 – Research findings**

A detailed view of the findings, extrapolated from the interviews and interview transcripts including the approach that was followed to identify key themes from the data was covered in this chapter. References to actual recorded participant feedback was provided which was the basis of the discussion of chapter 6.

- **Chapter 6 – Discussion of the findings**

Chapter 6 covered a thorough discussion of the findings of the study correlated and contrasted against relevant literature and attempted to interpret the findings. The discussion concluded with a view of how the findings built onto the existing literature and whether new findings were uncovered.

- **Chapter 7 – Conclusion and Recommendations**

The researcher concluded by summarising their approach and findings into recommendations for future or further academic studies. The aim being to continue enriching the academic literature in this field of internationalisation of emerging market brands, particularly African luxury brands. Further, the researcher attempted to formulate a conceptual framework that addressed how the primary constructs of the research merged to build a framework that can be tested in future studies.

1.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the understanding of how African luxury fashion brands internationalised and whether the approaches or modes of internationalising

of emerging market brands in general. It was also to seek to understand if the motivations of internationalisation for these brands were congruent with the motivations of other emerging market brands. The study also sought to understand if there are particular capabilities that these brands focus on developing before and during their internationalisation journey which enabled them to be able to market their brands successfully in foreign territories. Beyond the capabilities, the researcher wished to understand the actual marketing strategies or tactics that these brands utilise to drive growth.

While the study may seem multi-layered, the researcher sought to highlight the limited coverage of the phenomenon of African luxury fashion brands may be due to any of the angles highlighted in the objectives and thus it may be limiting to focus on just one perspective, i.e. internationalisation or marketing. By doing so, the study's aim was to identify in which area(s) the gaps existed and further aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge on the internationalisation of emerging market brands, particularly those classified as luxury fashion brands with African roots. It also aimed to ensure that the phenomenon of African luxury fashion brands gets coverage from an academic perspective, the same way it was receiving practitioner's focus.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The extant literature about the internationalisation of emerging markets of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with a key focus on luxury fashion brands was highlighted. The different modes of internationalisation and marketing strategies that luxury fashion brands adopted was explored to understand how they internationalised and how they drove the adoption of their products and services in foreign host markets (Paul & Criado, 2020). A brief overview of the luxury fashion industry was provided through the synthesis of the internationalisation phenomenon. This was followed by an analysis of trends from international perspectives, which were perceived to have had an impact on the internationalisation of African luxury fashion brands, also exploring the internationalisation of emerging market enterprises, and the internationalisation of African luxury fashion brands through the modes of internationalisation adopted. How they created demand in response to the chosen international market, utilising the international marketing strategies was also investigated to draw parallels with the internationalisation process and perceived successes. Precedent studies were provided in this chapter to contextualise internationalisation from the perspective of emerging market SMEs, and emerging market luxury brands, to the extent that it existed as established luxury brands.

2.2 The Internationalisation Process and Relevant Terminologies

Internationalisation was defined as a process incorporating a global dimension into the strategy execution of an entity, such as a luxury brand, resulting in the luxury fashion brands' increase in their level of involvement in foreign markets over time (Guercini, Ranfagni & Runfola, 2020). The initial step of this process for luxury fashion brands was often based on their buying decisions, which enabled the modified structural characteristics in the supply chain (Mo, 2015). The initial step towards internationalisation was approached in various modes of internationalisation such as exporting, licensing, joint ventures, direct investments, trade intermediaries, and alliances (Sprugel, 2023), which were all influenced by the

industrial revolution and globalisation that emerged in the 18th century due to advancements in technology and mass production (Carvalho, Chaim, Cazarini et al., 2018).

These developments enabled various industries such as the textile industry to produce at a large scale, resulting in increased economic growth and prosperity, because industrialisation expanded beyond technological advancements and mass production, influencing the emergence of luxury brands (Lin, 2012). Advancements of technology allowed luxury fashion brands to make use of mass production practices whilst maintaining high-quality standards and exclusivity (Carvalho et al., 2018). Thus, industrialisation played an important role in terms of the internationalisation process and the development of modern luxury fashion brands.

Academics in the field of international business have outlined various modes of internationalisation that could be adopted by companies when they internationalise. Some of those defined in the following section, were assessed in relation to the development and expansion of luxury brands.

- **Exporting** referred to the process of sending (luxury) goods manufactured in a firm's home country, to be sold in other countries (Love & Roper, 2015). This mode was made possible by the vital shift in the way luxury goods were produced and distributed through the industrial revolution. It was through the mechanisation of production that the textile industry was able to increase its productivity, which resulted in the emergence of luxury fashion brands and the availability of luxury goods across the globe (Carvalho et al., 2018). There was a growing demand for high-end products because luxury fashion brands offered exclusivity, superior quality, and craftsmanship (Love & Roper, 2015). Exporting made luxury fashion brands accessible in various regions, and addressed the demand for high-end products without consumers having to travel to other countries to access them.
- **Licensing** referred to granting or permitting the internationalisation of luxury fashion brands as a means of market entry (Moore & Doyle, 2010). Advancements in technology

and mass production had an impact on licensing in international business (Mottner & Johnson, 2000). Fundamentally, international licensing reduced the risks that were inherent in foreign direct investment (FDI) considering that luxury brands had also expanded into emerging and transitional economies, as beneficial opportunities (Moore & Doyle, 2010).

- **Joint ventures** referred to the collaboration of luxury fashion brands and partners to advance the economic growth and prosperity of particular brands whilst optimising skills, knowledge, and competencies of partners with complementary capabilities (Park & Harris, 2014).
- **Direct investments** referred to providing capital funding for luxury brands to internationalise in exchange for an equity interest or controlling interest in an enterprise, without purchasing the regular shares of the company's stock (Guercini et al., 2020). Direct investments may be from institutions that seek to invest, such as the Birimian company that provided support to African luxury fashion brands in terms of finances, production, and distribution of the luxury fashion brands internationally (Maguire, 2021). Direct investments could also be provided by the government and other organisations that seek to assist luxury fashion brands to internationalise.
- **Trade intermediaries** referred to the provision of a valuable service to small luxury fashion brands that often did not have the expertise and resources to market their products or services internationally (Virtanen, Jiang, You et al., 2022). They were regarded as short-term strategies that are necessary in the early phases of international engagement. This occurred when luxury brands internationalised, and were eventually abandoned when subsidiaries were established, and knowledge and experience of luxury fashion brands had expanded so that their position in international markets was more prominent (Virtanen et al., 2022). Trade intermediaries also paved the way for collaborations and different approaches to marketing, since small luxury brands may have had limited resources to market themselves. This resulted in a rise of the use of digital platforms to market such brands.

- **Alliances** referred to the collaborative arrangement between luxury fashion brands that had headquarters in different countries (Franco & Haase, 2016). The alliance between the home and host countries for luxury fashion brands like Italy and South Africa, and their alliance with Gucci, is believed to enhance the internationalisation of the luxury fashion brand, even in developing countries (Buckley, Munjal, Enderwick et al., 2017). Luxury fashion brands that operated between the home country and the different host countries, drew upon international relations (IR) by offering valuable insights into the nature and purpose of country alliances, to expand the high-quality experience of craftsmanship, exclusivity, and superior quality (Buckley et al., 2017). International retail further provided insights on the influence of cross-border luxury brand alliances and how that contributed towards their internationalisation. There was further evidence of African luxury fashion brands that had benefited from strategic alliances with established luxury brands, for example, Thebe Magugu collaborating with Valentino's Pierpaolo Piccioli (Schoeman, 2022). Thebe Magugu was exposed to this collaboration in 2022 after winning "the 2019 Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH) Young Fashion Designer Prize, and being a finalist in the 2021 International Woolmark Prize" which further exposed him to established international markets, and opportunities for competency development from partners that had complementary abilities, such as the 2022 collaboration with Adidas (Schoeman, 2022).

All the different modes of internationalisation of luxury fashion brands, could be applied by African luxury fashion brands when they internationalised. The different modes highlighted the essence of collaboration, optimising the experience and knowledge of other key role players that emerging luxury fashion brands may not have yet possessed.

2.3 Luxury goods and the luxury fashion industry globally

The luxury goods market continued to grow and expand, particularly in certain categories such as cars, travel, dining and personal luxury goods like apparel, jewellery and accessories that drove trillions of dollars in trade annually (Ko et al., 2019). The personal luxury goods such as apparel, jewellery and accessories as a subset of the luxury goods

category was estimated to be worth approximately US\$305 billion (Deloitte Global, 2022). The latest luxury goods report from Deloitte Global (2022) indicated that the personal luxury goods market was dominated by Europe, with France leading at 34% of the overall sales value globally, and China and India being the only emerging markets recognised in the Top 100 luxury brands from a valuation and trade value perspective. This growth of the luxury category had resulted in a number of diverse categories of luxury fashion brands of varying sizes increasing in value due to the increase in number of consumers and global consumer spend over the past couple of years (Ko et al., 2019). The increase in consumers of luxury brands was attributed to increased demand from and penetration of supply in emerging markets, mainly Asia and the Middle East due to a continuous rise in middle and upper middle classes in most emerging markets (Jain, Mishra & Mukhopadhyay, 2021; Ko et al., 2019; Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018).

The definition of luxury did not fall into one particular domain, nor was there one generally accepted definition of what constitutes luxury or luxury goods. Researchers had attempted to define luxury goods by interrogating the field through the lens of price and affordability; perceptually and intangibly through experiences and emotions evoked in a consumer; tangibly and materially through the use of, or perception of high-quality materials; hedonism and exclusivity inter alia. However, most of the focus was on luxury from consumers' perspective of value and exclusivity, or a company's determined product attributes, or market penetration activities (Ko et al., 2019; Batat, 2023).

Ko et al. (2019, p.2) defined a luxury brand as, "a branded product or service that consumers perceive to:

- be high quality;
- offer authentic value via desired benefits, whether functional or emotional;
- have a prestigious image within the market built on qualities such as artisanship, craftsmanship, or service quality;
- be worthy of commanding a premium price; and

- be capable of inspiring a deep connection or resonance, with the consumer.”

Kapferer & Valette-Florence (2018) presented the definition of luxury as high-quality, rare, exclusive, indulgent items that attracted prices that were significantly higher in consideration to functional benefits, and were rooted on heritage and culture, and evoked a sense of elitism and refinement. They based the value of luxury on two elements, namely, self-reward and indulgence, and showing off one’s prosperity (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018). To fulfil this desire of showing off, Kapferer & Valette-Florence (2018) indicated that it could also be achieved through conspicuous and “costly signalling” of logo prominence so that those who consumed such brands stood out from the crowds.

According to Okonkwo (2016), the luxury goods industry was characterised by unique cultural characteristics, as it was a symbol of social status, prestige, and taste. The history and heritage of the brand, quality, exclusivity, and premium prices were key factors contributing to the brand’s image and consumers’ perception of the brand. Similarly, Kapferer & Bastien (2012) accentuated the cultural aspects of luxury brands, and how cultural identity, history, and tradition of luxury brands played an important role in their internationalisation. Sharma, Mauli, Borah et al. (2020) provided empirical evidence of the cultural aspects of luxury brands, highlighting the key individual dimensions of the consumption of luxury brands, being the need for one to be unique, to be recognisable in society, as having higher prestige value, and the status of being different from others. They, however, pointed out that the ranking of these personal dimensions varied depending on the market.

Two dimensions that Kapferer & Valette-Florence (2018) highlighted as essential when luxury brands pursue growth, were brand awareness and brand penetration. They posited that in order for a brand to grow, it needed to develop and establish itself in order for it to be desirable. However, at odds with the rarity and exclusivity nature of luxury, a luxury fashion brand that was highly desirable and enjoyed large penetration ended up diluting its luxury attributes. Developing studies in brands such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton inter alia, and a new developing theme was that of quiet luxury, which shunned away from conspicuous display

of brand identity and was driven by the high global inflation and imminent recession as the so-called “haves” became more sensitive in terms of flaunting their wealth (Vogue, 2023; Business Insider, 2023). Due to the fact that African-based luxury fashion brands were still in their infancy within the global sphere, developing recognisable and desirable brands was the main focus to drive penetration globally.

2.4 Africa’s luxury fashion industry and the internationalisation of luxury fashion brands

2.4.1 African luxury brands’ pursuit to internationalise

According to Appiah-Nimo, Muthambi & Devey (2023), luxury goods in emerging economies had developed, with Brazil, India, Russia, Mexico, and China being crucial frontiers in the globalisation of the luxury industry. There were developed and developing luxury brands in different parts of Africa, with South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritius, and Nigeria as the leading destinations for luxury goods (Appiah-Nimo et al., 2023). Therefore, luxury and designer brands from emerging markets had increasingly been pursuing internationalisation as a growth strategy, and were part of the crucial frontiers in the globalisation of the luxury industry (Bai et al., 2020). However, few had been successful in establishing themselves as multinational companies. African luxury fashion brands had struggled to penetrate into the global market.

Mutunku (2016) however highlighted that luxury was not a new phenomenon in Africa and that it had been in existence from the beginning, pre-colonial; pointing out that Sub-Saharan Africa was actually the mining haven for minerals and natural fibres which were essential inputs into most luxury goods. Minerals such as gold, ivory, and tortoiseshell were not just used ornamentally in ancient times but were also used in the production of Coptic crosses, jewellery and adornments for royalty and complex weaving techniques by skilled craftsmen was the order of the day in producing fabrics such as the kente or bogolan and intricate beadworks by the Bantu and he cited that the primary reason for Africa being left behind in

being a luxury producer or contributor was attributed to it not investing in enhancing its knowledge in this space (Mutunku, 2016).

The luxury fashion brands discipline falls within the area of study of marketing because luxury fashion brands were generally assessed from the perspective of consumer consumption relating to psychographic dimensions such as status symbol, attitudes, derivation of pleasure, and the intangible benefits of appreciation of luxury as an art form (Sharma et al., 2020). It was also noted as a growing field within the marketing discipline, and has attracted recent interests around different luxury fashion brands from different countries (Appiah-Nimo et al., 2023).

The cultural aspect of luxury fashion brands, particularly for African luxury fashion brands, was an important consideration in the internationalisation process, and the study conducted by Bills & Tabot (2021) discovered that the consumer personality traits of African luxury fashion brand consumers played a role in their purchase intentions towards these brands. In the case of Africa's luxury fashion brands, the cultural aspect used in distinguishing luxury fashion brands was an essential part of their identity as their heritage and roots played an important role in the creative process and design elements of their products (Ojo, 2021). However, Sharma et al. (2020) provided a counterargument concerning culture as a dimension of assessing luxury fashion brands, stating that with the internet, and consumers becoming more global, cultural distances were diminishing and therefore cultural differences were not that obvious. This diminishing distance due to online exposure was beneficial to luxury fashion brands originating from emerging markets, particularly Africa. They were experiencing steady growth and increased global recognition. Notwithstanding, the representation of true African luxury fashion brands was not aptly represented in luxury goods studies (Benissan, 2022).

2.4.2 Drivers of internationalisation

Various internal and external factors influence the drivers of internationalisation. Singh & Kundu (2002) distinguished the internal drivers of internationalisation for luxury brands, as

brand reputation, management experience, and ownership structure. Brand reputation also entailed brand presence in both the local and international markets because it enabled luxury fashion brand designers to build strong personal networks in foreign markets, while using the previous experience of management to drive internationalisation (Van Andel, Demol & Schramme, 2014). The success of both these drivers of internationalisation was dependent on the ability and uniqueness of their network. An example of leveraging personal networks was the collaboration between Thebe Magugu and Valentino's Pierpaolo Piccioli, a network Thebe developed after winning and being a winner of the LVMH Young Fashion Designer Prize and being a finalist at the International Woolmark Prize (Schoeman, 2022).

Singh & Kundu (2002) distinguished the external drivers of internationalisation for luxury fashion brands, as market opportunity, competitor activities, and the availability of resources. The growth markets or countries with high purchasing power, and the attraction of major fashion cities, also drove the internationalisation of luxury fashion brands (Van Andel et al., 2014). Okonkwo (2016) supported this view because of the noted interest from African luxury fashion brand designers to showcase their brands in different fashion weeks that predominantly occur in major fashion cities such as Paris, New York, Milan inter alia. The availability of resources, particularly funding and access to distribution channels drove internationalisation, and this was notable through the direct investments that institutions such as the Birimian company had made to support African luxury fashion brands to internationalise (Maguire, 2021). This support included financial, production, and distribution support of African luxury fashion brands internationally, which also addressed the challenges that the brands faced like the high costs of production or the insufficient production capacity within home countries (Van Andel et al., 2014).

The different drivers of internationalisation from the internal and external factors, were mainly motivated by the desire to enter new markets and reach new customers, by influencing their buying decisions, which also enabled the modified structural characteristics in the supply chain (Mo, 2015). For African luxury fashion brands to succeed in their pursuit of internationalisation, they would have to be grounded on broader community cohesion and

upliftment by integrating shared value that transcends individuality (Van Andel et al., 2014; Mo, 2015).

2.4.3 Stages of the internationalisation process

The internationalisation process of luxury fashion brands was complex in the sense that there was no standardised approach. The process of internationalisation for luxury fashion brands could be categorised into three stages namely pre-internationalisation, internationalisation, and post-internationalisation (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014; O'Sullivan & Abosag, 2015).

2.4.3.1 The Pre-Internationalisation Stages

The *pre-internationalisation stage* referred to establishing network relationships through internal drivers of internationalisation, by focusing on overcoming the psychic distance (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014). In order to overcome the psychic distance, each luxury fashion brand had to be characterised by its own distinct features that could appeal through language, the nature of contacts and common attributes, which could be used to enhance their internationalisation process (Lin, 2012). The *pre-internationalisation stage* also entailed brand building and preparing the brand for international expansion, which may have been categorised by internal and external drivers such as brand reputation and the availability of resources that played a significant role in prepping the luxury fashion brand for global markets (Singh & Kundu, 2002; O'Sullivan & Abosag, 2015).

Khojastehpour & Johns (2014) stated that psychic distance could be used to predict the experiences luxury fashion brands would find on the internationalisation process in familiar countries to achieve brand penetration. However, it was important to note that with the limited academic focus and content on African luxury fashion brands and the internationalisation process for them; meant that it would be challenging to predict a pattern of internationalisation, hence the research problem noted such challenges and the significance of conducting this study.

2.4.3.2 The Internationalisation Stage

According to O'Sullivan and Abosag (2015), the *internationalisation stage*, involved market selection, mode of entry, and the adaptation to local markets, based on the efforts made during the *pre-internationalisation stage*. Khojastehpour & Johns (2014) stated that luxury fashion brands initiated their internationalisation by identifying, selecting and approaching relevant markets, which were geographically close to them before proceeding to those with greater psychic distance as psychic distance could limit the ease of information exchange between stakeholders in the market. The fundamental character of internationalisation in the very beginning of the internationalisation process for African luxury fashion brands was mainly attributed to the lack of market information (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014). Lin (2012) asserted that as international market knowledge grows, the psychic distance concurrently diminishes, providing a favourable environment for African luxury fashion brands to advance in their internationalisation endeavours.

It was important to note that forging relationships in the international markets to overcome the lack of knowledge of such markets was significant for African luxury fashion brands; however, there could have been information transmission distortion that was affiliated with psychic distance (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014). To overcome information transmission distortion, it necessitated trust development that played a vital role in terms of overcoming the challenges to successful international exchange relationships (Lin, 2012). Establishing and building trust relationships with local consumers reduced the impact of psychic distance, or leveraging a network of relationships, which were both important for the succession of internationalisation.

2.4.3.3 The Post-Internationalisation Stage

The *post-internationalisation stage* referred to establishing initial international market entry by focusing on establishing and positioning the brand in the market (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014). This stage entailed managing the global brand and the creation of a global identity once the African luxury fashion brand had established a notable presence in the international

luxury markets (O'Sullivan & Abosag, 2015). The dedication to global markets during the *post-internationalization* phase established the approach for entering foreign markets. Khojastehpour and Johns (2014) and emphasised that a crucial aspect of the internationalisation of African luxury fashion brands lay in the decisions they made regarding their entry mode.

The entry mode choices that African luxury fashion brands made, are also dependent on the gradual progression of the internationalisation process, because they had to search for new opportunities, examine them, and forge relationships in locations where they previously did not exist (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014). This showcased the commitment that African luxury fashion brands had, and the trust that they gradually built with their personal networks, and their local and international clientele. To establish such commitment and trust, African luxury fashion brands may have opted for one of the different techniques to immerse themselves in international markets, such as acquisition, strategic alliances with established trading houses, and through the services of an agent (Lin, 2012). It was important to note that the success of the internationalisation process was largely dependent on the knowledge of international markets because the lack of information was regarded as an obstacle in the development of the internationalisation process (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014).

Despite the three stages of the internationalisation of luxury fashion brands being known, Sharma et al. (2020) cautioned that during the internationalisation stage, luxury fashion brands sometimes failed to penetrate into certain markets, or to replicate successes from other markets due to various reasons such as not clearly identifying the product range and assortment, nor employing the best-fit distribution or partner selection strategies. Such strategies would need to be appropriate for the chosen market and be aligned to market conditions such as the level of infrastructural development and the prevailing geopolitical regime (Sharma et al., 2020).

This could contribute to the limitations of brand building and preparing the brand for international expansion during the pre-internationalisation stage (O'Sullivan & Abosag, 2015). Bai et al. (2020) also argued that the prominent challenges for the different stages of

internationalisation emanated from not applying the six-question framework, which was a useful way of comprehending luxury fashion brand internationalisation. This six-question framework was analysed from specific inter-related areas, which includes the motives to internationalisation that addresses the why question, the direction that luxury fashion brands undergo that addresses the where question, and the entry modes to global markets that addresses the how question to understand the internationalisation phenomenon (Bai et al., 2020).

2.5 Dynamic Capabilities

In the *pre-internationalisation stage* defined in the previous section, firms were required to develop capabilities that they could apply to convert their resources to sources of competitive advantage in order to derive a profit (Laaksonen & Peltoniemi, 2018). Teece (2017), and Laaksonen & Peltoniemi (2018) suggested that an organisation's overall capabilities portfolio operated on two tiers, namely, the foundational operational and ordinary capabilities that encompassed routine activities such as administration and basic governance; and above these, what they termed higher-order capabilities or dynamic capabilities. Dynamic capabilities were considered higher-order due to the fact that they were adaptable to, or at times could be used to instigate changes in the business landscape, crucial for shaping and adjusting a firm's business model to drive long-term competitive advantage and profitability (Teece, 2017). Teece (2017) further elucidated that management could, through high-order dynamic capabilities review organisational processes, anticipate future possibilities and devise appropriate business models to seize emerging opportunities, and determine the optimal organisational configuration based on existing structures and future plans. Laaksonen & Peltoniemi (2018) cautioned firms that dynamic capabilities alone didn't automatically translate to improved performance but require structural strength through quality ordinary capabilities that dynamic capabilities modify. They stated that it may superior performance will not be attained if operational capabilities are significantly subpar (Laaksonen & Peltoniemi, 2018).

Considering that the construct of luxury fell within the domain of marketing, the dynamic capabilities theory review was focused on marketing-specific capabilities.

2.6 International marketing strategies

Companies that pursued internationalisation, therefore needed to demonstrate how applying often marketing capabilities and strategies would lead to growth by adapting their domestic market capabilities when they first internationalised despite not having established brand equity in foreign markets (Samiee & Chiparanda, 2019).

2.6.1 Optimising marketing capabilities

Practitioners in any business venture, whether in the domestic or international context, utilised their marketing capabilities to create awareness and attract new customers, stimulate demand for their product, and to grow their share of the market in any market of operation (Samiee & Chiparanda, 2019).

One of the marketing capabilities and strategies that was employed for the internationalisation process was the relationship marketing strategy (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014). The relationship marketing strategy referred to the process of gathering information to assist African luxury fashion brands to identify and retain their best customers, as well as enhance customer value and profitability (Grönroos, 2016). This information was based on what attracted customers to African luxury fashion brands, how to maintain and improve relationships with said customers. The information gathered was also aligned with the components of the relationship marketing strategy namely empathy, bonding, communication, shared value, reciprocity, and trust (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014).

Empathy referred to comprehending the desires and goals of customers when it came to African luxury fashion brands, such as cultural elements with modern input or conventional input, and the uniqueness of such brands in different settings (Iqani, 2021). Bonding referred to the buyer and seller relationship of consumers of African luxury fashion brands, and the establishments that sell African luxury fashion brands on behalf of African luxury fashion

brand designers, or African luxury fashion brands' headquarters where they store their current fashion pieces or couture collection (Kaufmann, Petrovici, Gonçalves Filho et al., 2016). Communication referred to the exchange of gathered information by African luxury fashion brands on the identified customers and retaining them to ensure maximum customer satisfaction and profitability (Grönroos, 2016; Appiah-Nimo et al., 2023).

Shared value referred to partnering with like-minded organisations or individuals that have the same objectives and goals when it comes to African luxury fashion brands (Ko et al., 2019). Such organisations or individuals shared similar sentiments when it came to the progression of African luxury fashion brands, and considered various opportunities for internationalisation and to expand the consumers of such brands. Reciprocity referred to the exchange of valuable quality services, particularly African luxury fashion brands for profitable purposes (Khojastehpour & Johns; Virtanen et al., 2022). Trust referred to customers relying on the promises of African luxury fashion brands, and such brands maintaining their promises to their customers to heighten customer satisfaction (Iqani, 2021).

Creating a strategy for relationship marketing was an essential initial step in the internationalization process, as it offered a prominent avenue for engaging in foreign markets with minimal business risks (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014). This marketing approach enhanced the process of internationalisation through exports by emphasising the interaction between the exporter and foreign customers, as it effectively addressed various barriers to exporting, such as psychic distance (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014). This was validated by Samiee & Chiparanda (2019), because they also highlighted that the most often used method of internationalisation by emerging market SMEs, is exporting.

To concur that exporting was the mode primarily used, extant literature on marketing capabilities for international ventures also largely focused on export performance rather than other modes of entry (Samiee & Chiparanda, 2019; Martin, Javalgib & Ciravegnac, 2019; Morgan, Feng & Whitley, 2018; Tan & Sousa, 2015). Theoharakis, Angelis & Batsakis (2019) suggested that the primary reason for exporting as the most preferred and most attractive

mode of internationalisation, particularly for SMEs, is the reduced risk of investment, where focus for the internationalising SMEs was placed on developing an attractive product while reliance for the go-to-market activities such as sales and distribution was usually placed on the more knowledgeable host market partner.

According to Gregory, Ngo, & Karavdic (2019), e-commerce capabilities could also be adopted by small firms as they played a direct role in elevating a firm's distribution and communication efficiency, thereby resulting in improved performance in export venture markets. In contrast, the dynamic capabilities perspective emphasised the necessity for the firm to cultivate new capabilities to identify and promptly respond to opportunities; literature on export marketing combined both the conventional viewpoint and the dynamic capabilities perspective, indicating that marketing capabilities served as crucial indicators of an effective export venture marketing strategy, ultimately contributing to enhanced market performance (Gregory et al., 2019).

2.6.2 The dimensions of marketing capabilities

Tan & Sousa (2015) categorised marketing capabilities into four dimensions, namely product development, pricing, communication, and distribution. According to Caniato, Caridi & Moretto (2013), product development defined the material requirements, aesthetic characteristics, and style of various products that were produced by African luxury fashion brands. The material requirements, aesthetic characteristics, and style influenced the pricing of the various products designed and produced by African luxury fashion brands, in which the pricing was based on the cost, appearance, materials used, innovation, and quality (Curwen, Park & Sarkar, 2013). Communication and distribution was mainly based on the buyer and seller relationship between African luxury fashion brands and their consumers, in which both these dimensions contributed towards strengthening the trust for the buyer and seller relationship.

Each of these dimensions focused on the functional marketing mix-related dimensions but an additional set of capabilities, referred to as architectural capabilities, namely marketing

strategy planning and implementation, plus market orientation were essential in orchestrating the functional capabilities for better exploitation of the company's resources (Morgan et al., 2018; Joensuu-Salo, Sorama, Viljamaa et al., 2018; Theoharakis et al., 2019). These marketing strategy planning and implementation capabilities were further expanded to include capabilities such as the ability to service and support customers internationally and develop necessary local market competencies (Morgan et al., 2018).

Marketing capabilities, when effectively used, were said to enable the company to create a differentiation advantage (Martin et al., 2019). They argued that marketing communication was a key driver of performance in an international venture as it facilitated awareness of the company's offerings to the target audience, providing essential information on the attributes of the company's offering relative to competitors and drove positive perceptions about the brand to induce a positive response and an intention to purchase (Martine et al., 2019).

Morgan et al. (2018) proposed that, as the literature developed, and some studies were exploring the impact of marketing capabilities on different facets of internationalisation, such as multinational corporations (MNCs) and International Joint Ventures (IJVs) extending beyond the scope of exports, there was still an opportunity to align and understand the application of marketing capabilities for internationalising companies relative to the stage of internationalisation that the company was in. This was to determine if marketing capabilities development played any significant role in enabling a company's evolution from one stage of internationalisation to another (Morgan et al., 2018).

2.6.3 Marketing approaches for African luxury fashion brands

There were alternative internationalisation opportunities that African luxury fashion brands could pursue, such as establishing fashion capitals within the African continent to enable the fashion industry to better connect with the consumers in emerging markets, and showcase African luxury fashion brands' collections in the already established globalised fashion capitals (Godart, 2014). The initial internationalisation opportunity, of establishing fashion capitals was made possible through the existence of fashion week shows such as the South

African Fashion Week (SAFW), Mercedes Benz Fashion Week (MBFW), Swahili Fashion Week, Kenya Fashion Week, Lagos Fashion and Design Week, which were showcased in South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, and Nigeria respectively (Aziz, Salloum & Alexandre-Leclair, 2019). These different fashion weeks enabled such African countries to establish themselves as fashion capitals that worked towards attracting international customers and designers, as well as entrepreneurs to promote African luxury fashion brands to a wider market (Aziz et al., 2019).

The fashion weeks could also be curated in accordance with certain narratives, such as storytelling about the different materials, designs, patterns, metals or colour that usually spoke of African history and cultures (Aziz et al., 2019). African luxury fashion brands could employ this marketing strategy to internationalise, by spreading information about the deep history of their designs and products not only within emerging markets, but international markets as well (Godart, 2014). It was important to note that this internationalisation opportunity of establishing fashion capitals within African countries, had experienced previous challenges when it came to the marketing strategies that the African luxury fashion brands employed (Sharma et al., 2020).

Advertisement and communication strategies that were and continued to be employed by African luxury fashion brands such as social media platforms, word of mouth, websites, and fashion weeks for their consumers within emerging and international markets was still developing (Sharma et al., 2020). African luxury fashion brands had complete creativity freedom when it came to how they curated their brand on social media and on their websites; however, it restricted their ability to expand as other globalised luxury fashion brands had (Aziz et al., 2019). The reason for the inability of African luxury fashion brands to pursue above-the-line marketing strategies such as advertising in prestigious magazines and other media outlets, was due to limited budgets or the lack of capital as well as concerns of not being able to achieve the desired return on investment (Aziz et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2020).

One of the ways that African luxury fashion brands had pursued in addressing the challenge of the lack of the necessary capital for advertisement and communication purposes, entailed relying on publicity from partnerships with established globalised luxury fashion brands, as well as endorsements from public figures (Park & Harris, 2014). This approach often enabled African luxury fashion brands to pursue the second internationalisation opportunity of showcasing their collections in the already established globalised fashion capitals such as New York, Milan, Paris, and London (Brambilla, Sabet & Hosseini, 2021).

The second internationalisation opportunity of showcasing African luxury fashion brands' collections in established globalised fashion capitals, had become popular for several African luxury fashion designers and brands, in order to establish themselves in international markets (Brambilla et al., 2021). This provided African luxury fashion brands the opportunity to become familiar with the approaches that established globalised luxury fashion brands used such as debuting their latest collections' drop in annual or bi-annual fashion weeks. This not only influenced how they prepared for their different collections to showcase, but also informed how they structured or developed within the emerging fashion capitals in their home countries (Godart, 2014). African luxury fashion brands also gained additional consumers in the international markets when they made use of fashion weeks as an advertisement and communication strategy, which enabled them opportunities to engage with prestigious international magazines, other media outlets, and fashion buyers on their collections (Aziz et al., 2019).

Tran, Yazdanparast & Strutton (2019) highlighted that as an extension of publicity, product placement on celebrities and high fashion elitists was an effective strategy that influenced other potential consumers to want to purchase luxury fashion brands from emerging markets, because if the public figures they followed wore it, then it had to be of value.

Despite the various opportunities that African luxury fashion brands were exposed to, it was important for them to invest in their advertisement and communication strategies (Sharma et al., 2020). This would include seeking direct investments to acquire capital to advertise the African luxury fashion brands in prestigious magazines, or investing in emerging

opportunities that could be applied to advertise and communicate their products (Maguire, 2021).

2.7 Theoretical Anchor

The theoretical anchors of this study were the Uppsala model of internationalisation and the dynamic capabilities theories. The premise of using these theories was their underpinning of understanding the different stages of internationalisation, as well as the capabilities that brand companies aimed to exploit when they choose to internationalise and reach global expansion. According to Whitelock (2002), the Uppsala model of internationalisation was characterised by key features that were well-known to internationalising, like how luxury fashion brand companies expand their activities and production abroad over time, and in different phases.

The Uppsala model of internationalisation was also based on the knowledge development of luxury fashion brand companies, which could be explained through the concept of psychic distance (Whitelock, 2002). This concept could be best explained through the *pre-internationalisation stage*, because when luxury brand companies emerged into the scene, their target audience was often local markets that they were usually within proximity to; however, once these companies expanded, they reached new audiences based on the research that they undertook on their brand, and the desirability of their brand from consumers, which contributed to their knowledge development (O'Sullivan & Abosag, 2015). The use of this model helped in understanding the journey and experiences of African luxury fashion brands when they internationalised, in the context of the different stages of internationalisation and knowledge development.

The Uppsala model was augmented with the dynamic capabilities theory to assess the extent to which knowledge acquisition was employed for adapting to a dynamic environment and evolving business context. This information helped determine when these brands progress to the subsequent stage of internationalization according to the Uppsala model. From an international marketing perspective, the marketing capabilities framework was used

in relation to the extent to which African luxury fashion brands defined and used marketing capabilities to establish their brands and drive adoption in foreign markets.

These theories and frameworks were useful in understanding the journey and experiences of African luxury fashion brands when they internationalised. However, the literature was not extensive on luxury fashion brands originating from emerging markets, particularly Africa. This study was therefore significant due to the unique cultural aspects of these brands and the potential for growth in the luxury goods market. The internationalisation process and the international marketing strategies employed to drive consumer consideration and influence purchase intentions towards African luxury fashion brands were important areas of consideration for both academics and practitioners in the luxury goods field.

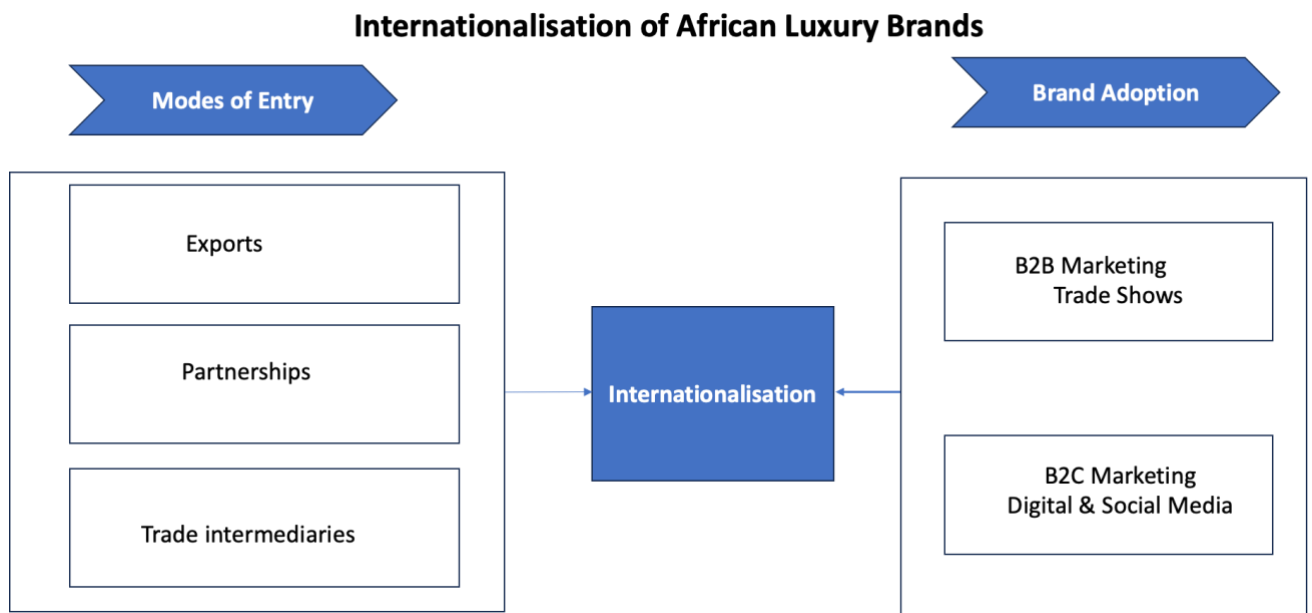


Figure 2.1: Research Framework (Researcher's Own, 2023)

2.8 Conclusion

Chapter 2 of the study focused on the internationalisation of emerging markets small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the luxury fashion industry, with a specific focus on African luxury brands. The chapter provided an overview of the internationalisation process and relevant terminologies and gave a perspective on the global luxury fashion industry as there was very limited academic literature specific to the luxury fashion industry and Africa as a producer. The chapter also outlined the internationalisation strategies adopted by emerging market brands. Additionally, the chapter discussed marketing strategies, including optimising marketing capabilities and the dimensions of marketing capabilities. The chapter concluded by establishing a theoretical anchor for the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 Introduction

This study aimed to address the gaps in knowledge identified concerning the internationalisation of African luxury fashion brands, particularly the modes of entry they adopt and the tactics they employ to drive demand for their products. The gaps in knowledge were previously discussed in Chapter 2. This study also sought to understand which marketing capabilities African luxury fashion brands employ and which have effectively enhanced the penetration of African fashion in foreign markets.

3.2 Research questions

The question that directed this study, was:

What modes of internationalisation do African luxury fashion brands prefer and what marketing capabilities and strategies do they use to drive adoption of their brands once they've internationalised?

The following sub questions were formulated:

1. What is the mode of internationalisation most commonly followed/preferred by African luxury fashion brands when they internationalise?
2. What opportunities motivate their choices of expansion and territories?
3. What strategies do African luxury fashion brands utilise to create demand, for and market their offering?
4. How do African luxury fashion brands develop their marketing capabilities to drive their business growth?

3.3 Conclusion for the chapter

In conclusion, this chapter summarised the questions the research endeavoured to answer based on the gaps in knowledge regarding the internationalisation and marketing strategies of African luxury fashion brands. The primary research question focused on the modes of internationalisation and marketing capabilities/strategies employed by these brands. The secondary research questions delved into specific aspects such as the preferred mode of internationalisation and the motivations behind expansion choices, as well as strategies for creating demand and marketing offerings and the development of marketing capabilities for business growth. This study aimed to fill the gap in academic literature and provide insights into the specific approach to internationalisation and marketing plus highlighted challenges and opportunities faced by African luxury fashion brands in the global market.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The research methodology section outlined the framework and structure that the researcher followed in collecting, organising, analysing, and presenting the research findings related to the study conducted (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016; Žukauskas, Vveinhardt & Andriukaitienė, 2018). This research methodology section provided a detailed explanation of how the research was conducted, highlighting the approach that was employed in designing the study; the sampling technique chosen; the data collection process that was followed; the method of data analysis, and relevant data quality and ethical considerations applied to this study (Žukauskas et al., 2018; Khathri, 2020).

4.2 Research Paradigm

The methodological approach that was used in this study is the **phenomenological qualitative approach**, which focused on gathering insights directly from participants on their experiences regarding the phenomenon of internationalisation and international marketing (Dodgson, 2017; Rahman, 2017).

The study centred on attempting to understand the experiences of the participants, which may have varied based on their interaction with the phenomenon, the **interpretivist** research paradigm was therefore the most appropriate philosophy as it focuses on individual cases or events, given the emphasis of the research being on what contributes towards the internationalisation of African luxury fashion brands. The research also looked at the challenges and opportunities experienced through the modes of internationalisation, which African luxury fashion brands adopted while also made sense of their approaches to marketing their brands (Dodgson, 2017; Rahman, 2017).

4.3 Research Design and Approach

A **single-phase exploratory procedure** was used to explore specific research questions in **semi-structured interviews** to address the research problem (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Given the study centred on engaging with African luxury fashion designers on their lived experiences concerning the phenomenon of internationalisation and international marketing, a **qualitative phenomenological inquiry research approach** was deemed the most appropriate (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4.4 Research Instrument

A semi-structured **interview guide** was the research instrument for this study, and it consisted of approximately 8-10 high-level questions that were used to gather data from the participants (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson et al., 2016). The semi-structured interview guide (see Error! Reference source not found.) was the most appropriate as it was not rigid and allowed for additional clarification questions to be asked during the interview discussions.

4.5 Population

Sampling enabled the researcher to determine who the participants of the study would be, being African luxury fashion brands (Creswell, 2014). Founders or senior executives who were responsible for defining the strategy of the African luxury fashion brands were sought as participants. They were chosen because they were assumed to be the most knowledgeable and with a high level of interest in engaging on the phenomenon of internationalisation (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). The targeted population for this study, therefore, was African luxury fashion brand owners or directors who were involved in internationalisation through marketing, financing, investment, and distribution (Koet al., 2019). These designer-run African luxury fashion brands were sampled to collect relevant information on the internationalisation process of African luxury fashion brands and the modes of internationalisation that they adopt.

To identify the population, the researcher used business sources that promote exposure and sales of African luxury fashion brands; namely, the digital marketplaces such as Merchants on Long and Industry Africa. The researcher also reviewed the brands that Birimian, the investment company that positions itself as a champion for African luxury and heritage, considers qualified to be referred to as African luxury (Birimian, n.d.; Industrie Africa, n.d.; Merchants on Long; n.d.).

The researcher also discovered a few profile pages such as Guzangs, Amiri (Amiri Prize), Tranoï, Creative Africa Nexus (Canex) and others on the social media platform Instagram, that promote and profile African designer brands, most of which fit the research criteria. To verify fit, the researcher conducted desktop research on some of the identified brands through Google searches, reviewing their social media pages and checking for mentions in top fashion publication websites such as Business of Fashion, Vogue, etc.

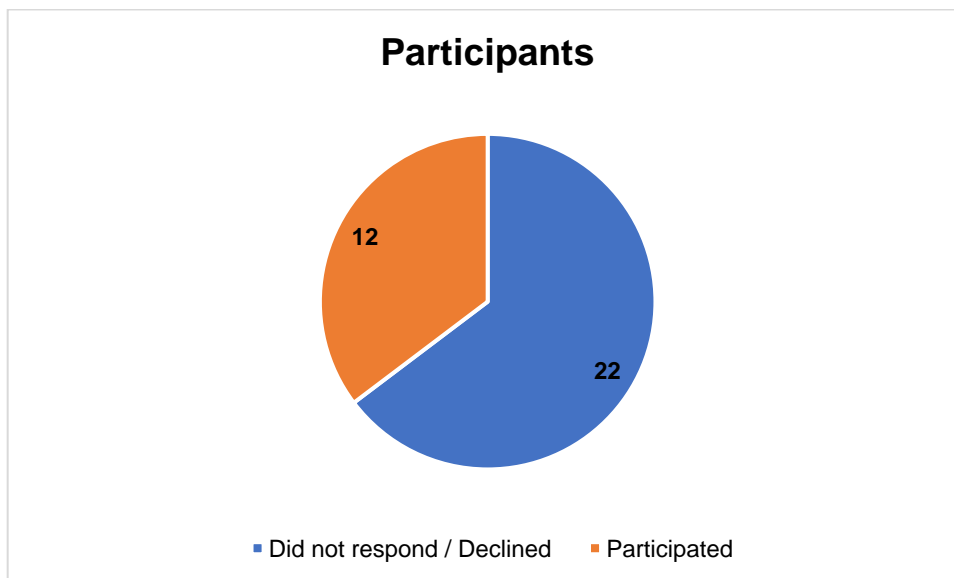


Figure 4.1: Total Sample size (Researcher's Own, 2023)

An initial twenty-two (22) potential participants were invited for interviews however only eight (8) responded affirmatively and only six (6) of those availed themselves immediately. A second round of requests was sent to the same batch of potential participants, with an additional two (2) availing themselves. To secure additional participants, further desktop research was conducted to identify other brands that fit the criteria; an additional twelve (12) requests were sent out resulting in an additional four (4) participants being secured.

Out of a total of 34 potential participants that were invited from across the continent only twelve (12) participants were interviewed face-to-face or online with Microsoft Teams. South African participants being the majority of the participants. To develop an understanding of the background of the participants, demographical data about the number of years the organisation had been in operation, country of origin and their staff complement were collected as presented below. The brands varied in terms of the number of years of operation from one (1) year to thirty-two (32) years; and the scale of operations from one (1) employee to over two hundred and eighty (280) employees. In terms of country of origin, it was the intention of the researcher to also get participants from different countries within the African continent in order to determine if there were country-specific nuances.

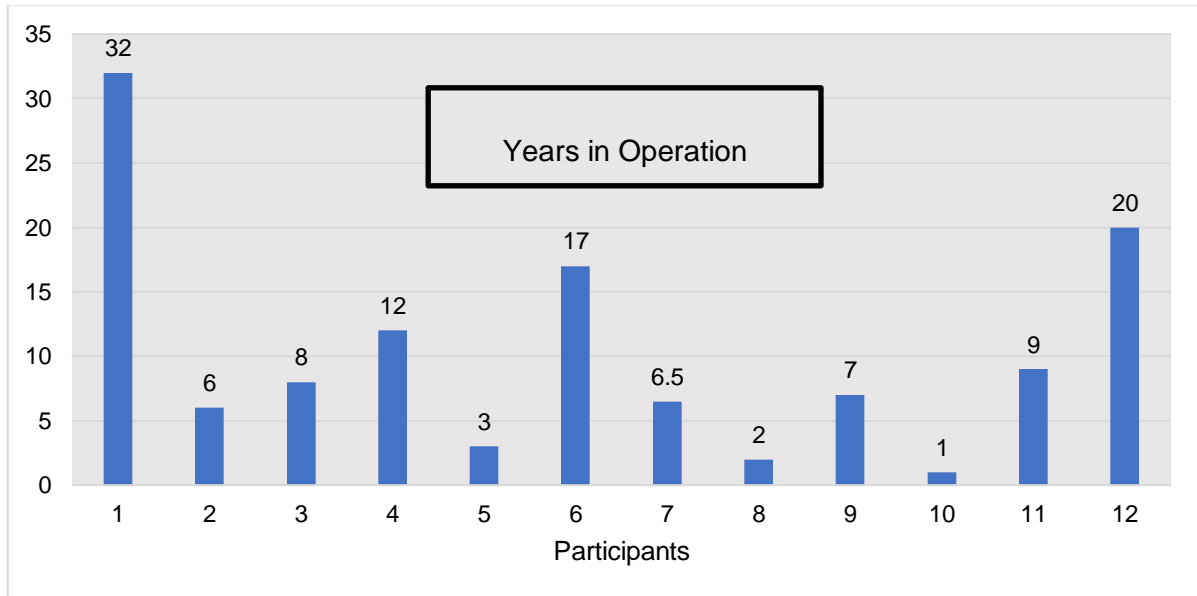


Figure 4.2: Number of years the participating organisations were in business (Researcher's Own, 2023)

The number of years of operating their businesses varied from one year, and the longest being 32 years. The researcher was interested in understanding whether the length of time of business operations yielded any significant differences in terms of approach and/or drivers to internationalisation. The intention was also to find out, whether the length of experience had any effect on their approach to how they marketed the businesses internationally.

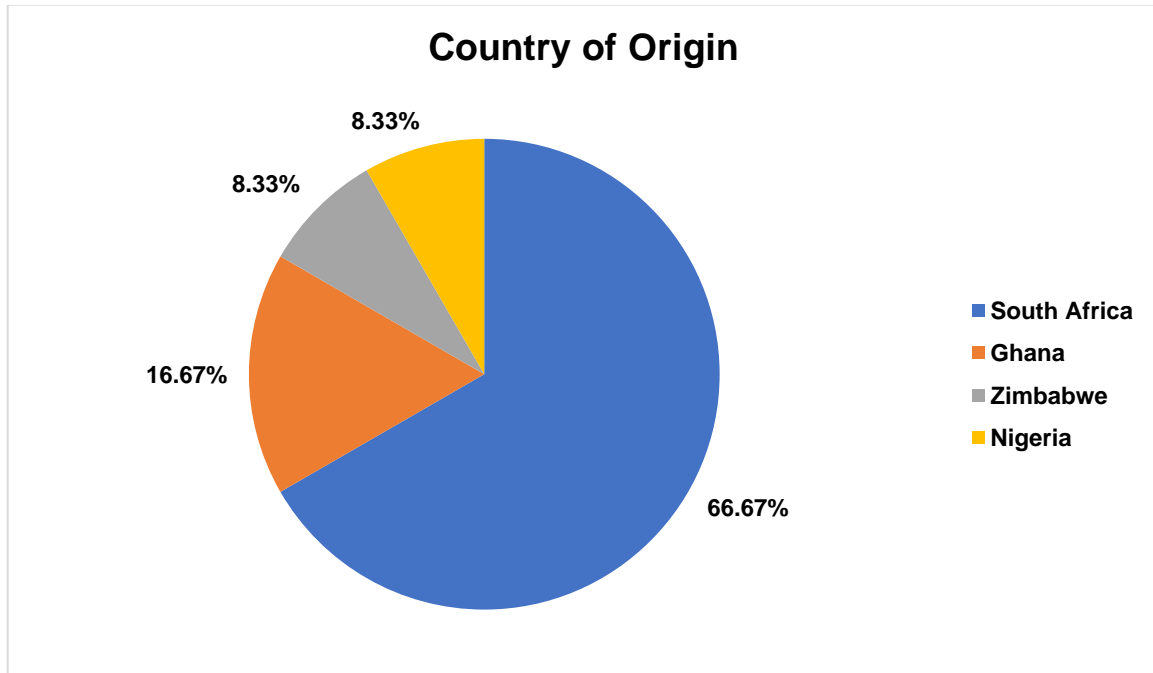


Figure 4.3: Country of origin of the participants (Researcher's Own, 2023)

The researcher selected the sample across Africa in order to understand if there were country specific nuances and factors to internationalisation. Based on secondary research from practitioner sources, the researcher discovered that Nigeria and Ghana were leading in West Africa and South Africa leading in Southern Africa. The researcher identified African luxury fashion brands from countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal etc. but most of the identified potential participants however did not respond to the request for participation resulting in the sample being 67% dominated by South Africa, 16.5% Ghana and 6.25% respectively by Zimbabwe and Nigeria. This data cannot be used to deduce if South Africa is the most active or has the highest number of internationalised brands as the sample size was moderately low.

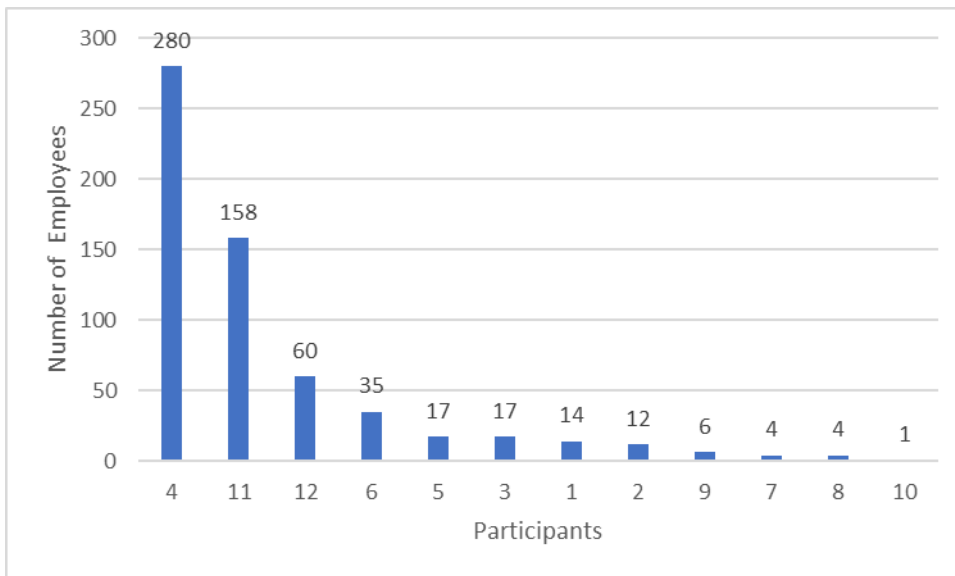


Figure 4.4: Staff compliment of the participating organisations (Researcher's Own, 2023)

The participants' businesses not only varied significantly in terms of number of years' experience but in size of operations and employee count as well. Even though turnover was not assessed as part of the study, some of the brands that mentioned being successful also had a significantly higher employee count. The brand that had operated the longest had significantly fewer employees than half of its counterparts and this could be the reason why even though it's been around longer, it still operated in fewer markets.

Table 4.1: Summary of demographical data (Researcher's Own, 2023)

Participant	YEARS IN OPERATION	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	INTERVIEW TYPE	INTERVIEW LENGTH	STAFF COMPLEMENT
1	32	Nigeria	Online via Microsoft Teams	57 minutes	14
2	6	South Africa	Online via Microsoft Teams	49 minutes	12
3	8	South Africa	Online via Microsoft Teams	33 minutes	17
4	12	South Africa	Face to Face	75 minutes	280
5	3	Ghana	Online via Microsoft Teams	51 minutes	17
6	17	South Africa	Face to Face	37 minutes	35
7	6,5	South Africa	Online via Microsoft Teams	71 minutes	4
8	2	Ghana	Online via Microsoft Teams	45 minutes	4
9	7	South Africa	Online via Microsoft Teams	78 minutes	6
10	1	South Africa	Online via Microsoft Teams	30 minutes	1
11	9	Zimbabwe	Online via Microsoft Teams	80 minutes	158
12	20	South Africa	Online via Microsoft Teams	80 minutes	60

4.6 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis that this study focused on was the **owners or senior directors of African luxury fashion brands in Africa** who were responsible for their respective company's strategic choices for expansion and growth of the businesses (Kumar, 2018).

4.6.1 Sampling Method and Sample Size

This study made use of the **non-probability purposive, convenient sampling technique** focusing on the targeted population, since they would be more likely to provide appropriate and useful information on the research problem. This sampling method was most appropriate as the researcher used her judgement on who may be an ideal fit to participate in the study, avoiding randomly picking participants who may not be suitable (Rahi, 2017; Campbell, Greenwood, Prior et al., 2020).

The **sample size** drawn from the targeted population was initially twenty-two (22) founders or senior executives of companies that were African luxury fashion brands considered to be leading in fashion across various countries in Africa.

The researcher contacted the identified population telephonically and/or via email to invite them to participate in this study and only those who were willing to be then sent official invitations for face-to-face or virtual interviews at a time convenient to them. When the researcher failed to acquire a satisfactory number of participants, secondary data sources were used. These included global fashion publications, such as Vogue and Business of Fashion, and social media pages that profiled luxury fashion brands. From these sources, an additional sample of 12 participants were contacted, which resulted in the researcher getting twelve confirmed participants to interview.

4.7 Data Collection Tools and Techniques

Data was collected through secondary and primary sources. Secondary data was any data that was previously collected, interpreted, and recorded concerning the constructs of this study. Secondary data was mainly used for the literature review to better understand the phenomenon and was sourced through academic books, journals, articles, newspapers, and media statements on luxury fashion brands and market penetration, and properly cited and listed in the reference list (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016; Dodgson, 2017). The secondary data assisted in terms of identifying gaps in the existing body of knowledge, which informed the

research questions and questions posed to the participants during the semi-structured interviews to obtain primary data.

The researcher used search engines such as Google to discover practitioner articles and publications relevant to the research questions. Search terms such as African luxury fashion brands, African luxury fashion designer brands, and emerging market luxury fashion brands were used to crawl the internet and identify the most appropriate sources.

Academic aligned search engines such as Google Scholar, and the University of Pretoria online library were used to discover relevant journal articles. Most of the academic literature however was limited in terms of the combined search terms that answer each of the two main constructs of the research. The researcher therefore broke down the searches to 'luxury fashion brands', 'internationalisation of luxury fashion brands', 'luxury marketing', 'international marketing', 'African luxury fashion brands', in order to locate the most appropriate sources.

Primary data is data that had not been documented anywhere before. The collection of data for this specific study was gathered through **semi-structured interviews** of approximately **one hour** involving African luxury fashion brand owners or directors as the source of data (Creswell, 2014; Rahman, 2017). These semi-structured interviews were conducted during the month of September 2023 depending on participant availability and convenience. A few of the participants and potential participants indicated that this time of year was not suitable for interview availability as it clashed with various global fashion weeks where they showcased their latest seasonal collections. As a result, a few interviews were conducted in October to align with participant availability.

A **formal request** was made before the collection of primary data via email and telephonic communication to **explain the aim of the study**, and to **resolve any concerns** that the identified participants had. The **informed consent letter** was shared with the participants once they agreed to participate in the study; the semi-structured interviews were then

scheduled during a time convenient for both the researcher and the participant to collect primary data between September and October 2023.

With the permission granted by interviewees, the researcher made use of the **recording feature of the meeting software Microsoft Teams for virtual interviews and a mobile device recording functionality** for the face-to-face interviews (Freeman & De Decker, 2021). The purpose of using the Microsoft Teams or Zoom applications was that they provided the meeting organiser with the ability to record and/or transcribe in a transparent manner as all meeting participants were made aware of the recording thus prompting consent and integrity of the data (Al-Qora'n, Salem & Gordon, 2022).

The Microsoft Teams application **recordings have been stored** on the researcher's laptop in a data collection folder that is linked to the iCloud and Google Drive cloud storage facilities for data backup purposes (Cahyani, Rahman, Glisson et al., 2017). The researcher used professional transcription services and the professional transcriber signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) to confirm acceptance not to disclose the researcher data or participants (Krenz & Abhinit, 2021). The transcriber was granted temporary access to a folder on the researcher's Google Drive to access the recordings. Upon completion of the transcriptions, the transcriber was advised to delete any files that may have still been stored on their laptop and access to the researcher's Google Drive was revoked. Throughout, **participants remained anonymous**, and their contributions will remain confidential, not disclosing names, but rather using codes to distinguish contributions.

4.8 Data Confidentiality

The digital platforms, namely iCloud and Google Drive were used to store the recordings and findings of the study digitally. On both of these platforms, there are source data and data findings folders that are **password protected**, and only the research supervisor of this study would be granted access to the findings on the Google Drive to maintain data confidentiality (Ethicist, 2015). The researcher used both platforms for redundancy to ensure

that if one platform crashes or stops operating in the next few years, a proper data backup is available.

4.9 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from this study, as it was the most appropriate method for analysing textual data about a particular phenomenon. Thematic analysis was most appropriate for understanding the experiences and opinions of research subjects by looking for patterns within the text, i.e., common themes in the data (Clarke & Braun, 2018; Lawless & Chen, 2019).

According to Scharp & Sanders (2019), analysing data using thematic analysis was an approach that followed a process of organising collected research data into codes and identifying clear patterns that were then used to interpret the findings of the study. Finlay (2021) suggested that thematic analysis could be approached from a “scientifically descriptive or artfully interpretive” view, depending on the research paradigm of the study, and that a good thematic analysis showed strong linkages between the research objectives, the methodology applied, and the researcher’s beliefs.

The six-step framework for data analysis as defined by Clarke & Braun (2018) was used to analyse the primary data from the semi-structured interview transcripts and to interpret the results of the study. This six-step framework for thematic analysis is outlined below:

- *Step 1: Become familiar with the data:*

The researcher acquired an understanding of the primary data by reviewing the interview transcripts comprehensively in order to understand the premise of the primary data obtained (Lawless & Chen, 2019).

- *Step 2: Generate initial codes:*

In this step, the researcher, organised data logically and meaningfully, segmenting it into small units aligned with the research questions to establish the initial codes (Lawless & Chen, 2019).

- *Step 3: Search for themes:*

Within this step, the researcher explored the generated codes from step 2 to identify patterns capturing noteworthy or relevant data (Lawless & Chen, 2019).

- *Step 4: Review themes:*

Involved reviewing and confirming the preliminary themes discovered in step 3, as well as assessing the qualitative data that supports them (Lawless & Chen, 2019).

- *Step 5: Define and name themes:*

This step dealt with refining the discovered themes to clarify the essence of each issue and analysed the relation between the themes and subthemes (Lawless & Chen, 2019).

- *Step 6: Write-up:*

This step concluded the analysis process by preparing a report that summarised the analysis, discussed and interpreted the findings in relation to the research objectives (Lawless & Chen, 2019).

The Principles of Trustworthiness

To maintain the integrity of the data and the research findings, it was important to apply rigour by employing data quality strategies. Aguinis & Solarino (2019), argued for more transparency in how qualitative studies are conducted, to ensure replicability. The researcher ensured the detailed methodological approach and research outcomes were

provided in the final research report. Amankwaa (2016) and Abdalla., Oliveira, Azevedo et al. (2018, p.1) suggested that qualitative data collection needed to cover four quality dimensions of “credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability” to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

Credibility tested how believable the participant’s account of the phenomenon of internationalisation is (Salvador, 2016). The researcher was observant of the participants’ mannerisms and explanations of the phenomena and constructs, against the secondary data to test how believable and detailed their account of the phenomena is. To ensure the participants were credible sources regarding the phenomenon, the researcher asked two primary questions about their definition of a luxury fashion brand and their perception or the perception of their customers of whether they would be classified as one. This also helped the researcher to establish if their views aligned with what the literature intimated.

Transferability was applied to test whether the findings on internationalisation and marketing capabilities could be applied to different disciplines, contexts or other similar businesses, hence encouraging detail of contributions rather than general sweeping statements, based on experience (Abdalla et al., 2018).

Dependability was maintained by making certain that the study procedure was transparent and well-documented. This encompassed offering a comprehensive elucidation of the research methodology, data gathering techniques, and processes for data analysis to enable other researchers to reproduce the study.

Reliability was used to test if the findings were consistent throughout the study, focusing on the research questions and relevant terminology, and somewhat aligned with the secondary data (Amankwaa, 2016). The researcher double-checked the transcriptions against the recordings to further ensure the reliability and accuracy of the data which was to be analysed.

Confirmability ensured that the findings were objective and based on the participant's accounts and not the researcher's bias (Abdalla et al., 2018). The researcher declared any predispositions regarding the phenomenon being researched. The researcher also requested the participants to define luxury in their own terms as well as confirm if their consumers and themselves perceived their brand as a luxury fashion brand in order to confirm suitability for the study.

This study used data validity and reliability instruments prescribed in theory to ensure rigour. The researcher focused on construct validity (using the correct terminology in the interviews) and internal reliability to regulate the interviews and feedback collected to ensure alignment with the research objectives and to ensure extrapolated findings were reliable (Taherdoost, 2016; Hajjar, 2018).

Abdalla et al. (2018) proposed triangulation as an appropriate strategy for ensuring quality in qualitative research. Although they highlighted that scholars differed in viewpoints, they still insisted that triangulation be considered a useful strategy to eliminate the researcher's bias. Triangulation involved the researcher looking at the same phenomenon through the lens of different data sources, with multiple participants being interviewed until no new evidence emerged. (Abdalla et al., 2018).

4.10 Limitations

Due to the nature of the study and the identified gaps in the literature, there was not enough participation across the continent as African luxury fashion brands were still a developing phenomenon. Further, most of the participants invited to participate in the study were not very willing to engage for various reasons, some of them citing a lack of capacity as they were busy preparing to showcase at fashion weeks in their home countries and in global fashion capitals in developed markets. Despite this, the researcher managed to gather sufficient responses to address the research problem.

Due to English being the language that was used for ease of interpretation by the researcher, another limitation was the elimination of some of the identified luxury fashion brands that came from Francophone (French-speaking African) countries due to the language barrier unless they could comprehend and converse in English. This limited participants to mainly Anglophone (English-speaking) countries. This may be perceived as the study not being representative of all African luxury fashion brands, but limited to mainly those from Anglophone countries or those who have a good comprehension and fluency in the English language.

4.11 Ethical Considerations

This study employed ethical principles by respecting all the participants who contributed to this body of knowledge. Research ethics were not considered purely from a governance perspective but as a critical aspect of research. The research ethics provided a sense that the researcher **established trust** with participants, grounded on acceptable societal values. Also the participants had comfort that they were not just being used as an information source but that they contributed to the development of the body of knowledge (Žukauskas et al., 2018). Participants **were not coerced or paid to participate** in the study. The tone used to engage with participants was **informative, gentle, and professional** to develop trust between the participants and the researcher as recommended by Gajjar (2013).

Once the study was concluded, collected primary data was **stored on the iCloud and Google Drive digital storage facilities for a period of ten years** as prescribed by the Gordon Institute of Business Science. Only the researcher has access to the raw data, transcriptions, and findings. The supervisor and the Gordon's Institute of Business Science would be granted access to the data upon completion of the research.

Ethical clearance for this study was applied for, from the Gordon Institute of Business Science – University of Pretoria Ethics Committee before data was collected from the research participants. The ethical clearance protects the participants by ensuring that if there are any ethical discrepancies, they can be reported to the institution's Ethics Committee to

avoid misconduct. Any **participants who decided to no longer participate in the study, faced no repercussions**, and trust between the researcher and participants was not compromised (Davis, Tan, Miller et al., 2021). The researcher **acknowledged and referenced all the sources of information used in this study** to abide by the Gordon Institute of Business Science – University of Pretoria’s plagiarism rules and regulations to avoid misconduct, that may result in severe consequences (Masic, 2013).

All participants were requested to give **informed consent** to the use of their contributions in an academic report where the names of participants are withheld (see Error! Reference source not found.).

4.12 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter offered a summary of the research paradigm, design, and approach applied in the study. It delved into details about the research instrument, population, and unit of analysis. The sampling method and sample size were also discussed. Additionally, the chapter defined the data collection tools and techniques used, and addressed the measures taken to maintain data confidentiality. The data analysis approach was outlined, along with considerations of data quality, reliability, and transparency. The chapter also highlighted the limitations of the study in covering participation from a broader set of countries. Despite this, the researcher was able to gather enough findings to address the research problem. The chapter also mentioned the ethical considerations that were taken into account during the study.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The research approach section was summarised in the previous chapter, which gave a thorough explanation of how the study was designed, how the sampling technique was selected, how the data was collected, how the data was analysed, and how pertinent data quality and ethical considerations were applied to this investigation. This chapter presents the findings from the interviews conducted as part of this study. In total, 12 luxury fashion brand owners were interviewed. Based on the initial selection criteria, that is, a brand established within the African continent, classified as a luxury fashion brand and selling its products and services beyond its country of origin, the twelve brands interviewed matched the criteria albeit having different international penetration levels.

The brands varied in terms of the number of years of operation from one (1) year to thirty-two (32) years; and the scale of operations from one (1) employee to over two hundred and eighty (280) employees. In terms of country of origin, it was the intention of the researcher to get participants from different countries within the African continent to determine if there were country-specific nuances as outlined in the previous chapter.

One of the key insights the researcher discovered was that the period between September and November was a key season for these types of brands/companies to do business prospecting and showcases of their latest collections explaining the unavailability of most. Those that responded and participated or responded and declined participation did indicate that from July they start preparing production of new collections and do the international showcases between September and November. This was key to note for any researchers that may wish to conduct studies focused on this sector in future.

5.2 Findings

The aim of the study was to explore the measures that drive internationalisation and marketing strategies of African luxury fashion brands as well as the challenges, if any, they face in establishing themselves in foreign markets. The study aimed to understand the preferred mode(s) of internationalisation, motivations for expansion, strategies for creating demand and marketing their offerings, and the development of marketing capabilities for business growth. Using semi-structured interviews, the researcher collected qualitative data from the twelve participants in order to answer the research questions:

- *Research question 1:* What is the mode of internationalisation most commonly followed/preferred by African luxury fashion brands when they internationalise?
- *Research question 2:* What opportunities motivate their choices of expansion and territories?
- *Research question 3:* What strategies do African luxury fashion brands utilise to create demand, for and market their offering?
- *Research question 4:* How do African luxury fashion brands develop their marketing capabilities to drive their business growth?

5.3 Development of themes

The researcher interviewed the 12 participants in semi-structured interviews. Written transcripts in Microsoft Word files were created from the interview data in order to facilitate the analysis. The stages described by Clarke & Braun (2018) were followed in the thematic analysis of the data. The researcher read through the interview transcripts to become well-versed with the data, post the interviews. The first codes were extracted to arrange the data logically and usefully, breaking it down into manageable chunks that corresponded to the particular research questions. In the process of looking for themes, the generated codes were then analysed for patterns that contained relevant or intriguing data. In order to make

sure the themes found in this step matched the goals and objectives of the research and if there was enough qualitative evidence to support them, they were examined, updated, and verified. The last stage was to refine the themes by evaluating the relationships between the themes, subthemes, categories and the major subject as well as articulating the essence of each issue. A total of 156 codes were extracted which were then grouped into related categories, from which 20 subthemes and four (4) main themes emerged.

As shown in Figure 5.1, a theme mind map was created to serve as the study's framework.

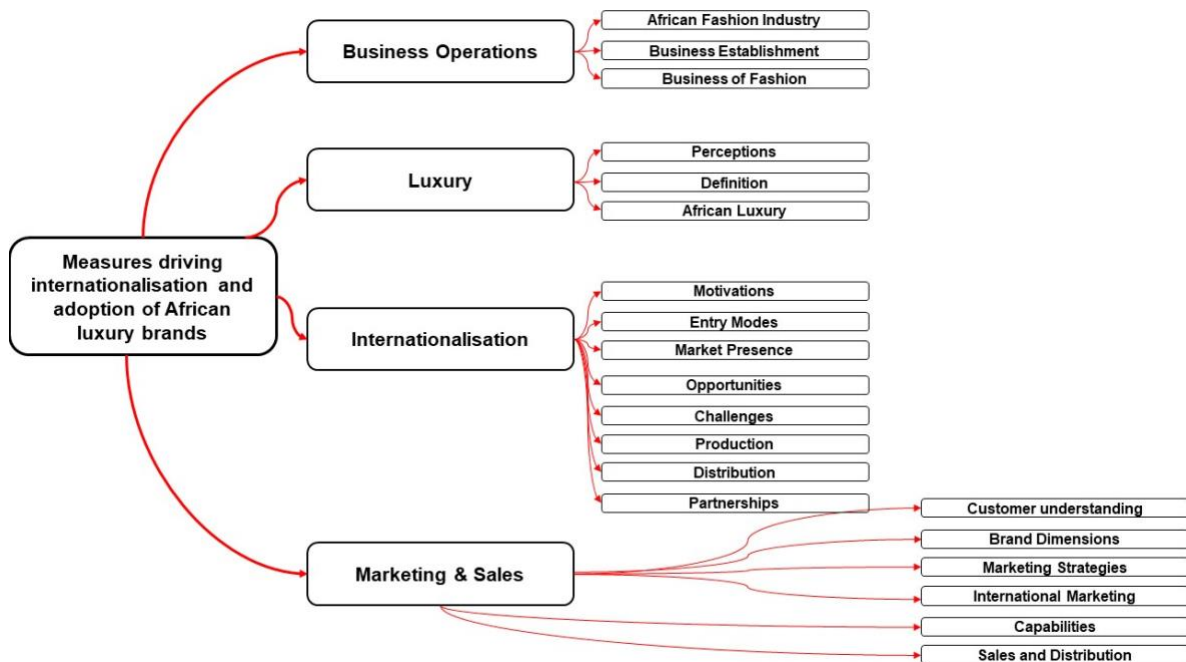


Figure 5.1: Theme Mind Map - Measures driving the internationalisation of African luxury fashion brands (Researcher's Own, 2023).

The study's findings were presented using the above mind map as a framework. Before diving into the themes that emerged, the researcher also observed the general emotions and attitudes of the participants. With the participants having different levels of experience in their businesses and in internationalisation, their attitudes to certain aspects were slightly nuanced yet congruent. One thing they mentioned is the definite opportunity for luxury

fashion brands of African descent in the global luxury market. Most participants highlighted that their desire for global expansion in the luxury clothing industry was largely driven by seeking business growth from a financial perspective, but also the goal of shifting the narrative about Africa while promoting African culture. Some participants shared their personal journeys to establish themselves as credible in this space. One obtained a PhD in order to develop a framework they could use in growing their business, while another spent six months in New York perfecting their craft and skills.

" So, my PhD was not really for anybody. It wasn't even for the title Doctor. It really was to create a powerful framework within our own brand so that we would be able to do it right. We would be able to work with people right and we'd be able to essentially build those communities through design and say what we said and meant what we meant. And that was the reason why we did all this so that ,we fell, but we were able to get back again, using a framework that took me at three years of very lonely time." (Participant 11)

"2018, I took 6 months off, and I went to work for Carolina Herrera in New York. So it's really about teaching myself new skills and constantly learning and constantly upskilling myself. We used to outsource a lot of the beading to India, now I've trained the staff so that we can do the same beading here." (Participant 6)

It was evident from the discussions that these brands were passionate about promoting the African luxury fashion market globally; they had a strong belief that African craftsmanship should be recognised as worthy of luxury status. A few highlighted the challenges of establishing a brand in this space where there was limited clientele potential in their home markets due to African consumers' attitudes towards premium or high-priced goods. Hence international expansion became the only avenue for growth.

The themes that emerged and related subthemes and categories were discussed at length in the below sections.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Business Operations

Three sub-themes, each with various categories, emerged to summarise the findings related to the business operations of these brands as the main theme. This section highlighted the types of operations that the brands had set up to enable their capabilities pre and during internationalisation.

Table 5.1: Theme 1: Business Operations

Subthemes	Emerging Theme
1.1: African Fashion Industry	1: Business Operations
1.2: Business Establishment and Growth	
1.3: Business of Fashion	

5.3.1.1 Subtheme 5.1: African Fashion Industry

Balancing customer expectations and local market affordability: A few brands mentioned the challenges of focusing only on the local market for growth being the inability to balance meeting customer expectations of an attractive price whilst still delivering the level of value that the brand is about. They discussed the importance of understanding and accommodating local customer preferences but were worried about the potential risk of becoming fast fashion brands. To overcome this, the brands were considering re-evaluating their position as premium luxury fashion brands and making changes to their value chain and business pipeline. This would involve adding more segments to their target market and adjusting pricing strategies. Their aim however was noted that they did not want to enter the fast fashion space and thus few have ventured into incorporating an accessories range

which is more affordable than the clothing category while others have resorted to creating specific ready-to-wear lines that were more affordable.

*“So what I did was I...you need to think on your feet, need to optimise on the opportunities. We launched an SKU that was significantly street, right, like just one line, 2 items, that’s it and it moved so fast. Price point was right...It was so fast...?”
(Participant 9)*

“So we immediately shifted and it actually opened up a whole other side of the brand, which is actually leading the brand of the moment, which is t-shirts, hoodies, shoes, accessories.” (Participant 6)

5.3.1.2 Subtheme 5.2: Business Establishment and Growth

According to the participants, business establishment referred to the process of starting and growing a fashion brand. It involved various steps such as establishing the brand in their country of origin before seeking international expansion. They elaborated on their business models and the sizes of their operations.

On the aspect of growth through establishing themselves globally, they cited that it involved showcasing at international events, collaborating with others, and expanding into different markets. They believed that the successful establishment and growth of the business were influenced by factors such as market appetite for African luxury fashion brands, government support, networking, and recognising global demand for luxury goods. The following were contributions of how businesses were established and were operated by the participants. How they actually drove growth was discussed further under the theme of Marketing and Sales.

Business model: Some participants started out as couture brands and realised that the intricacies and time involved in developing a garment for an individual were limiting in generating profits and a broader client base, which is one of the reasons why they had since shifted to focusing on ready-to-wear primarily, with couture being a smaller percentage of

their business. Others started out as small businesses producing woven bags in their country of origin but soon realised that specialised skills for certain materials such as leather were lacking and therefore saw an opportunity to have additional production in different countries such as Ecuador and Tunisia depending on the material used relative to the skillset in a country.

“Around the early 90s, there was a recession so a lot of boutiques and stores that were selling clothes started closing down. So because we were already doing a lot of wedding dresses, I now veered more into couture, so that’s when the business took its course and gradually grew from that. And then we went back into ready-to-wear when I opened the shop in Lagos, Nigeria where I am based now” (Participant 1)

“All those types of things were born through the need of creating a new income, where we couldn’t sell wedding dresses. And the whole thing shifted where my business used to be 90% couture, it is now a point where it is 80% ready to wear and only 20% couture. Which is the way I like it.” (Participant 4)

“Okay, so our products, we’ve got three separate products that we make, so we’ve got two, we make leather handbags as well, leather handbags with straw and then just particularly just leather handbags, and of course, the macrame product. So, the macrame product is made solely in Zimbabwe. The leather and straw is made in Ecuador. But again, this is a whole project that we do about bridging culture through design. And then the soli(sp) leather is made in Tunisia, which is in Africa.” (Participant 11)

Company Structure: What stood out was that the businesses followed different models in structuring their companies; some operated on an end-to-end inhouse value chain while others managed certain capabilities internally and outsourced others. For those that outsourced certain activities such as production, there was a recognition that at a certain level of growth, the business could have to consider in-housing those. Some of the

considerations around in-housing were motivated by the need to have control over production quality. The researcher observed that despite the size of the business, there was potential and opportunity to internationalise. However, those businesses that had developed scale in their businesses seemed to overcome the challenges outlined in the internationalisation section better.

5.3.1.3 Subtheme 5.3 Business of Fashion

One theme that emerged from the codes with regards to ensuring the brands prepared and set up their business operations for global competition was that of understanding the business of fashion and not only relying on one's creativity and products to attain success.

There was mention of the significance of formal education and on-the-job experience for aspiring designers before trying to start their own brands. The participants suggested prioritising acquiring skills through formal education and gaining practical experience in the industry. They referenced that their counterparts in markets that value the business of fashion such as Paris and New York went through rigorous programs to understand the value chain of a luxury fashion brand. A few highlighted that through partnerships such as those facilitated by AfreximBank and Birimian, they had been able to grasp this knowledge and apply it to their brand development and market growth activities.

"I'm not talking about just putting a product in front of buyers when you haven't invested in the back end of the business, right? Cause the manufacturing is part of it. The business growth is part of it. You know, the allowing of the brand to function as an actual business, it is another, and also making sure that things are calculated enough for that growth strategy" (Participant 9)

"I had no knowledge about the business of fashion and you know how to shoot an editorial lookbook. I literally didn't have any idea, so my friend linked me up to working with Christie Brown and then I worked with the design team and then I worked with the retail team. So that's where I got most of my knowledge. In fact, the business of

fashion from how to advertise your product, how to talk to customers, how to go about your creative process.” (Participant 8)

“There was not much of a business of fashion. It was just people making clothes, just selling clothes. But you're looking at it today we're starting to say let us build the business of fashion in Africa. And we're not selling African fashion, we're selling the business of fashion because there's a big difference.” (Participant 12)

“Because the designers now are changing the whole narrative of Africa, but more so, it's just really important to understand the business of fashion, which is something that creatives don't always think about.” (Participant 11)

5.3.2 Theme 2: The World of Luxury

The participants discussed the world of luxury as being one characterised by exclusivity, high fashion, celebrities, and the use of high-quality materials and craftsmanship. The different participant brands had different focuses, some on heritage and legacy building whilst others focus on novelty and edginess. They described luxury fashion brands as brands with history, a story to tell or a point of view, and high-quality products. They also mentioned the importance of time, passion, and devotion in creating products that can attract a premium status. Overall, luxury was seen as providing exclusivity, high-quality items, and a unique and higher experience for customers. They believed African luxury is unique as it embraced African aesthetics, patterns and artistic approaches.

Table 5. 2: Theme 2: The World of Luxury

Subthemes	Emerging Theme
2.1: Perceptions	2: The World of Luxury
2.2: Definition	
2.3: African Luxury	

5.3.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: Perceptions

Perception of African luxury brands: Some participants appreciated the celebration and adoption of African luxury fashion brands in global markets. The lesser established brands recognised that the pioneering efforts by some of the more established brands have paved the way. While that may have been the case, some did express frustration about the perception of African craftsmanship in the luxury market. They highlighted that there were still consumers who perceived their products to be of inferior quality. The participants highlighted the importance of product placement and physical market presence so that consumers get to touch and feel their products.

“So, when we started, we’d always had an interest in the European market, so we had attended 2 or 3 showrooms in Paris to try and break into the international market. That was challenging because the advisors would say buyers like our brands, but they want consistency, so they want you to come back for three seasons consistently so that they know that this brand is sticking around. And that is challenging for an African brand because it’s not like I’m taking a bus to Cape Town.” (Participant 7)

The other aspect they highlighted was the perception from large retailers, they wished to wholesale to, that African brands could be 'fly-by-nights' and did not have the ability to grow and be in the industry long. Buyers preferred to deal with brands they had seen at fashion weeks or showrooms for at least three seasons back to back. Moreover, the participants indicated that the buyers had a misconception that the brands may not be able to deliver at the scale and volumes required by these brands consistently.

"But, you can understand from their perspective, that they are going to spend a lot of money they're giving you a 72,000-pound order. They really have to be sure. They are used to working with markets in Italy, in Paris, Turkey in Portugal, and there you are, they look at your product, they are absolutely wild about it. But what they want to know is if they ordered 300 of them, one, are you going to be able to deliver and also two, is it going to be consistent?" (Participant 11)

5.3.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Definition

The subtheme delved into the definition of what constituted a luxury fashion brand. It discussed various aspects and highlighted the dimensions of luxury from the perspective of the brand owners, and these included, exclusivity, high-quality materials, craftsmanship, aesthetics, and the association with celebrities and high fashion. The input also explored different perspectives on luxury and how it was defined by individuals. Some of the participants referenced the positioning of brands such as Louis Vuitton, Hermes, Dior, Gucci, and Off-White, and drew from how these brands had associated themselves with a narrative and dimensions such as legacy, heritage, history, exclusivity and quality.

"My definition of luxury is...it would be the heritage of the brand, if you look at your Louis Vuitton, your Hermes, Dior, Gucci, they all thrive on their heritage, the number of years they've been around, and the excellent workmanship and the aesthetics in their designs as well as the material they use when they're producing their designs; and obviously the quality of their products." (Participant 2)

Additionally, there seemed to be an emphasis on the use of natural fibres, handwork, and indigenous textiles and patterns in luxury couture. These brands, mostly having been birthed in this millennium, appreciated the importance of embracing sustainability, community development, and ethical practices as part of their brands' DNA.

“Couture lends itself to luxury because couture is high-end and we use natural fibres, so the rules stand when I started is that you always have to use natural fibres. So natural fibres being like silks, linen, wools, leather. So those are the natural fibres and they're usually more expensive. Couture also has to do with exclusivity.”
(Participant 1)

“When people talk about sustainability, they don't know that it can be in a lovely space. The fact that someone can wear recycled pieces, doesn't make it cheap. I always say that if I'm going to produce something that is ethical, I'm going to get more local artisans involved, use more natural fibres; and these are things that are costly.” (Participant 5)

Exclusivity: According to the participants, luxury fashion brands were associated with exclusivity and providing high-quality, prestigious goods and services. They aimed to intrigue and were not intended for mass market consumption. The participants discussed the concept of luxury and its association with exclusivity, high fashion, celebrities and influencers, and unique art however one brand pointed out that they were uncomfortable to be positioned as a luxury fashion brand based on exclusion due to one's pocket size and preferred to refer to exclusivity in relation to exclusive taste.

“My belief of a luxury brand is a brand that offers exclusivity, and beautiful products that are made to the best, highest quality standards...And that offers luxury because as I said earlier, luxury is also about exclusivity. The fact that there's not a lot of it makes it exclusive and increases the price a bit” (Participant 1)

*“We don’t necessarily want to be exclusive to a certain demographic, or a certain class. But I think I would describe luxury as doing what you want, wearing what you want, not being influenced by trends, not being persuaded by what’s happening around you but doing what you want. I would consider that luxury, not a price tag.”
(Participant 7)*

Legacy: The participants discussed the importance of legacy, longevity, and quality in luxury brands. They extend their legacy in relation to cultural heritage where they embrace the designs and textiles their ancestors used such as beadwork patterns, and unique textiles of Burkina Faso and mention the use of unique materials like the Nigerian Aso-Oke in their couture creations as a preservation of African craft. Overall, the participants highlighted the importance of legacy building from being pioneers in the industry but also in relation to establishing brands that can stand the test of time.

“And for me, that’s really important because what we’re doing really is for legacy, for future generations. So, we may think that we’re building up our brand in order to get to be a multimillion-dollar brand or whatever it is that we perceive. But what’s really important is to create a legacy.” (Participant 11)

*“What I think about luxury is a sense of having a strong level of human ingenuity and really practicing that. Understanding the skill behind the practice that you’re doing, and this is specifically done within the preservation of craft and how that craft.”
(Participant 3)*

Cultural influence and heritage: Some luxury fashion brands emphasised their cultural heritage and incorporate traditional materials and craftsmanship into their designs. The participants emphasised the importance of promoting and celebrating their cultural identity by incorporating African culture into their luxury products, such as using Nigerian fabric and traditional Xhosa beading. They believed that cultural heritage added a sense of luxury and innovation to their brand. Cultural influence in the luxury industry was described as something to be proud of, something to borrow inspiration from and something to be

preserved. These luxury fashion brands associated with unique works of art, aesthetics, and quality in their narratives.

“Culture has a long-standing heritage which is longer than Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Chanel and Christian Dior, so there’s a lot of things to tell. Not every piece of clothing within the luxury space has to be written Made in Italy. It can be Made in Africa so it would be a paradigm shift of how people look at culture, locally, here at home, so that we don’t look down on our culture as the people.” (Participant 4)

“I think heritage is twofold: cultural heritage, which we borrow from and are inspired by, and I always tell my team that I get annoyed when we compare heritage to luxury. Some aspects of heritage are luxurious. And it’s not just because it took eons to innovate a particular idea. For me, it’s inherently luxurious. Some brands that aren’t inspired by cultural heritage have built heritage into their brands over time. Creating a story around cultural heritage, which is luxurious only because of innovation over time, requires time.” (Participant 9)

Celebrities, high fashion and premium brand perception: The participants highlighted a strong association between celebrities and high fashion. They mentioned the value of having their products worn by celebrities, influential people and influencers as they believed these public figures played a role of being moving billboards and served to attract consumers who aspired to look like them. Overall, the input portrayed luxury as exclusive, unreachable, and associated with prestige, elitism, and influential figures. Luxury fashion brands were defined as premium due to their exclusivity, high-quality items, and attention to detail. They were seen as providing a unique, hedonistic and luxurious experience.

“When people see Swizz Beats and Alicia Keys, all these public figures that wear our clothes overseas, it changes how people perceive culture. It crystallises it.” (Participant 4)

“If a product is available in the US and by luck or by opportunity it lands into the right hands like the celebrities and so forth, it potentially could blow to the rest of the world because of the American influence.” (Participant 2)

Sustainability and ethical practices: Some luxury fashion brands emphasised sustainability, ethical production, and fair compensation for craftspeople. They aimed to promote community development and benefit participants in the industry.

“The African continent is unique, so we view sustainability as African luxury. Ethical elegance is more about structures that draw you in. Sustainability in a beautiful setting is unknown to most people” (Participant 5).

“Sustainability is not only the buzzword where we're just saying, ‘oh we use sustainable materials’. I always say sustainability for us is an approach that comes from a spiritual way.” (Participant 11)

Quality and craftsmanship: Quality and craftsmanship were key themes in the brand's approach to African fashion. The participants emphasised the importance of craftsmanship, quality, and exclusivity in their designs in order to appeal to the international consumer. They highlighted that quality was highly appreciated in developed markets and thus the standards internationally were significantly higher than in Africa.

“The design, the fit and the making of the product. And I’m saying this now confidently because we’ve spent the past 7 years perfecting our fit and craftsmanship. And I think for a wool designer, I think that’s what differentiates us from fellow competitors or fellow young designers. It’s the quality, the design and the fit.” “So that’s when if we say luxury, then it’s the quality of the fabric, the craftsmanship,” (Participant 7)

“I would say our designs are beautiful, using beautiful fabrics with a little touch of African modernity to them. So beautiful clothes made....beautiful styles made with beautiful fabrics with an African influence.” (Participant 1)

5.3.2.3 Subtheme 2.3 African Luxury

African luxury according to the participants entailed the incorporation of African textiles, colours, and cultural influences into modern fashion designs. It emphasised the importance of showcasing the richness of African textiles and craftsmanship, as well as telling the African story. African luxury fashion brands, like the Nigerian brand, incorporate African textiles and modern interpretations of African fashion into their designs. There was a growing interest in African fashion globally, with an appreciation for African creativity and talent and they aimed to be part of this renaissance.

The brands aimed to prioritise African colours and culture in their luxury products and view sustainability as a part of African luxury. They also prioritised showcasing the richness of African textiles and the cultural influences that shaped their designs. The participants aimed to tell the African story and connect with global customers through storytelling. They valued the history and provenance of their brands and aimed to build credibility and confidence through their designs.

“And now there’s a renaissance of African textiles everywhere and it’s become the norm. I hope it’s not a trend, something that will come and then disappear after some time.” (Participant 1)

“There was a bubbling interest in African fashion, and I think we came at the right time that there was that interest, and we had our own interpretation of African heritage or what we were presenting as what we interpret as African fashion. It was a modern take, it was not your typical Ankara print, so it worked in our favour because it was sort of like showing the people who were looking into Africa, that we’re not just African prints, we are modern individuals who are inspired by their African heritage but also live in the internet age, in the technology world.” (Participant 7)

Appreciation of African creativity: The one brand from Nigeria appreciated African creativity by showcasing the richness of African textiles and the craftsmanship behind them.

The brand prioritised incorporating African colours and culture into its luxury products and aims to tell the African story. They valued the stories behind African creativity and the cultural influences that shape their designs.

“My brand is unique and distinct due to its beautiful designs made with African fabrics and a touch of African modernity”. (Participant 1)

5.3.3 Theme 3: Internationalisation

The participants had a good understanding of the potential for international expansion and had identified specific countries for expansion in terms of physical presence. They in the meantime had embraced the power of digital connectedness through the internet to explore and enter new markets. They elaborated on the different approaches such as wholesale exports, DTC exports through e-commerce, trade intermediaries etc. They emphasised the value of partnerships in helping them improve their capabilities around the business of fashion and accelerate their growth as most of the wholesale and retail partners required scale. They covered aspects such as what motivated them to seek international expansion covering aspects such as personal satisfaction in seeing their works on global and influential customers, to wanting to be part of the change with regards to economic and community development. They also highlighted some key challenges for each of the product development to go to market stages.

Table 5. 3: Theme 3: Internationalisation

Subthemes	Emerging Theme
3.1: Motivations	3: Internationalisation
3.2: Entry Modes	

Subthemes	Emerging Theme
3.3: Market Presence	
3.4: Opportunities	
3.5 Challenges	
3.6: Production	
3.7: Distribution	
3.8: Partnerships	

5.3.3.1 Subtheme 3.1: Motivations

Participants cited a number of factors that motivated their journey of internationalisation. The primary factor being to seek growth and tap into a global customer base especially as the market for luxury consumers was still proportionately smaller in emerging markets. Some experienced growth by chance due to certain influential individuals being attracted by their unique aesthetics while others panicked when their local markets faced shrinkage due to COVID-19 and sought to expand outside their home country.

“One of the audience [at a talk he gave], took my profile and recorded my talk and sent it to a lady who owned a boutique on Long Street. A boutique named Merchants on Long. So I met the owner not knowing her background and then later realised that she is associated with the Richemont owners. She then took my products and then spread it out amongst her friends and connections in the UK...So that was one of the first unintentional exit points of the product.” (Participant 1)

“It was panic, to be honest. It was lockdown and we were thinking “Geez, what are we going to do”. We were closing our little outlet in...and trying to focus online, and what actually got our interest was a guy who is based in Dubai who is very experienced with working in the American market, and how they consume goods and all of that. So we did test Facebook and Instagram advertising and the results were fantastic. We did so well, so much that we could not believe it, and we were like okay this US market is worth a try. So that’s how we knew that this is the market that we should focus on, it outperformed South Africa by far and that’s the reason why we just focused on that market.” (Participant 2)

Participants mentioned economic development and social upliftment as other motivations.

“We are getting more people involved and making sure that we’re also giving back to society, so in that piece, getting people involved and making sure that everybody is well provided for.” (Participant 5)

“We’ve seen it with just the two employees that we have, that the job creation makes a difference in the person’s life. That has been the thing that drives us, that we’d like to have more employees and make a difference in more people’s lives.” (Participant 7)

5.3.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: Entry Modes

Of the known modes of internationalisation, the participants primarily spoke of exporting, trade intermediaries, and alliances and partnerships. The approach to exporting, however, varied from direct-to-consumer exports through their own brand e-commerce websites or through wholesale to established retail partners or via trade intermediaries. To recap on the different modes of internationalisation, particularly those that were mentioned by participants:

- *Exporting*: This involved selling products or services to foreign markets; either directly to the end-user or to a retailer who would carry out the go-to-market activities. E-commerce exporting seems to be on the rise with most of the brands, and they

spoke of leveraging the power of the internet to remove barriers, i.e., their products are easily discoverable by consumers globally through social media, with the sales fulfilled on their own websites.

“It’s wholesale. We do not do consignment, never done consignment, we’ll never do consignment. It’s for people with money, so we’re totally against consignment.” (Participant 7)

“It’s wholesale based, so it’s literally business to business. It’s wholesale so they buy the stock upfront. So, it’s not commission-based, it’s not consignment, it’s wholesale business to business. They buy the stock and then they add their margins and markup and then they sell it to the international market at retail selling price.” (Participant 3)

“With the UK we started first with direct-to-consumer through our website.” (Participant 9)

“So, my clothes are currently sold worldwide from my online store.” (Participant 6)

- *Licensing arrangements:* This entailed authorising a foreign company to utilise intellectual property, like trademarks or patents, in return for payment of royalties or fees, while almost all the participants did not make mention of this mode of internationalisation, one did highlight that he was against it as it distanced the brand from the end consumers and the brand narrative may be distorted by the brand licensing partners.

“Licensing is something that we haven’t fully considered yet. We’ve tried it a bit with certain individuals and realised that because we are in a new space, people don’t know how to sell African luxury yet.” (Participant 4)

- *Partnering and strategic alliances:* This involved collaborating with a local partner in the foreign market to expand business operations. The most common approach to partnerships cited by the brands involved collaborating with fashion studios or showrooms in foreign markets to give their brands a space where consumers could touch and feel their products or partners that promote the brand to relevant stakeholders through PR (public relations).

“How we did a showroom was after we won the Woolmark prize....no last year after we won the prize, my business partner or someone from their team (Woolmark) came up with the suggestion that we use their spaces in Paris as a showroom because it’s the perfect location for Fashion Week and it’s where the buyers are roaming around. So, we did the showroom, and we were sponsored by Cape Wool to travel to the showroom and that’s how we met buyers.” (Participant 7)

“We used to have a PR company in Lagos, that used to do PR that side. It was fabulous but getting products into Lagos is quite challenging with their logistical problems.” (Participant 6)

- *Trade intermediaries:* This involved establishing relationships with entities that acted as middlemen, either as agents that facilitated exposure to buyers or provided distribution facilities such as their e-commerce marketplaces. This form of entry, especially where the brand leveraged the retail marketplace platform, was highlighted by some participants as beneficial compared to exporting as it, 1) provided exposure to the broad and established clientele base of the platform, and 2) did not require large volumes in production as each order placed on the platform was sent directly to the end-user.

“And now we just signed up with Folklore, they’re American based, by an American lady. Their main thing is to get Black owned designers to the next level be it with A-Lister, be it in showrooms, be it in Fashion Weeks, trade

shows as well, that's what they specialise in, so they bridge the gap, they are the middleman between the designer, and the designer and the online retailer." (Participant 2)

"So Shopbop came after our last season, they came through a platform called Folklore, they show African brands to buyers and if buyers are interested, they have meetings with them. So that's how we met Shopbop, we only had one meeting with them and they were in love with the brand, and they placed an order." (Participant 7)

"But Adjoaa is buying straight, it's just pure e-commerce. ...when there's an order, they just pass it to you, so you would do the shipment from your side [to the consumer]." (Participant 5)

- *Establishing new, wholly owned subsidiaries (greenfield ventures):* This involved setting up new business operations in a foreign market. Most participants highlighted this mode of entry as not being feasible due to the costs of setting up an operation in a new country, as this would require replicating the full value chain they have in their country of origin. One particular participant however saw an opportunity when his sales to the United States shot up during the COVID-19 pandemic and decided to take this approach and operate primarily from the United States and close shop in their country of origin.

"We found that we did way better in the US hence we shifted the entire business to the US market. We don't sell in SA at the moment but I'm working out a plan to avail my products in SA as of next month again. So, we've been focusing on the US market since 2020 basically up until now and we've been doing very well." (Participant 2)

“We used to have a PR company in Lagos, that used to do PR that side. It was fabulous but getting products into Lagos is quite challenging with their logistical problems.” (Participant 6)

5.3.3.3 Subtheme 3.3 Market Presence

While digital adoption had been cited as one of the key enablers in exposing African luxury fashion brands in developed markets, there was consensus amongst participants that physical presence or a physical space within which one’s brand was seen and felt was critical. This applied to both B2B interactions and direct-to-consumer interactions. In the case of B2B interactions, the primary platform was through exhibiting at trade shows or showrooms, while for direct-to-consumer interactions, pop-ups were the most cited. Trade shows were seen as the most critical element to get exposure to international buyers who then helped the brands gain momentum on their expansion ambitions as this opens up distribution channels at a bigger scale

“We’ve created awareness by being in fashion shows, trade shows, pop-ups and also talks as well.” (Participant 4)

“I would say more so having a place in which a customer can interact with your brand like having a storefront or like doing pop-ups, like it’s important to reach your customer at a personal level. More so than just having your website and dropping clothing and just selling your brand, you should also sell the experience and get the customer involved, that’s how they get more of a connection to your pieces.” (Participant 10)

The role that these physical interfaces played was that of giving potential buyers and customers assurance, through touch and feel, that the product meets expectations in terms of luxury dimensions they may be seeking. It spoke to an element of establishing credibility.

“If I’m going to sell a product for R10k online, I’m likely not to see good results because of the price point. If a person is spending that much, they would want to

touch and feel the product first before they can make the actual purchase. It doesn't matter how much they see online, but the fact of the matter is they want to see the proof of what the PR says this brand is. Even if they will still go back and make the purchase online.” (Participant 2)

5.3.3.4 Subtheme 3.4: Opportunities

The opportunities cited included the attitudes and appetite for luxury fashion in certain markets, specifically markets those that were receptive to African products or are pro-Africa. They prioritised markets that had easier accessibility and diversity of consumers. It also highlighted opportunities for growth, including global market knowledge, wholesaler/distributor links, and collaborations.

Accessibility and diverse markets: Accessibility and diverse markets were key themes in the input. The participants emphasised making African fashion accessible globally, with a growing interest in African fashion in the US and Europe. The participants incorporated African influences into their designs and aimed to connect with diverse markets by showcasing the richness of African textiles and cultural heritage. The participants also prioritised affordability, exclusivity, and timeless designs to appeal to a wide range of customers. The participants highlighted that markets that were pro-Africa and had a large population of African descent and ancestry seemed to be the most favourable. The United States was the most favourable market to enter the global space. Brands see it play a dual role, it has the right consumer type from a mindset and affordability point of view; and secondly, the United States market was perceived to influence the global fashion scene from an exposure and driving interest perspective.

*“...but I think the major market comes from America, especially Black Americans who live in America, especially Nigerians and Ghanaians. And also, the UK, those are the people who have been most of my, I mean most of my client base.”
(Participant 8)*

“And with time, we’ve got to realise and find out that actually, America is much more receptive, to a brand that actually comes from Africa. And it’s also because of the colour of our skin, it’s much easier as people are much more receptive. And that’s one thing that we can never just look down upon because it surely does matter.”
(Participant 12)

“However, with the US, what we found is that they’ve got like lovely rebates with South Africa and they allow for the customer to be able to ship within, at least for (from) Africa, about \$600.00 and they don’t need to pay tax, so it allows for us to ship easily and the customer in itself doesn’t have to bear the cost of importation.”
(Participant 9)

“...because once the product hits the US market and becomes popular it’s easier for it to spread throughout the world because of the American influence and PR.”
(Participant 9)

Global competitions and prizes:

Another area of opportunity these brands had identified was the role of global fashion competitions, run by global fashion powerhouses such as fashion conglomerates like LVMH, Amiri, etc. and respected fashion media houses such as Vogue, played in shining a spotlight on African talent and opening the doors to large fashion buyers.

“I think from my perspective, without the grant and the loan from the Queen’s Trust, that was my basis for starting...I wouldn’t have started;” (Participant 1)

“I mean the LVMH prize in itself is an international competition...that visibility allowed us to engage with select wholesalers and distributors that based within the international market...So after that opportunity of having global visibility through this prize, it brought attention to the brand. That literally coincided with having interest from our international retailers .” (Participant 3)

“So very quickly, soon after we started the brand we won an award with the Vogue Accessories Designer of the Year, and it was a handcrafted collection. All of it. And that’s how we started getting attention. So, we got attention internationally before anyone knew us at home, which is Africa. (Participant 11)

5.3.3.5 Subtheme 3.5: Challenges

The participants discussed the challenges they experienced such as the cost of participating in fashion weeks to establish credibility, difficulty in obtaining funding, logistical issues, and finding reliable local producers. Primary challenges however seem to stem from lack of recognition and lack of support for the industry by authorities in the countries of origin. With regards to lack of recognition, it was noted that luxury fashion brands do not attract the right investors and funders as these stakeholders do not see these businesses as viable investments, while authorities such as the governments and tax authorities do not set policies conducive to the growth of these businesses.

“So, we had attended 2 or 3 showrooms in Paris to try and break into the international market. That was challenging because the advisors would say buyers like our brands, but they want consistency, so they want you to come back for three seasons consistently so that they know that this brand is sticking around. And that is challenging for an African brand because it’s not like I’m taking a bus to Cape Town. It’s costly to go to Paris consistently for three seasons.” (Participant 7)

The participants were aware of the challenges and opportunities in their business, such as the impact of COVID-19, funding challenges, shipping costs, taxation, and logistics. They also suggested potential solutions, such as setting up warehouses in the US and government support in the form of tax rebates and streamlined registration processes.

Government and tax authorities: Participants cited governments’ lack of interest in the industry as a challenge that limits their growth potential. They referred to unfavourable trade policies which resulted in higher taxation and shipping costs thus making their products

uncompetitively priced in certain markets. They did, however, propose for government and authorities to play a more active role as enablers for their internationalisation.

"Regulating those things and making sure the government invests in the clothing and textile industry is very important. Also, taxation is crazy for us to import raw materials. Our taxes are high. Import taxes are high. You pay import taxes, VAT, and 37% on raw materials before touching the garment. When you export it, there are still export taxes. How do you rationalise selling a garment wholesale or to enter an international market? They do what they think is right, not industry-relevant policies." (Participant 12)

"But when you, when it's all said and done, it all starts from the top, government needs to believe in what we do. And when you think about Paris how Paris has been able to build itself as a world capital of fashion. You think about Paris Fashion Week. It still comes number one, because why? How they structured and the way they've regulated, the industry they've regulated, the markets and everything else." (Participant 12)

"And this is exactly what Rwanda did. The government looked at fashion and they were like, 'Okay, we're actually going to have a ministry for this' because they recognise what it is. And if we have more governments recognizing this and partnering with us designers, then you can see that the narrative is just going to go on and on. And we're going to open up and the opening up is endless. (Participant 11)"

Funding: The aspect of funding was brought up in relation to the different phases of business growth. The new entrants into this space, i.e., shorter operational tenure, were more focused on funding for business establishment activities and access to potential B2B buyers. They felt that facilitators such as Birimian were useful as catalysts but needed to understand that it started with ensuring that the business has the right facilities, equipment, capacity and capabilities before exposing them to potential buyers, whilst another pointed

out that even access to fashion weeks to establish essential relationships and exposure was costly. Funding was however perceived as a double-edged sword especially when it is equity funding.

“I’ve always wanted to have like a financial investor, but I found them either quite challenging in the sense that a lot of them would want to then have control of your business and by, like59% or 51%; or they wanted to have control in share. And I wasn’t comfortable with that.” (Participant 1)

“I mean, I apply for fashion weeks outside, but then again, they’ll be like ohh you have to pay and then you look at the price they are charging, and you’re thinking about hotel accommodation. Uh, quite expensive.” (Participant 8)

The more established brands referred to funding challenges from the perspective of business expansion, such as increasing their production capacity, and getting additional artisans especially when they are hit with large order volumes from international retailers.

“I don’t think they go in and actually say we’re going to fund this business for it to grow. They don’t do that. Yeah, cause funding a business to grow is a completely different interaction with that business. It means you put money in it, and you put your network and relationships in it and you potentially help drive that business for growth in key markets that you yourself might have strong relationships here” (Participant 9)

There seemed to be resistance towards seeking loans and/or getting investors that did not already operate within the fashion space as they believed these investors would not add value besides providing funds. The brands sought investors with similar values but also sought those who understood the fashion industry and had connections in the industry. They mentioned the goal of showing couture in Paris and potentially having the backing of fashion conglomerates like LVMH or Kering.

*“So, I think one thing, I mean one challenge for every upcoming fashion business in Africa has to do with funding because now loans have high-interest rates.”
(Participant 8)*

*“So being taken over by LVMH or Kering...that’s the sort of backing I would much prefer because they would have a lot of foundations in place that the credentials take advantage of, as opposed to somebody who doesn’t understand the industry and just putting the money in, and he’s not happy maybe with the returns even when the returns are healthy, he might feel he might get a better profit putting it in a building.”
(Participant 1)*

5.3.3.6 Subtheme 3.6: Production

The underappreciation of quality and lack of skills in local artisans to produce products to international standards was a running theme amongst these brands. They have had to prioritise developing their own in-house production capabilities where the artisans were under their direct employ for supervision and quality control. In the case of the brand from Zimbabwe, they had offshored some of their production for specific materials. Some participants indicated that they had developed means of production within their home countries as this gave them better control and oversight over the production process. This was also touted to be beneficial due to the affordable cost of and presence of excess labour in Africa.

Challenges: The key challenge that most brands encountered with the approach of home country production, was that there wasn’t a luxury/quality mindset in Africa, and **production quality** had been compromised or fallen short of international standards. This challenge was experienced similarly across the continent and was not unique to one particular environment.

“So, a lot of ready-to-wear that sells to the shop we have in England is produced here. It’s a global industry so I can manufacture in one region and sell in another

region. Handwork in Africa is not as expensive as in Europe, so you can employ people to just sit down and do the whole garment even if it's going to take a whole 3 months, and you can find that labour here.” (Participant 1)

“We don't have the facilities and the CMTs (Cut, Make and Trim) that can produce that same level of quality that our international counterparts have. That's where it becomes tricky. So at the moment we have to produce in-house to ensure the quality of the product that goes out of the studio. But it's not sustainable because we are creatives, we're not production people.” (Participant 7)

“From a South African point of view, for me, I don't know how other brands are doing it. I'm finding it very challenging to work with local producers in South Africa, particularly for garments and apparel. And the reason for that is that issues of quality and also consistency of production.” (Participant 9)

A different aspect of production challenges that was highlighted earlier was the **lack of capacity** to produce at the scale global fashion retailers require. It resulted in a catch-22 situation for these brands because while they desire to grow, if the growth was beyond their capacity or too sudden, without the necessary support from funders and partners, it could destroy them.

“So, obviously the challenges are production, Way more volumes than we normally produce for the local market, way more! Even deciding to produce in-house was a risky move because it could gridlock the brand from being able to do other things because we're so focused on this particular production.” (Participant 7)

“Because if I think about 2015, there was no way we were able to even make 1000 products at a time for different retail companies. There was absolutely no way, we didn't have the capacity to pay for the labour. We didn't have the income or the money to even start anything, anything like that.” (Participant 11)

Overcoming challenges and opportunities: Brands spoke of Africa as still being more feasible for production due to the cost of labour, however, they were also starting to identify production partners outside of Africa in semi-developed European or Asian countries.

“So a lot of ready-to-wear that sells to the shop we have in England is produced here. It’s a global industry so I can manufacture in one region and sell in another region. Handwork in Africa is not as expensive as in Europe, so you can employ people to just sit down and do the whole garment even if it’s going to take a whole 3 months, and you can find that labour here.” (Participant 1)

“And then internationally we also do outsource some specific techniques that are not available in South Africa. I’ll take you through a tour of my studio. Because we’re so specific on quality, we actually do a lot of things in-house.” (Participant 6)

“ And the other thing would be is beyond just setting up in a market, it would mean that our manufacturing has to be done outside of South Africa, potentially in Europe, in Portugal, in Eastern Europe. Not necessarily China, but those two markets will enable a brand like ours to be able to support an expansion within those two markets US and EU.” (Participant 9)

5.3.3.7 Subtheme 3.7: Logistics

Distribution was a key factor highlighted by these brands especially since most still produce and ship from their country of origin. Shipping from Africa, regardless of the market, was cited as being costly. They highlighted the importance of having B2B distributors and stockists in foreign markets. Participants also want to see local authorities considering more favourable policies especially where taxation and customs duties were concerned as this added a further premium to their goods.

“It was not easy, there were a lot of challenges. You must remember we make bags that are made of leather, right? And one of the difficult things was to package the stuff into a container to the US market without the goods getting there crumpled and

creased and all of that. So, the first problem that we encountered was logistics first and foremost.” (Participant 2)

Challenges’ is shipping, shipping is a big challenge for everybody. So, I think it’s more of just at the moment it is capacity and logistics, it’s a problem.” (Participant 6)

“So, you end up with like a double or even triple taxation, cause you pay tax on the garment when it goes out, you pay tax. When it comes back, or you may not even recover some of that money and then tax again when you have to ship one more. So, it doesn’t make sense from a logistic point of view.” (Participant 9)

5.3.3.8 Subtheme 3.8: Partnerships

Partnerships were considered enablers to expand the business of African luxury fashion brand and was cited by all the brands interviewed, although there was an element of caution when dealing with partners that wanted to have a controlling stake in the business or those that misrepresented the brand narrative. While some of the partnerships were intended for financial injection in the business, the brands seemed to value more the partnerships that provided skills development in the business of fashion for the emergent ones while the established brands were looking for partners that would offer them brand exposure and help them scale up by enabling access to buyers of global retailers and retail platforms as this would ultimately open up a wider distribution network and customer universe for them.

“Partnerships have really been actually the way for our brand. And I’m going to add collaborations, so partnerships and collaborations have been the way forward of the rise of our brand and, in picking partnerships that also has been really essential to how the brand moves, because it’s not always easy to know from the onset if values are aligned.” (Participant 11)

“So, I think such partnerships are really key, but it must be beneficial to a brand and what you’re trying to achieve...for instance with us partnering up with the agency based in Dubai I think that was a really good milestone for us. It actually changed

everything that we do in the business, it opened our eyes in terms of the whole online marketing and how digital selling works basically.” (Participant 2)

“Collaboration is always the fundamental key aspect of the brand as a whole...and the reason why I believe that is because those specific retailers and distributors have their own targeted markets that I myself might not have the power at hand to essentially reach. So, I definitely believe that those partnerships are essential...multiple distribution spots and multiple retail partnerships really helps a lot in gaining more traction, and also having different market segments. (Participant 3)

One participant summarised partnerships to enable African luxury fashion brands to scale globally into five levels, which supports what the other participants also cited, namely:

“The big one would need to be within the fashion space is media... there's nobody trying to buy your stuff if you don't have great exposure; The second one is what we call commercial director...they are important because they either partner with showrooms or they have relationships with key buyers in certain retailers. What I've seen and what has also helped us, is the support of (catalysts)...they take care of the trades. Umm, you know the sales trades that happen whether in Paris and in Portugal...So that's really, really critical, that exposure. The fourth one, what I've noticed is...you have to build a significant pool of stylists... a good agent that works with a good showroom that deals with relationships with stylists allows your products to be seen in the right places... ..they are instrumental to helping create visibility for your brand. The fifth one, which should have been number one, is investors...I'm talking about real investment, not just putting a product in front of buyers when you haven't invested in the back end of the business. I haven't seen it from the continent, and when you look at our partners and competitors around the world, you find that there are actually dedicated investment companies investing in brands and that's how most of them scale.” (Participant 9)

The role that fashion media played was one greatly recognised by these brands as they believed global fashion media advocating for them, set them up for great exposure and potentially successful entry into markets that would be difficult for them to seek out on their own.

“Trend forecasters, a lady called Leigh Edigwood, high profile writers, your Suzie Menges, and the Editor in Chief of Vogue Italy, Franca Suzanna. Their voices are powerful, and anyone that they co-sign people listen to them.” (Participant 4)

“As a continent, we’ve always been creators, but we need people to advocate for. In any situation we need people just to have the creativity, the talent or the material, you need someone to advocate that you are what you are, and that’s how the whole world will buy into it.” (Participant 7)

The participants highlighted the frustration of having partners coming up with their own models of enabling internationalisation of these brands without actually consulting them on the real need, which oftentimes, even before the exposure, what they did need was the manufacturing capacity, the business itself, etc.

“ So the program I was talking about when we went to Paris to learn about the fashion industry, they were the ones who sponsored... My issue was not with them but... they do it for the designers but without the designers’ input...they have these programs..., and [they tell you] you need to do this show, and that’s all you need. Why don’t you supply machines to these young designers? Why don’t you supply the basics to them so they can start to operate before you take them to those places? And it’s all with good intentions but just without the input of the designers.” (Participant 7)

5.3.4 Theme 4: Marketing and Sales

This theme centred around how the brands positioned and marketed themselves to stimulate demand for their products. The primary goal was to drive adoption of their products

in international markets, particularly in the US, UK, and Europe. The marketing strategies they developed targeted both the B2B(Business-to-Business) and the B2C(Business-to-Consumer) market segments.

Table 5. 4: Theme 4: Marketing and Sales

Subthemes	Emerging Theme
4.1: Customer Understanding	4: Marketing and Sales
4.2: Brand Dimensions	
4.3: Marketing Strategies for Demand Creation	
4.4: Capabilities	
4.5: Sales and Distribution	

5.3.4.1 Subtheme 4.1: Customer Understanding

The brands demonstrated a great understanding of their target market including an understanding of customer demographic and psychographic behaviours in their home market, and the markets they had expanded to or still desired to expand to. A key insight was that the local consumer market was split up into those who were price-sensitive and perceive these brands to be unaffordable and the other part being those who did spend on luxury fashion brands from Europe and the United States but did not believe they should pay a similar premium for African brands. With regard to the international markets, they operated in and were targeting, they highlighted that consumers' appreciation and attitudes towards spending on luxury differed, as those consumers placed quality, aesthetics and craftsmanship ahead of price. Also, the markets were pro-African, whether due to a large

concentration of the African diaspora or those that wanted to connect with their African ancestry.

“So, for instance the move to the US was also informed by the fact that there is a very fast-growing upper middle class that is Black. And the whole pro-Black movement, buying black in America is quite a big conversation so we wanted to capitalise on that... And also, in places like New York, they’re inclined with the whole movement of supporting Black and buying Black and buying a great piece from a Black person.” (Participant 4)

“A medium entry-level market in America could be completely different to that in South Africa...the best way that we can tackle that within our capacity in our business, is to have different categories and offerings within them. Being very specific about the price point and the product line, that way we’re in a position where we’re able to diversify our distribution to reach a wider market one market of consumer market.” (Participant 3)

“The only challenge that I'm finding is that the South African customer is very sensitive to price, so I'm finding myself to be like, you know, I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place. Like, how do I deliver the value that I believe the customer actually should get from a brand or a brand at a price that would be interesting enough for the local market.” (Participant 9)

“I think price points are an issue, because what I find.... well, I’ll speak of England, they’re able to afford it, it’s not considered too high. But those price points in Nigeria, are considered high, and especially in all the other African countries.” (Participant 1)

Further, the brands that had embraced digital marketing capabilities and applied digital marketing strategies in their marketing activities, highlighted that they utilised the analytics capabilities of digital and social media platforms to understand the demographics of the customers who purchased on their own or the DTC marketplace e-commerce platforms.

Such data assisted them to identify the dominant markets to which their products were shipped and incorporated these insights in deciding which other territories to enter.

“What’s really fortunate for us is that because we’ve had the opportunity to learn a lot on the digital marketing aspect of things, social media specifically; there’s a lot of data that we’re able to draw in terms of demographics that is part of these platform on the back end where we’re able to actually see who is looking at x, y and z and how they’re essentially engaging with that. So that data it allows us to have a strong indication of who is actually having a look at the brand as a whole.” (Participant 3)

“I’m currently engaging in email marketing, which is great for us from our conversion point of view. Uh, because it’s direct. We interact with our customers a lot better. Performance marketing, including Google Analytics, Google shopping, something that we realise is actually giving us a lot of transactions. So, from a digital point of view, not only just discovery from a social media point of view but actually getting in front of those customers with regards to other digital interactions.” (Participant 9)

5.3.4.2 Subtheme 4.2: Brand Dimensions

The brands demonstrated an understanding of the different stages of brand development in order to drive adoption locally and internationally. They highlighted the need to establish oneself as a name in the category within one’s home market and highlighted the importance of brand exposure to the relevant B2B and B2C segments, they also valued differentiation to set themselves apart and thrived on storytelling and their silhouettes and techniques as tools to drive differentiation and gain a share of the market.

Brand Differentiation: The brands focused on building their brand narratives and differentiation through storytelling, education, and personal connections with consumers. They aimed to change the narrative and promote African fashion. The participants discussed the concepts of storytelling as a differentiating factor in the context of building a collective narrative around African fashion and luxury but also at the individual level regarding what

made their individual brands unique. The participants emphasised the origin and inspiration of their brands overlaying African heritage and cultural influences to define and position their stories. Storytelling was seen as a powerful tool for luxury brands to connect with customers and create an appreciation for their brand's heritage, however, one particular participant highlighted that storytelling would never replace a product that was not well produced. Therefore, the product craftsmanship should be the primary focus before the story.

“No one can come to me and say, ‘I’ve seen this on someone’. I always put my hands up to that because you know, when we are designing, we lock ourselves out completely from anything; away.” (Participant 11)

“I think there are very few brands specifically from Africa that are really using craft in a very contemporary way and still having something that is appealing to the international market. And the way that we’ve been able to tell our point of view... and how we’ve worked with select textile communities that are based in Southern Africa and Western Africa. I think that’s our unique selling point, and I think people have felt very attracted to our point of view and I think that is something that has made us really different.” (Participant 3)

Each brand's unique point of view to design was emphasised as another layer of differentiation. While some brands focused on the actual craftsmanship, others had crafted unique techniques such as fabric manipulation, unique artistic prints, distinct silhouettes and integration of sustainable practices to stand out and appeal to global consumers.

“So, I make them as a signature silhouette of the brand. So, for now, that is what I’m exploring more, like the silhouetted everything. So, I think for me, what makes my, what makes me different is I make my product sell for me. I just use the product so I push more of behind the scenes. How it's done? How it's achieved? I mean, people be like, don't you? Don't you think they copy you? I'm like it takes patience and grace, and if you are going to sit down and do four yards of fabric and come and so that's up to you.” (Participant 9)

**5.3.4.3 Subtheme 4.3: Marketing Strategies for Demand Creation and Brand
Exposure and Adoption**

The techniques employed for **B2B** included exhibiting at global and intercontinental fashion weeks and fashion shows or doing collaborations with other brands. Participants also highlighted that B2B marketing was important in driving growth for their businesses and they saw this as the single biggest opportunity to secure wholesale partnerships leading to generous volumes of sales. This was due to the fact that the target audience were buyers and agents of large global retail shops and marketplaces such as Baines, Folklore, Farfetch, ShopBop, Netaporter, Saks etc. While the fashion show and fashion week approach seem common, few of the smaller brands indicated it was not a viable tactic for them due to the cost of entry and related logistical costs such as travel.

“We started with marketing, which is introduction of the brand to the international market, which is doing Fashion Weeks in New York and Fashion Week in Paris, and which I think is very important, before you do anything because nobody knows who you are. Nobody will even pay attention to who you are. And with time we've seen that literally helping us to grow momentum, helping us to grow and grow on visibility. And, slowly then from there, we started getting into like the trade shows which are very important when you start talking to like the real businesspeople, and also the buyers.” (Participant 12)

“What we're currently doing is through trade shows which is really good because that's where all the international buyers go to. For instance, Baines, Farfetch, they're all out there looking for new products, new designers and so forth... So, by doing so, we're trying to familiarise ourselves and get familiar to the buyers with our products so that they can procure our products in big volumes, to stock trade floors.” (Participant 2)

For **B2C**, almost all the brands relied on **digital marketing and social media**. Very few though utilised paid digital media due to not having dedicated marketing budgets therefore

organic **social media, influencer marketing and product placement** were prioritised. A few had started **direct marketing** by creating their own client databases from interactions on their e-commerce portals and doing email marketing to advertise and generate demand for new collections.

They emphasised the importance of consistency and freshness in content and mentioned exploring unique silhouettes and storytelling to connect with their audience. They also mentioned the role of emotions in creating relatable connections.

“There’s a saying that a designer is as good as the people that wear their pieces, so getting the right individuals...it’s one of the major marketing tools that we’ve experienced in the past three years. (Participant 5)

“We shouldn’t underestimate the idea of the influencer marketing strategy. For me that, I’m telling you once you find the right influences, drives sales immediately.” (Participant 9)

“What is promising for us is product placement on celebrities internationally. So, we are on the shopping lists of big stars because we do get calls from Christina Aguilera, Avril Lavigne, lots of like mega stars and of course a lot of new up-and-coming stars.” (Participant 6)

“We do both (organic and paid social media). So, we do a lot of social media, a lot of things like that. Yes. Newsletters, all things like that. And I have two people who constantly are in sales and marketing of the brand. So that’s very important.” (Participant 6)

“I think my digital marketing skills have just shone because I have to. Because we’re a digital-first brand we don’t have an opportunity to be offline for a very long time. I had to learn email marketing. I also had to learn Google Analytics. I had to learn Facebook marketing. So, I had to learn all those. The other way is engagement on social media.” (Participant 9)

5.3.4.4 Subtheme 4.4: Capabilities

When the brands elaborated on their capabilities, they mentioned various aspects such as the skills they possessed as owners of the brands, they discussed the distinct aesthetics and uniqueness of each of their brand stories. One participant had approached capability development from an academic perspective and created a framework which formed the basis of how they operated and also used it to guide social enterprises.

“I think my digital marketing skills have just shone because I have to. Because we're a digital-first brand we don't have an opportunity to be offline for a very long time. So, my digital marketing skills set had to be sharpened to the point where I built my own website. I had to learn email marketing. I also had to learn Google Analytics. I had to learn Facebook marketing.” (Participant 9)

“Also, the detail of our pieces, if you get a chance to see some of our pieces, it's more detail. People want to copy your things but I always have this ideology that whatever I'm doing I have to make it difficult for someone to imitate it. So, it's the story and also the detail of our pieces.” (Participant 5)

“I think 100% the aesthetic of the brand because it's very recognisable, and we've built the aesthetic very strong so kind of like the brand itself, like you can close your eyes and you'd know what a P5 looks like. So, I think that is definitely a competitive advantage on the aesthetic side. I think the quality is exceptional, good not just for South Africa but for the world.” (Participant 6)

“And I think as well, just the framework that we have is unique and it's one that I sell to universities now, part of curriculums, social enterprises.” (Participant 11)

5.3.4.5 Subtheme 4.5: Sales and Distribution

The brands utilised their social media and e-commerce sites to create sales demand. Distribution was a key factor highlighted by these brands especially since most still produced

and shipped from their country of origin. Shipping from Africa, regardless of the market, was cited as being costly. The brands highlighted the importance of having B2B distributors and stockists in foreign markets. They also wanted to see local authorities considering more favourable policies especially where taxation and customs duties are concerned to avoid adding a further premium to their goods.

Online presence and e-commerce:

“And with the advent of online, we get a lot of sales through the...social media, especially on Instagram. Instagram seems to be a very good vehicle for clients across the world to be able to access you.” (Participant 1)

“So, my clothes are currently sold worldwide from my online store. But for us, it’s better to sell everything online...at the moment because the way my business model works is direct to consumers. It gets very complicated with costings when we must add a partner.” (Participant 6)

“So, the marketing did not pertain to just having a physical fashion show, but it has lot to do with really leaning a lot on the digital world because essentially everyone has access to a smartphone and having that immediate access brings a tool that the brand can use in terms of visibility.” (Participant 3)

Channel partners: The participants highlighted that the biggest driver of access to and growth in international markets was securing channel partners. The marketing activities they conducted, particularly B2B marketing through trade shows were a gateway to building these relationships. Channel partners were at two levels, wholesale and retail marketplace. Wholesale partnerships such as the ones which occur when large luxury retail stores place bulk orders and then carry out all the last mile go-to-market activities in their physical or online channels. From a marketplace point of view, these retailers provide a digital e-commerce platform that facilitated transactions between the participant brands and buyers

or consumers. The sales were done on the platform but fulfilled by the brand directly to the buyer or consumer from their facilities.

“With the UK, we started by direct to consumer through our website, then from there we gave The Lotte where we give it wholesale price and they will sell it. And there’s another e-commerce store that you may have heard of, Folklore. So, we’re almost done setting up with Folklore.” (Participant 5)

“We sell directly online on our online platform, and we have about two stockists, one is going to be in New York, and one is in Cape Town.” (Participant 7)

5.4 Chapter Conclusion

Participants shared considerable detail about the fashion industry discussing challenges encountered in their pursuit to internationalise. Clearly, there was no hesitation concerning their perceptions of being worthy role players in the industry. What emerged clearly, was that they continually explored ways to extend their brands, mentioning online shopping’s potential and pitfalls.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The primary research findings covered in the previous chapter were reviewed, elucidated and discussed in line with the literature review section in Chapter 2 in order to determine conclusive primary research findings. The themes uncovered formed the basis of the discussion aligned with the research questions the study aimed to explore. This section is structured per question, with the relevant themes, contrasted to the theory in the literature review section, in order to enhance the academic perspectives on the phenomenon of internationalisation of African luxury fashion brands.

As a start, the researcher lined up the most relevant emergent themes against each of the research questions to make it easy for the reader to understand what themes addressed which questions. Four themes emerged from the research findings addressing; business operations, which highlighted the type of operations each of the participants had built to enable their growth within and outside the home country. The world of luxury was the second theme which profiled the African luxury space including verifying if the definition and perceptions of luxury related to African brands aligned with the theoretical perspective which covered mainly developed market brands. The internationalisation theme had a number of sub-themes which covered the actual entry modes as per the research objectives but also delved into some of the opportunities explored and challenges and encountered in the process. Lastly, the fourth theme of marketing and sales outlined the capabilities built and strategies employed to drive product uptake in foreign markets.

It must be noted that there were themes labelled overview that were not necessarily aligned to a particular research question in the schematic summary of the discussion. The researcher wished to present these as a general overview of the landscape of the African luxury fashion industry. The high-level demographical data was included in order to understand if these brands were a homogenous subset of emerging market SMEs or if there were differences based on the country of origin, the number of years a brand had been in

operation and/or the size of their operation, and determine if this informed their approach(es) to both internationalisation and/or to how they drove adoption of their products through marketing. The number of years in operation could potentially also provide a perspective on whether tenure had an effect in terms of the capabilities they had built.

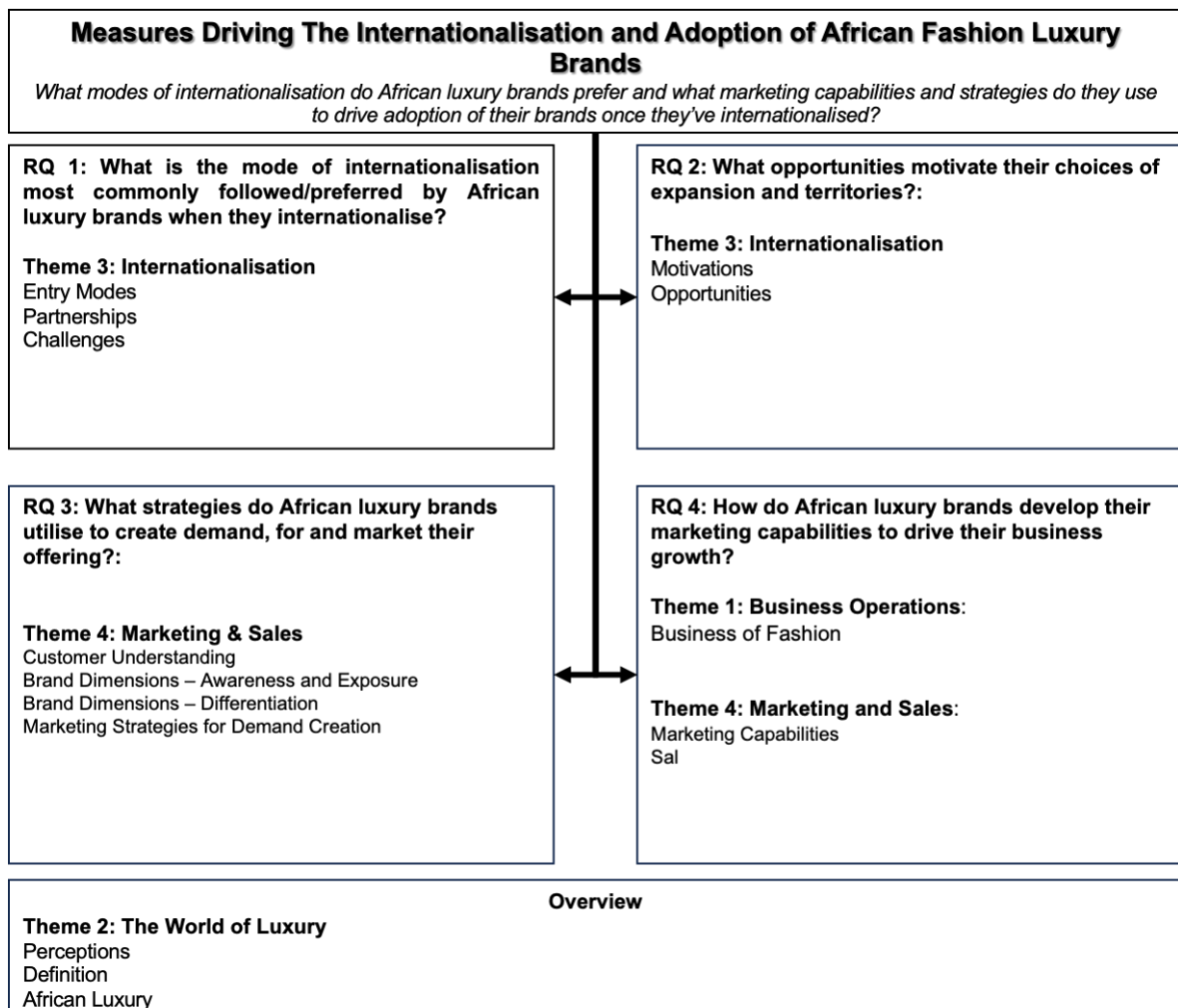


Figure 6.1: Themes per question (Researcher's Own, 2023)

The figure above summarised the structure of the discussion, according to the primary research question. The research question as presented in Chapter 3 had four sub-questions

therefore the discussion followed how the questions were outlined in Chapter 3. Discussion of the primary research findings follows.

6.2 Discussion of the primary research findings

6.2.1 Overview: The World of Luxury theme

The World of Luxury theme provided an overview of the participants' reflections on what defined the luxury industry and more particularly the luxury industry in Africa relative to the rest of the world. The participants elaborated their perspectives and perceptions pertaining to their own definitions of luxury, and they indicated what informed their points of view. The primary highlight from this section was that the definition had some universal elements in the sense that the dimensions of luxury they mentioned were the same as those covered extensively in the literature. What differed however was how these brands interpreted specific dimensions and contextualised them to the continent of Africa.

Dimensions such as heritage and culture were embedded in luxury definitions, however, for these brands heritage from an African perspective was about the appreciation of unique African artefacts such as beadwork and handiwork, whereas culture was perceived from an ancestral way of doing things and the rich traditions of the various countries or tribes such as the weaving of macrame in Zimbabwe and the relevance of the Aso-Oke fabric in Nigeria as age-old traditions.

The collective sentiment was around how they aimed to proudly exhibit what creativity and talent in Africa looked like and to partake in the growing global luxury industry. On dimensions such as exclusivity, most participants aligned in terms of inaccessibility and unaffordability. However, one participant highlighted that exclusivity should be viewed from the perspective of unique tastes, and he mentioned that the exclusion of certain segments based on price was not how we wanted to position his luxury brand. Whilst that was the case, the participants highlighted that adoption of the luxury category in Africa was curtailed by a limited middle class and elite segment that could afford their offerings hence the need

to seek growth offshore. The findings were discussed in relation to the literature in the next section.

6.2.1.1 Perceptions

From the perspective of these brands, there were three segment-specific views of luxury in general and to African luxury in particular. The African consumer perspective highlighted that luxury was seen as exclusive and unreachable, creating interest and intrigue, it was recognised as not being mass market, often affiliated with rich consumers, celebrities and high fashion elitists. Tran et al. (2019) endorsed the perception of consumers when it came to celebrities and high fashion elites recognising certain luxury brands, and how that influenced other potential consumers to investigate or purchase luxury fashion brands from emerging markets.

Unfortunately, other African consumer perspectives on luxury fashion brands were affiliated with them being unaffordable and flashy, relative to the socio-economic challenges that were faced in their countries of origin (Appiah-Nimo, 2020). This contributed to their non-belief in paying a premium especially for luxury goods produced in their home markets. However, they were an aspirational segment and were influenced by celebrities, influencers, and fashion elites, as well as the American market (Crosswaite, 2014; Rathore, 2018). This was further endorsed by the participants that mentioned the opportunities that were present for African luxury fashion brands in the American market, as well as the positive outcomes they received after well-known figures were spotted with their luxury fashion brands.

The global consumer segment perceptions were at two levels, those that intentionally sought luxury goods from Africa, usually those with a shorter psychic distance to Africa such as pro-African markets such as America. Others just consumed luxury goods from a hedonistic and indulgence perspective and therefore they were always on the lookout for novelty. Sharma et al. (2020) provided empirical evidence of the hedonistic aspects of luxury brands, being the need for one to be unique, to be recognisable in society, as having higher prestige value, and the status of being different from others.

Lastly, the participants highlighted that they had to work harder in establishing credibility with the international trade buyer segment as perceptions of quality being below international standards, disbelief on ability to produce at scale still lingered. They highlighted that they had to spend a minimum of three seasons for them to establish the credibility. The researcher could not locate academic literature that supported this perception.

6.2.1.2 Definition

Luxury was defined differently by the individual participants, however, at the core of their perspectives was the emphasis on exclusivity, craftsmanship, aesthetics, quality, heritage, culture and legacy. They described luxury fashion brands as brands with history, a story to tell or a point of view, and consistently produced high-quality products. They also mentioned the importance of time, passion, and devotion in creating products that could attract a premium status.

Quality and craftsmanship in relation to meeting international standards was an intrinsic value of luxury from their views. Most participants elaborated that heritage and culture were additional dimensions to drive appeal. The use of cultural elements, such as the Aso-Oke Nigerian fabric and traditional Xhosa beading was emphasised in creating unique and high-quality products. The importance of heritage, both in terms of history and cultural heritage, was discussed as adding a sense of luxury and innovation to the brands.

The participant's view reflected Okonkwo's (2016) perspective that the luxury goods industry was characterised by unique cultural characteristics and was a symbol of social status, prestige and taste. Similarly, Kapferer & Bastien (2012) accentuated the cultural aspects of luxury brands, and how cultural identity, history, and tradition of luxury brands played an important role in their internationalisation.

These dimensions as highlighted by the participants were congruent with established literature. Ko et al. (2019) covered some of these dimensions and summarised them into five characteristics of a luxury brand, namely, a luxury brand had to, demonstrate superior

quality; provide genuine value through sought-after benefits whether functional or emotional; possess a prestigious market image centred on attributes like artisanship, craftsmanship and quality; be able to justify commanding a higher-than-average price point; and foster a deep and profound resonance with consumers.

The participants' responses with regards to defining their brands as luxury brands also concurred with the definition provided by Kapferer & Valette-Florence (2018), where they spoke of luxury as having characteristics such as high-quality, rarity, exclusivity, indulgent items that attracted prices that were significantly higher than purely considering functional benefits and were rooted on heritage and culture, and evoked a sense of elitism and refinement. One of the participants further provided an enlightening perspective when it came to the definition of luxury beyond exclusivity to a certain demographic or class. Instead, luxury was best described as "being liberated to do what you want, wear what you want, and not necessarily being influenced by trends, but being unique in one's own style."

The notion of rooting luxury fashion brands in heritage and culture seemed to evoke different views from the participants. Some recognise heritage as the passage of time and the history of embeddedness of certain characteristics of the brand during that passage. Others viewed heritage from an ancestry perspective. In the context of culture, the participants' perspectives were centred on African handcrafts, motifs, designs and unique aesthetics as elements to incorporate in building an African luxury fashion brand.

6.2.1.3 African Luxury

The rise of luxury fashion in Africa was discussed by the participants, with an emphasis on the growth of the fashion sector and the recognition of African style and craftsmanship. The economic importance of the fashion industry and the need for fair compensation for craftspeople and community development were also highlighted. Overall, luxury from an African perspective was anchored on the generic definition about exclusivity, high-quality materials, workmanship, with a slight difference that it also served to promote culture, embrace heritage and creativity of Africans.

Koet al. (2019) concurred with the notion of the luxury goods market enjoying growth and expansion, and included personal luxury goods like apparel, jewellery and accessories in what drives trillions of dollars in trade annually. The personal luxury goods such as apparel, jewellery and accessories as a subset of the luxury goods category were estimated to be worth approximately US\$305 billion (Deloitte Global, 2022), and continued to rise annually. While luxury fashion brands of African descent were yet to have representation in luxury studies, it was encouraging to see that the reported growth for the category was also applicable to them.

According to the participants, what made African luxury unique was the incorporation of African textiles, colours, and cultural influences into modern fashion designs. They emphasised the importance of showcasing the richness of African textiles and craftsmanship, as well as relaying the African story through their individual and unique interpretations. There was caution however not to assume the use of the kitenge or Ankara fabrics equalled African fashion. However, Sharma et al. (2020) provided a counterargument concerning culture as a dimension of assessing luxury brands, namely that with the internet, and consumers becoming more global, cultural distances are diminishing and therefore cultural differences may not be that obvious.

6.2.1.4 Section Summary

African luxury was not different to luxury in general with regards to the dimensions of luxury it had to fulfil, such as exclusivity, high quality and craftsmanship, as well as commanding a premium in price. The players in this category, being the luxury fashion brand owners that participated in this study, emphasised these dimensions as important in positioning their brands as luxury fashion brands. Considering the brands were engaging in trade in international markets, this rooting on core luxury dimensions would ensure that they were able to appeal to the luxury consumers in those markets and effectively compete against brands from different origins, including established markets.

Nuances of African culture, textiles and unique craftsmanship were highlighted as the unique perspective these participants integrated into their product development and brand positioning to differentiate their brands and appeal to global luxury customers during internationalisation. An element of continuing to establish credibility and trust with regards to quality and that the brands were not 'temporal' were highlighted in order to attract large retail buyers.

6.2.2 Sub Research Question 1:

What is the mode of internationalisation most commonly followed/preferred by African luxury fashion brands when they internationalise?

The primary aim of the sub-question was to establish, based on the different modes of internationalisation if there were specific modes that applied to, or were most preferred, or suitable to their type of business. Academic literature on internationalisation provides for different modes of entry into foreign markets and also different approaches based on firms' capabilities, networks, and resources, inter alia.

6.2.2.1 Entry modes

The research findings as highlighted by the participants identified three primary modes utilised by these brands, mainly exports, working through trade intermediaries, and strategic alliances and partnerships. Reference to licensing was made, however, this mode was criticised as the participants' felt that the brand essence might be lost in interpretation by the licensing partner.

The most common approaches to internationalisation cited by the participants centred around, establishing key partnerships and strategic alliances in foreign markets, to whom the luxury fashion brands would export at a wholesale level, with said partners managing the last mile with regards to the go-to-market activities. The purpose of establishing such partnerships and strategic alliances assists by leveraging the power of digital connectedness to do DTC e-commerce exports via their own established e-commerce sites or through

partner retail platforms and building networks through trade intermediaries that facilitated relationships with relevant buyers for large fashion retail firms.

The approach of establishing relationships with strategic partners and trade intermediaries, was asserted by Khojastehpour & Johns (2014), and Lin (2012), where they postulated that the selection of entry modes by African luxury fashion brands was closely tied to the step-by-step advancement of the internationalisation process where the brands were required to actively explore new opportunities, evaluate them, and cultivate connections in regions where they had not been present before. The authors proposed that African luxury fashion brands might choose from various strategies to establish their presence in global markets, including forming strategic alliances with established trading entities and engaging the services of agents (Lin, 2012; Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014). This was demonstrated by these brands in how they had sought and utilised partners such as Folklore to establish trade relationships with retail buyers of retail firms such as Netaporter, Saks, inter alia. It must be noted, however, that these three modes were interlinked for these African luxury firms. Strategic alliances and trade intermediaries fulfilled the role of facilitating access for African luxury fashion brands to large fashion retail firms to enable them to export to these markets.

Exporting was notably less risky for these brands as it eliminated the need for them to manage the whole go-to-market value chain, as it entailed sending (luxury) goods manufactured in a particular country to be marketed and sold in other nations (Love & Roper, 2015). This practice of exporting has broadened the availability of their luxury brands in different regions, catering to the demand for high-end products without requiring the African luxury firms to set up production and retail facilities in those markets.

Extant literature on the internationalisation of emerging market SMEs highlighted that emerging market organisations, particularly SMEs, internationalised gradually and used the approach of identifying markets with a shorter psychic distance for familiarity. This approach, embedded in the Uppsala model to internationalisation, resonated with the findings of the study where participants highlighted that their journeys to entering foreign markets started

out with them first developing their brands and capabilities in their home country and gradually internationalising through exports (Lakshman Kumarasinghe & Weeramasinge, 2022; Guercini et al, 2020). Lakshman et al. (2022) stated that the last two stages of this process involved the establishment of a subsidiary in a foreign country and then overseas manufacturing and production. While most of the brands' internationalisation journeys were still at early stages, some were already integrating the offshore production stage into their operations. It could be deduced that these stages were not always sequential for these brands.

6.2.2.2 Partnerships

Lakshman et al. (2022, p.9) asserted the importance of having networks in the “modern age of internationalisation”, networks which the African luxury firms developed through the strategic alliances and trade intermediaries. Trade intermediaries enabled these brands in the earlier stages of internationalisation as they provided them with expertise and access to networks that would allow them to market their products and services globally (Virtanen et al., 2022). The brands highlighted the importance of these trade intermediaries; companies such as Folklore, which focused on promoting and opening access for African luxury fashion brands through their networks, were mentioned a few times.

Through these partnerships, some of the brands had been able to scale up as they now receive orders of large volumes from companies such as Netaporter. Other types of intermediaries, such as Wolf & Badger, Adjoaa, Merchants on Long UK were mentioned in relation to providing access directly to their consumer client base enabling these brands to get immediate massive brand awareness and exposure, which would otherwise require significant marketing investments. Strategic partnerships in the case of these brands were through what they term facilitators, such as Woolmark, Birimian, etc. that established some form of collaborative arrangements in their headquarters which were mainly located in the fashion capitals such as Paris and New York to name a few (Franco & Haase, 2016).

Over and above trade intermediaries (Folklore) and strategic partners (Woolmark), three additional partnership models were highlighted as being essential. These being fashion media such as Vogue, stylists that prepared looks for celebrities for key events, and lastly, but considered important were investment houses, which basically fall under the direct investment mode of internationalisation. The brands indicated that the publicity from credible and respected fashion media was worth more than any marketing strategy they could deploy. Mention by, and their products being worn by respected fashion media, was perceived to be a worthy endorsement. Stylists fulfilled the role of product placement which was highlighted several times by the brands as a key marketing tactic as covered in the marketing section below.

The brands spoke of great appreciation for the role strategic partners/alliances and direct investment fulfilled in their internationalisation journeys, however, there was discontent around how some of these entities positioned themselves as saviours and created models that did not take the brands' input into account. Direct investments, directed at their businesses, as a mode of entry into foreign markets was desired, however, they were cautious of being 'taken over' or their opinions being diluted by the investment partners.

6.2.2.3 Challenges

The challenges cited by the brands were summarised into four areas, namely, lack of recognition and support, the cost of doing business from Africa, lack of funding and a lack of skills.

Regarding lack of recognition, the brands mainly referred to the fashion and luxury industry not being recognised as an economic contributor by the governments and authorities in their countries. They claimed that this manifested through a lack of favourable policies pertaining to the unique factors of exporting products that could require returns or exchanges. Furthermore, this affected the attractiveness of their products in the various markets as they had to sometimes incorporate up to triplicate levels of taxation into their final pricing. They however made examples of countries that had prioritised the fashion industry such as

Burkina Faso and Rwanda and highlighted how these countries were reaping the rewards from this. Due to no representation from those countries in the sample, the researcher could not establish what solutions had been implemented that could be useful to accelerate the fashion industry and thus facilitate easier internationalisation of the African luxury fashion brands. This could be considered for future studies in this field.

Pertaining to the cost of doing business from Africa, participants cited logistical challenges related to the cost of shipping from Africa. African countries had not optimised trade networks to bring down the cost of shipping from Africa resulting in higher than ideal pricing.

While the participants appreciated the cost of labour being relatively cheaper in Africa compared to developed markets, they were frustrated by the fact that local artisans did not have a quality mindset and therefore risked their products not meeting international quality standards.

The last and possibly the biggest of their challenges was the lack of capital to fund different phases of growth and internationalisation of their businesses. Those in the early stages of internationalisation mentioned that access to buyers required significant investment into B2B marketing activities over a period of time for them to gain the right level of attention. Those who were at the intermediary stage mentioned their funding needs were more related to expansion in order to meet the large volumes of orders they had to fulfil once trade partnerships had been established. At the developed stage, they anticipated the need to move to the establishment of an international subsidiary where they would have to replicate their full operations in host countries. To overcome the challenge of investing in B2B marketing activities, Park & Harris (2014)'s suggestion that African luxury fashion brands must establish relationships with partners that could give them publicity on a global level, as well as endorsements from public figures aligned with the findings around different partnerships covered in the previous section.

6.2.3 Sub Research Question 2:

The aim of question 2 was to establish if there were specific opportunities that motivated the participants choices of expansion and also the territories to which they internationalised.

6.2.3.1 Motivations

Besides the opportunity of reaching a wider customer base and growing their businesses commercially, the research participants indicated that they were motivated by the opportunity to participate in the global market and showcase African luxury. Mo (2015) emphasised that the different drivers of internationalisation based on external and internal factors are usually motivated by the desire to enter new markets and reach new customers by influencing their buying decisions.

Van Andel et al. (2014) brought an additional perspective to Mo (2015)'s argument by highlighting that African luxury fashion brands could succeed in their pursuit for internationalisation, if they were grounded on broader community cohesion and upliftment by integrating shared value that transcends individuality.

The brands did highlight their desire to contribute to economic development and community upliftment through their involvement in the industry and through enriching the lives of their artisans by keeping them employed. One participant elaborated on this with an example that her artisans included women who were ex-prisoners that she had employed with the intention of giving them a second chance in life.

6.2.3.2 Opportunities

Three major opportunities were cited by the participants as those that stimulated their desire to internationalise. Firstly, it was the newly adopted approach of discovering young creative luxury designer talent by global luxury conglomerates such as the LVMH group, the Amiri organisation, Vogue Fashion, etc. These luxury conglomerates invited luxury designers from emerging markets to enter their annual 'talent search competitions' through which they either

collaborated with the winning designer to transfer knowledge, enrich their skills and improve their understanding of the business of fashion. These competition prizes also provided some financial injection into their businesses and facilitated access to key global luxury fashion networks.

Schoeman (2022) confirmed evidence of African luxury fashion brands that have benefitted from these prizes such as Thebe Magugu who won the 2019 Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy (LVMH) Young Fashion Designer Prize, the benefit which he derived, being exposure to established international markets, and opportunities to absorb skilled partners that had complementary abilities, such as the 2022 collaboration with Adidas.

Secondly, it was what they deemed, the African Renaissance, being the appreciation of African culture largely driven by the pro-Black and pro-Africa attitude from the United States. They believed that this African Renaissance provided them access to new and diverse markets and not just the United States. Their belief was that the United States was the most favourable market to enter the global space as they saw it play a dual role. Having the right consumer type from a mindset and affordability point of view; and secondly, the United States market was perceived to influence consumption behaviours across the globe. The country's public figures being admired globally resulting in them driving interest in other markets indirectly. By incorporating the richness of African textiles and cultural heritage into their designs, they appealed to this market and could therefore leverage this social and cultural movement.

Sharma et al. (2020) suggested that with the internet, and consumers becoming more global, cultural distances were diminishing and this diminishing distance due to online exposure was beneficial to luxury fashion brands originating from emerging markets, particularly Africa.

The third opportunity that a few of the participants highlighted was growth within the continent of Africa. Participants challenged themselves on only pursuing growth in developed markets. They recognised the fact that luxury consumers in Africa existed and

had been on the rise presenting an opportunity that could further be considered in their internationalisation journey. This perspective of Africa being rife for luxury consumption has been covered in literature, where it was noted that the buying power in Africa was driven by the growth in the middle class over the last two decades due to a faster rate of urbanisation (Jain et al., 2021; Ko et al., 2019; Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018).

6.2.4 Sub Research Question 3:

The aim of research question three was to understand what strategies African luxury fashion brands utilised to create demand for and market their product offering in foreign markets.

6.2.4.1 Customer Understanding

Khojastehpour & Johns (2014) highlighted that the success of the internationalisation process largely depended on being knowledgeable about international markets as lack of or inadequate information could be an obstacle. The brands demonstrated a great deal of understanding of the various markets and the attributes that made them attractive or least attractive.

They demonstrated knowledge of their target market in foreign markets including an understanding of customer demographic and psychographic attributes in their home market and the markets they had expanded to or still desired to expand to. The key insight they highlighted was that the home country consumer market was split up into those who were price-sensitive and perceived these brands to be unaffordable and the other part being those who did spend on luxury brands from Europe and the United States but did not believe they should pay a similar premium for African brands. Consumers in the international markets they operated in and were targeting, had different appreciation and attitudes towards spending on luxury compared to their home country consumers. These international consumers placed quality, aesthetics and craftsmanship ahead of price. They further indicated that the markets with consumers that are pro-African reduced the psychic distance and made the consumer receptivity better than those environments that had no such

emotional connectedness. The pro-Africanism being due to a large concentration of the African diaspora or those that connected at an emotional and spiritual level with their African ancestry.

6.2.4.2 Brand Dimensions – Awareness and Exposure

Two dimensions that Kapferer & Valette-Florence (2018) proposed as essential when luxury brands pursue growth, were brand awareness and brand penetration. Brand awareness referred to the consumers in the market being aware of the existence of the brand and led to the brand being considered at the point of purchase decision-making. Brand awareness also drove familiarity with the brand for the target market.

The brands' perspective on the need to drive brand awareness and exposure to generate interest for their products and gain a share of market was congruent with Samiee & Chipandara (2019) where they encouraged the practitioners to utilise their marketing capabilities to create awareness and attract new customers, stimulate demand for their product, and to grow their share of the market in any market of operation. Some of the brands emphasised that brand awareness and exposure on their own did not automatically gain them customers. A trust barrier still had to be overcome and therefore the strategies they employed had to address these brand dimensions also.

6.2.4.3 Brand Dimensions – Differentiation

The participants posited that for their brands to grow internationally, they needed to establish themselves as desirable brands in these highly competitive markets. One way to do so, they stated, was through ensuring that their brands had unique elements that differentiated them and made them stand out in market. The brand dimensions covered herein were discussed in detail under the marketing strategies section.

Martin et al. (2019) stated the importance of having a differentiation advantage relative to competitors in order to induce a positive response and an intention to purchase.

6.2.4.4 Marketing Strategies for Demand Creation

Martin et al. (2019) posited that marketing communication was a key driver of performance for international ventures as it facilitated awareness of the company's offerings to the target audience, provided essential information on the attributes of the company's offering relative to competitors and drove positive perceptions about the brand to induce a positive response and an intention to purchase.

Participants approached marketing from a B2B and a B2C perspective. They highlighted that **B2B marketing** was important in driving growth for their businesses and they saw this as the single biggest opportunity to secure wholesale partnerships leading to generous volumes of sales. The techniques employed for B2B included exhibiting at global and intercontinental fashion weeks and fashion shows or doing collaborations with other brands. The main reason they applied this strategy was due to the fact that the target audience was buyers and agents of large global retail shops and marketplaces such as Baines, Folklore, Farfetch, ShopBop, Netaporter, Saks etc. While the fashion show and fashion week approach seemed common, few of the smaller brands indicated it was not a viable tactic for them due to the cost of entry and related logistical costs such as travel.

This strategy was grounded on what Godart (2014) and Aziz et al. (2019) proposed as an opportunity for African facilitators to establish fashion capitals within the African continent to enable the fashion industry to better connect with the consumers in emerging markets while continuing to showcase African luxury fashion brands' collections in the already established globalised fashion capitals for deeper penetration. While parts of Africa may yet to establish themselves as fashion capitals, the existence of fashion week shows such as the SAFW, Arise Fashion Week (previously Mercedes Benz Fashion Week), Lagos Fashion Week, and Glitz Africa to name a few, was enabling intercontinental exposure of African luxury fashion brands (Aziz et al., 2019). Through these fashion week shows, African countries are slowly establishing their own journey to being fashion capitals that work towards attracting international customers and designers, as well as entrepreneurs to promote African luxury fashion brands to a wider market (Aziz et al., 2019).

For marketing strategies directed at consumers, namely B2C marketing, the African luxury fashion brands highlighted using strategies and tactics such as social media, product placement through influencers and public figures, periodically doing pop-ups in key targeted markets and CRM (customer relationship management) marketing.

Due to the lingering misconception that African luxury fashion brands potentially were not what they presented, the participants highlighted the need for a physical market presence in foreign markets. They acknowledged that this would not be through them setting up subsidiaries yet as that required significant investment but highlighted short-term pop-ups assisted in overcoming the trust issue highlighted in the previous section. Namely, to establish brand familiarity and credibility of quality and craftsmanship as physical presence allowed for touch and feel.

Globalisation's collapsing borders for countries to trade amongst each other, was what digital connectedness through social media was doing for people connecting to each other and discovering brands beyond their home countries as highlighted by the participants. The participants highlighted this was the biggest form of marketing they did and the benefit of it was that they could use it without necessarily needing to spend on media fees. However, a few of these brands did invest in paid social media marketing and they claimed to see the benefits thereof.

Sharma e al. (2020) concurred that online exposure was beneficial to luxury fashion brands originating from emerging markets, particularly Africa.

Instead of just using social media to post studio shots or images with models, the brands highlighted that product placement yielded the highest returns. Product placement through social media involved the brands partnering up with stylists as highlighted in the partnerships section to dress influential public speakers for events. This way their products received immediate mass reach as these public figures usually had a large follower base on social media. There were feelings of excitement from the luxury brand owners that had managed

to place products on United States A-Listers and public figures, whilst others shared a bit of frustration that they hadn't managed to crack through the stylists for these public figures.

The approach of product placement was considered important by Tran et al. (2019), as they posit that consumers were highly influenced by celebrities and public figures and often their purchase decisions on luxury was informed by what latest luxury fashion items these figures wore.

The final approach some of the brands highlighted on using the power of the internet to reach customers digitally, was the adoption of the CRM marketing strategy, where elements such as emailers are used to generate interest for the latest collections, engage customers who had interacted with them online and to convert them to repeat customers. Khojastehpour & Johns (2014) suggested the use of CRM marketing as one of the marketing capabilities and strategies to employ for the internationalisation process. Grönroos (2016) defined this relationship marketing strategy as the process of gathering information to assist African luxury fashion brands to identify and retain their best customers, as well as enhance customer value and profitability which was congruent with the insights provided by the participants.

Overall, the brands demonstrated a good understanding of how to create awareness and exposure in foreign markets targeting B2B and B2C customers; they articulated strategies and methods relevant for each segment aligned to literature. Some were starting to integrate analytics tools as capabilities to enrich their marketing efforts and guide their decisions regarding future growth markets.

6.2.5 Sub research question 4:

The aim of this sub research question was to understand how African luxury fashion brands developed their marketing capabilities in order to drive business growth during internationalisation.

As outlined in the literature review section, a firm's capabilities could be classified as lower or higher order, with lower-order capabilities focused on administrative and governance functions whilst higher-order capabilities were adaptable and could shape a firm's long-term competitive advantage (Laaksonen & Peltoniemi, 2018). Considering that a firm had to first have ordinary capabilities that could be modified, the discussion of this section started off by understanding how these firms approached business operations or business model design, followed by looking at marketing specific capabilities (Teece, 2017).

Teece (2017) further elucidated that management could, through high-order dynamic capabilities review organisational processes, anticipate future possibilities and devise appropriate business models to seize emerging opportunities, and determine the optimal organisational configuration based on existing structures and future plans. Laaksonen & Peltoniemi (2018) cautioned firms that dynamic capabilities alone didn't automatically translate to improved performance but required structural strength through quality ordinary capabilities that dynamic capabilities modified. They stated that superior performance would not be attained if operational capabilities were significantly subpar (Laaksonen & Peltoniemi, 2018).

Considering that the construct of luxury falls within the domain of marketing, the dynamic capabilities theory was focused on marketing-specific capabilities and not the broader firm capabilities.

6.2.5.1 Business of Fashion

The participants brought up the term 'business of fashion' which is summarised as the basic managerial capabilities the firm must possess to effectively run a business in fashion, particularly luxury fashion. According to the participants, without a deep understanding of how the business of fashion operated, they were reduced to just being creative directors with no skills to convert their works into profitable businesses. In the context of the dynamic capabilities theory, the business of fashion could thus be assumed to be the ordinary

capabilities that every luxury fashion business must possess before setting out to attain growth (Laaksonen & Peltoniemi, 2018; Teece, 2017).

The participants highlighted that facilitators and trade intermediaries in the luxury fashion industry such as Woolmark, Cape Wool, Birimian etc. had been instrumental in providing them with the necessary knowledge to sharpen their ordinary competences.

The brands highlighted the need to have strong production capabilities, through human capacity, being the staff they employed, to the same staff having requisite skills to produce garments at international quality standards, and the ability to cost for profit. They approached development of this capability based on the level of capital they had at their disposal. Some highlighted the facilities and infrastructure they had which was built over time in order to be able to meet high volume production requirements. Those who cited funding as a key barrier, applied an outsource approach; whilst those that had more infrastructure, had developed the capability inhouse and operated an end-to-end value chain. Besides access to infrastructure, those who insourced indicated that the biggest motivation was so that they would manage quality control and assurance better. Some that outsourced but not necessarily restricted by capital and infrastructure, employed outsourcing as it gave them access to certain specialised skills; examples made were beading in India and soli(sp) leather production in Tunisia.

The brands also highlighted learning by observation as another facet to integrate to their way of doing business. This was in relation to observing how established luxury fashion brands created demand, i.e., bi-annual seasonal productions, replicating the same model in order to keep customers and potential customers interested. Continuous development of knowledge seemed to feature highly in their refinement of their ordinary capabilities as proposed by the scholars, Whitelock (2002) and O'Sullivan & Abosag (2015). These researchers emphasised that as the brands internationalise, they should continuously assess the market research they undertake to enrich their knowledge of the new audiences they encounter.

6.2.5.2 Marketing Capabilities

Tan & Sousa (2015) categorised marketing capabilities into four dimensions, namely product development, pricing, communication, and distribution.

According to Caniato et al. (2013), product development defined the material requirements, aesthetic characteristics, and style of various products that were produced by African luxury fashion brands. The material requirements, aesthetic characteristics, and style influenced the pricing of the various products designed and produced by African luxury fashion brands, in which the pricing was based on the cost, appearance, materials used, innovation, and quality (Curwen, et al., 2013). The brands highlighted that they took great care in their product development by ensuring the products met superior quality standards and met the various dimensions of luxury discussed under the world of luxury overview section. In the discussion under question 3, it was highlighted that brand differentiation was one of the key brand dimensions that enabled competitive advantage. Within the context of product development and brand differentiation, the brands emphasised unique craftsmanship through the development of unique brand aesthetics, silhouettes and textures that over time became synonymous with each of the respective brands., This supported Curwen et al.'s (2013) proposal of approaching the product development and pricing of luxury fashion brands.

The communication and distribution dimensions were mainly based on the buyer and seller relationship between African luxury fashion brands and their consumers, in which both these dimensions contributed towards strengthening the trust for the buyer and seller relationship (Tan & Sousa, 2015). These dimensions focused on the functional marketing mix-related dimensions but an additional set of capabilities, referred to as architectural capabilities, namely marketing strategy planning and implementation, plus market orientation were essential in orchestrating the functional capabilities for better exploitation of the company's resources (Morgan et al., 2018; Joensuu-Salo, et al., 2018; Theoharakis et al., 2019). These marketing strategy planning and implementation capabilities were further expanded to include capabilities such as the ability to service and support customers internationally and

develop necessary local market competencies (Morgan et al., 2018). The brands articulated how they approached planning and implementation of their marketing strategies in question 3.

Storytelling, in the context of each brand's history and provenance, and their interpretation of their culture and heritage, was infused into the communication capability. Most of the brands highlighted that storytelling enabled them to connect with consumers at an emotional level. They highlighted that also used storytelling as a way to change the narrative around Africa and reposition the continent favourably through their products and marketing.

What emerged from the discussion with the brands was that global connectedness and internet adoption had enabled these firms to develop distribution capabilities through e-commerce. This has enabled them to evolve from the traditional method of wholesale exporting to trade partners in foreign markets to also embrace DTC e-commerce exporting. E-commerce, particularly the DTC sites the brands owned, not only facilitated distribution but were viewed as a valuable tool to build knowledge on customers and facilitate customer relationship marketing, which Morgan et al. (2018) stated were key to customer service.

According to Gregory et al. (2019), e-commerce capabilities played a direct role in elevating a firm's distribution and communication efficiency, thereby resulting in improved performance in export venture markets. In contrast, the dynamic capabilities perspective emphasised the necessity for the firm to cultivate new capabilities to identify and promptly respond to opportunities; literature on export marketing combined both the conventional viewpoint and the dynamic capabilities perspective, indicating that marketing capabilities served as crucial indicators of an effective export venture marketing strategy, ultimately contributing to enhanced market performance (Gregory et al., 2019).

Overall marketing capabilities, when effectively used, were said to enable a company to create a differentiation advantage (Martin et al., 2019).

6.3 Chapter conclusion

In conclusion, the discussion of the findings highlighted that the African luxury fashion brands had a strong alignment with the global definition of luxury with regards to the luxury dimensions presented in literature and integrated by these brands in their product development. Key insights pertaining to modes of internationalisation were explored and aligned to literature, and exports seemed to dominate. However, what was evident from the finding's discussion was that almost all the brands employed a second method over and above exports in order to enhance their chances of success. Partnerships of different formats were highlighted as the biggest growth levers and even served as an antecedent to the internationalising of these brands, as most referred to at least one type of strategic partner that helped them gain global exposure.

A lack of involvement of home country policymakers was highlighted as a barrier that needed to be addressed. This resulted in the brands not being able to compete efficiently as they logistical challenges and cost of doing business was impacted. Involvement of policymakers and industry partners in defining appropriate systems and structures was an opportunity to accelerate growth.

Clear articulation of how the brands approached capability development and executed their marketing strategies were expanded upon, and both B2B and B2C marketing were part of their marketing strategy. Global connectedness through the internet was cited as the primary tool to gain brand exposure, with social media being the one digital marketing tool utilised by all. E-commerce as a marketing and distribution capability was at the early stages of development and its impact on export growth could be explored further. From this discussion, it may be deduced that two antecedents enabled internationalisation for these brands, namely, partnerships and global connectedness.

Based on the findings, the below theoretical framework emerged.

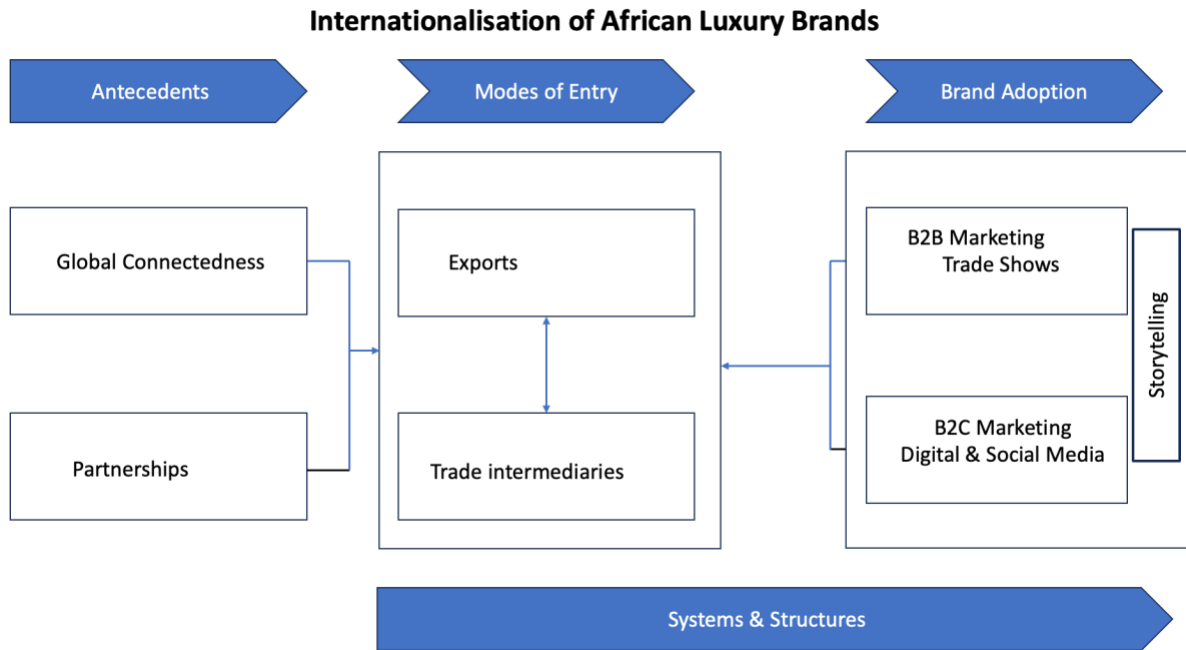


Figure 6.2: African Luxury Fashion Brands Conceptual Model (Researcher's Own, 2023)

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The research problem identified a gap in the literature pertaining to SMEs from emerging markets, whose area of trade is luxury fashion. The study focused on the African continent in particular and aimed to understand the route to international markets for African luxury fashion brands and the related capabilities and strategies they employed to grow within the global luxury sector as this had not been thoroughly covered in extant literature.

African luxury fashion brands were a developing phenomenon and understanding their nuances to internationalisation was therefore important to understand both from an academic and practice perspective (Benissan, 2022); Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2021). From an academic standpoint, it was necessary to establish if existing international business theories and frameworks applied and were apt for this industry or if further development was required in order to support this emerging sector as it continued to grow and evolve. Ko et al. (2019), Singh et al. (2021) and Deloitte (2022) presented a sector that generates significant revenues and is poised to grow and therefore could provide guidance to new entrants into the industry and further contribute to views on sectors that could provide economic growth in emerging markets in future.

The preceding chapters sought to capture the primary data findings based on the experiences of the African luxury fashion brands' participants and secondary data based on existing literature about the luxury fashion space in general, most of which related to developed markets or emerging markets from a consumption perspective. The primary constructs of internationalisation, marketing and African luxury fashion brands were traced in both the primary data and the secondary data to ensure that the findings were relevant to the questions being explored.

The methodology and philosophy that was followed for the study was a phenomenological interpretivist qualitative approach. The aim was to understand the individual cases of the

participants and draw findings back to the research problem and extant literature (Dodgson, 2017; Rahman, 2017). Use of thematic analysis enabled the researcher to clearly identify emerging themes and respond to the research questions because the findings were extensively discussed in relation to each theme; and the themes grounded in literature in the discussion chapter (Clarke & Braun, 2018; Lawless & Chen, 2019).

This chapter is structured into five sections, namely the research contribution to existing literature, the recommendations based on the findings, the limitations of the study, inferences for future research and the conclusion. The recommendations provided are specific to the internationalisation of African luxury fashion brands, based on the findings from the participants, the theoretical anchor of this study plus the conceptual framework that emerged in Chapter 6.

7.2 Research contribution

The outcomes of the study provided context on the drivers of internationalisation for African luxury fashion brands. The findings highlighted that the African brands' perspectives of luxury complemented those provided in extant literature with some nuances that the participants believed made African luxury fashion brands a bit unique such as integration of traditional craftsmanship practices and drawing inspiration from their ancestral heritage.

The study highlighted that the route to market for African luxury fashion brands was grounded on international business theories however their journey involved more than a single mode of entry. While the study concluded that exports were a preferred mode of entry, support from strategic partners or trade intermediaries is required for the brands to be noticed and successfully establish themselves in foreign markets. The study also concurred with the three stages of internationalisation although most of the findings centred on the pre- and during stages (Khojastehpour & Johns, 2014; O'Sullivan & Abosag, 2015). Partnerships could be assumed to be an antecedent to growth for African luxury fashion brands in international markets due to how extensively the participants discussed them.

Global connectedness through the internet emerged to be another **antecedent to the adoption** of these brands' products, as it provided opportunities at two levels, namely; as a driver for brand exposure (Sharma et al, 2020), through social media and other digital marketing tactics, and, as a sales channel through which African luxury fashion brands can interact and sell directly to consumers.

The role of governments and related policymakers was highlighted as one of the inhibitors that needed to be reviewed in order to enable the ease of internationalisation for African luxury fashion brands.

7.3 Recommendations

7.3.1 Establishment of fashion structures in the continent

It emerged from the findings of the study that markets that are considered global fashion capitals invest in the development of luxury fashion as an industry. Participants highlighted that environments such as France (Paris) and the United States (New York) focused on sector education that covered all the developmental aspects that culminate in the 'business of fashion' and they have also positioned themselves as the luxury fashion authority in the world, attracting international trade shows and brands that wish to establish themselves in the industry.

For African luxury fashion to grow, a similar approach with regards to setting up relevant structures is recommended. While the brands elaborated on the role facilitators such as AfreximBank, Birimian, and Creative Nexus Africa are fulfilling, these facilitators are focused on providing exposure rather than changing the structures of the global luxury industry to be decentralised from France and the United States. The call for such change was summarised by one participant who called for the facilitators to focus on the development and maturity of foundational ordinary business capabilities before exposure.

Jain et al (2021), Ko et al., (2019), and Kapferer & Valette-Florence (2018) highlighted the rising luxury fashion brands adoption in Africa which supports the opportunity for

intercontinental growth highlighted by the participants. Pairing the opportunity with the rise in country-specific fashion weeks such as Arise Africa Fashion Week, Lagos Fashion Week and Glitz Africa to name a few, gave an indication that the continent could be ready for cross-continental and country-specific structures that could spur the international growth.

7.3.2 Favourable trade and industry policies

As an extension of structure formulation, two potential opportunities that could enable this sector to grow and internationalise successfully could be the formulation of favourable trade policies and artisan skills development, which in the case of South Africa, previously existed when the textile industry was booming in the 1990s.

The recommendation for the establishment of favourable trade policies is based on the challenges experienced and highlighted by the participants due to the lack of such policies. These included higher taxation and shipping costs, which compromised the competitive pricing of such luxury fashion brands in certain markets. Establishing favourable trade policies could contribute significantly to facilitating trade through exports and lead to further expansion of African luxury fashion brands.

One of the participants highlighted that the Rwandan and Burkina Faso governments focus on fashion and textiles, which was claimed to have translated into the growth of the sector in those countries. Unfortunately, this study did not include participants from Rwanda to verify the assertions that were made. However recognition as an economic contributor and the need for government involvement to establish suitable conditions that would facilitate the growth of such businesses was emphasised by the participants.

7.4 Limitations

The duration within which the study was performed clashed with key trade related engagements in the global luxury fashion industry, resulting in many other brands declining to participate and provide their contributions. Participants were predominantly from South

Africa therefore the findings may not be conclusive and could require further exploration for the other countries where such brands were identified.

The study did not cover in detail the different stages of internationalisation and therefore may have omitted some critical considerations pertaining to each stage. This was not part of the research focus.

7.5 Inferences for future research

The inferences for future studies are based on recommending aspects that may be addressed in future studies on the subject matter of internationalisation, particularly for African luxury fashion brands.

The phenomenological qualitative data collected addressed the measures driving internationalisation, however, opportunities that warrant further investigations include:

- African luxury fashion brands;
- Strategies to overcome the challenges experienced by African luxury fashion brands when they internationalise and seek international business growth;
- Establishing fashion capitals in Africa for the growth and internationalisation of African luxury fashion brands;
- Favourable trade policies to facilitate the internationalisation of African luxury fashion brands;
- Effects of African heritage and culture in driving adoption of African luxury fashion brands in international markets;
- The impact of e-commerce exports in internationalisation of emerging markets luxury fashion brands;
- A longitudinal study on African luxury fashion brands to determine if they do move through the internationalisation stages to set up international subsidiaries and eventually become MNCs.

7.6 Chapter Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the modes of internationalisation and marketing strategies that were adopted by African luxury fashion brands when they expanded internationally. It also aimed at identifying the capabilities developed to facilitate business growth and identify if there were challenges faced by these brands in distinguishing themselves in the global market.

The essence of this study was to gain insight into internationalisation, through semi-structured interviews, directly with the participants who were the founders and designers of such brands as they had first-hand experience.

The findings and the discussion sections highlighted key themes that informed the recommendations covered in the study conclusion. Furthermore, anaphoric referencing is used to reflect on the previous chapters.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CONSISTENCY MATRIX

Title: Measures driving the internationalisation and adoption of African luxury fashion brands			
RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND/OR PROPOSITIONS OR HYPHOTHESES	LITERATURE REVIEW	DATA COLLECTION TOOL: INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTION	DATA ANALYSIS
Perception and definition of luxury	Okonkwo's (2016) Kapferer & Bastien (2012) Kapferer & Valette-Florence (2018) Ko, Costello & Taylor (2019) Sharma, Mauli, Borah et al. (2020)	Question 2	Thematic analysis to determine if there is consistency in definition and attributes
Q1: What is the mode of internationalisation most commonly followed/preferred by African luxury brands when they internationalise?	Guercini, Ranfagni & Runfola (2020) Khojastehpour & Johns (2014) Lakshman, Kumarasinghe & Weeramasinge, 2022; Lin (2012) Love & Roper (2015)	Question 4	Thematic analysis to determine range of options, i.e. various modes of internationalisation and how they are approached
Q2: What opportunities motivate their choices of expansion and territories?	Mo (2015) Van Andel, Demol & Schramme (2014)	Q3 and Q8	Thematic analysis to determine the internal drivers of seeking global expansion
Enablers of internationalisation	Appiah-Nimo, Muthambi & Devey (2023) Curwen, Park & Sarkar (2013) Ko, Costello & Taylor (2019)	Question 5 and Q8	Thematic analysis to determine the external drivers and enablers of global expansion
Q3: What strategies do African luxury brands utilise to create demand, for and market their offering?	Khojastehpour & Johns (2014)	Question 6	Thematic analysis to uncover similarities and differences in go to market approaches
Q4: What marketing capabilities do African luxury brands develop to drive their business growth?	Samiee & Chiparanda (2019) Grönroos (2016) Iqani (2016) Tan & Sousa (2015) Caniato, Moretto & Caridi (2013) Gregory, Ngo & Karavdic (2019) Joensuu-Salo, Sorama, Viljamaa et al (2018) Theoharakis, Angelis & Batsakis (2019)	Question 7	Thematic analysis to determine if there are unique capabilities owned/built by African luxury brands

Title: Measures driving the internationalisation and adoption of African luxury fashion brands			
RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND/OR PROPOSITIONS HYPHOTHESES	LITERATURE REVIEW	DATA COLLECTION TOOL: INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTION	DATA ANALYSIS
	Virtanen, Jiang, You et al (2022).		

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE OF THE INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Request for Participation in Academic Research

Dear Participant

I am conducting research in partial fulfilment of the Masters in Philosophy: International Business at the University of Pretoria - Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). My research will focus on the **internationalisation and marketing of African luxury brands**, a topic that you are well acquainted with as one of the leading fashion brands in the continent. The interview (face-to-face or virtual, whichever suits you best) is expected to last **an hour** and will help me understand how you penetrate new markets and drive the adoption of your products in foreign markets. Your participation is **voluntary**, and **you can withdraw at any time without penalty** if for whatever reason you decide to terminate your participation. Before the interview, I will provide a consent letter for your signature, to confirm agreeing to a recording, and indicating that you grant permission for:

- the interview to be recorded;
- the recording to be transcribed by a third-party transcriber, who will be subject to a standard non-disclosure agreement;
- verbatim quotations from the interview to be used in the report, provided they are not identified with your name or that of your organisation;
- the data, which will not explicitly identify your name or the name of your company, to be used as part of a research report that will be publicly available once the examination process has been completed;
- opportunity to terminate your contribution for whatever reason, without any penalty or consequences.

If you have any concerns with my conduct during the interview process, you may contact my research supervisor on the details provided below.

Researcher name: **Bridget Gugu Mthembu** ____ Research supervisor name: **Prof. Alet Erasmus**

APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE OF THE CONSENT LETTER

Informed Consent Letter

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am aware that Bridget Gugu Mthembu is conducting research in partial fulfilment of the Masters in Philosophy: International Business at the University of Pretoria Gordon Institute of Business Science. I hereby permit Bridget Gugu Mthembu to use my contributions relating to this topic for her to understand the internationalisation and marketing of African luxury brands. I acknowledge that this research will involve collecting data through face-to-face or virtual interviews from African luxury brand owners for a period not exceeding 1 hour, which I agree to.

I understand that participation in this research is voluntary and that the principle of informed consent will apply in the data collection process. I confirm that the researcher will protect the identity of participants involved in the research by keeping this information confidential in any stored data, reports or publications that may emanate from this research.

I also confirm I am authorised to speak on behalf of my organisation.

Signature of participant: _____

Name of participant: _____

Title of signatory: _____

Date of signing: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Name of researcher: _____

Contact Number: _____

Date of signing: _____

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research topic: Measures driving the internationalisation and adoption of African luxury fashion brands

The following interview questions serve as a draft of what will be covered during the interview process.

Introductory questions

1. Tell me about your business or brand.
 - a. Where and when did it start?
 - b. How many countries are your products currently sold in?
 - c. Which countries outside your home country do you operate in?
 - d. How many employees do you have?
 - e. Has your business turnover increased in your domestic market or foreign territories in recent years after the COVID-19 experience?
2. Do you believe your customers and general consumers consider your brand as a luxury brand?
 - a. Why do you say so?
 - b. What is your definition of a luxury brand?

Research questions: Internationalisation

3. You mentioned that your products are sold in other markets outside your home country. Please share your experience relating to penetrating new markets.
 - a. Did you find it easy to establish yourself in these countries or were there specific challenges you encountered?
 - b. What motivated you to seek international expansion?

- c. What made you choose the specific foreign countries you operate in? Are there specific market attributes that you look for when you consider setting up or selling in a new country?
4. Please talk me through the process you followed when you first internationalized. [Researcher to expand on entry modes so that participant can give specific answers]
 - a. Are you considering expanding to more countries? If so, would you use the same approach or adopt a different entry mode/strategy and why?
5. You've spoken about your experience and motivation behind internationalisation. I'm now interested in understanding if partnerships of any kind play a role in the process of internationalizing brands from emerging markets.
 - a. Who were the main stakeholders that assisted or enabled you on this journey?
 - b. How did you identify these partners?
 - c. If these are ongoing trade partnerships, what are the terms of the relationship/partnership?

Research questions: Marketing and Marketing Capabilities

6. Most businesses recognise the role that marketing plays in driving the adoption of a brand's offerings.
 - a. Once you started operating/trading in the foreign market, how did you use marketing to create exposure and adoption of your brand?
 - b. How is your marketing strategy in foreign markets that you operate in different from your domestic market marketing strategy?
 - c. How do you measure the success of your marketing efforts?
7. Scholars and marketing practitioners suggest that organisations need to build marketing capabilities which are a firm's ability to use available resources to perform

marketing tasks in ways that achieve desired marketing/business outcomes. They further suggest that the capabilities must be valuable, inimitable and non-substitution able to create sustainable competitive advantage.

- a. Which marketing capabilities have you developed over time that you use to differentiate your brand from competitors in the foreign market?
 - b. How do these capabilities concur or differ from what is done in your domestic market?
 - c. If your capabilities and strategies are applied differently per market, what informs the changes you apply?
8. Do you wish to contribute anything else that may be of value concerning this topic?

Thank you for your time and contribution!

APPENDIX E: QUALITATIVE LIST OF DESCRIPTIVE CODES

Coding	Frequency
Advice for designers	2
Affordable and ready to wear clothing	2
African fashion industry	4
African influence and cultural significance	7
African influence and luxury	4
African luxury brands	3
Association with celebrities and high fashion	2
Balancing affordability and quality	3
Balancing value and affordability	4
Brand expansion and focus	4
Brand history	5
Brand identity and African textiles	4
Brand identity and differentiation	7
Brand identity and expansion	3
Brand identity and legacy	4
Brand identity and marketing	6
Brand identity and protection	2
Brand identity and story	4
Brand narrative and marketing	4
Brand perception and heritage	3
Brand perception and recognition	3
Brand positioning	7
Brand recognition and support	3
Brand storytelling and advocacy	5
Branding and storytelling	8
Business establishment and growth	7
Business model and distribution	3
Business operations	4
Challenges and difficulties	2
Challenges and logistics	5
Challenges and market insights	12
Challenges and opportunities in international trade	8
Challenges and opportunities	11
Challenges and potential for growth in the African fashion and creative industry	8
Challenges and strategies in the fashion industry	8
Challenges faced by African luxury brands in internationalization	6

Coding	Frequency
Challenges faced in seeking international expansion	6
Challenges in internationalization	11
Challenges in selling couture	2
Challenges in the fashion industry	6
Challenges of African luxury and internationalization	2
Challenges of breaking into international markets	6
Challenges of retail during the covid 19 pandemic.	2
Challenges with local producers	3
Changing consumer behaviours	4
Collaboration and international expansion	4
Collaborations and campaigns	5
Company structure and social impact	3
Covid	3
Craft and cultural roots	6
Craftsmanship and artisans	5
Cross continental growth and localization strategies	3
Cultural appeal	7
Customer demographics	3
Customer loyalty	2
Customs and logistics challenges in South Africa	11
Design and aesthetic	6
Differentiation	3
Difficulties in international markets	6
Digital marketing	5
Education and experience	2
Emerging luxury brands in Africa	4
Emotions and attitude	4
Ethical and sustainable luxury	2
Events and trade shows	3
Expansion and challenges	3
Expansion and goals	2
Expansion and growth	3
Expansion and international market	10
Financial backing and business operations	13
Financial challenges	4
Financial success and international sales	2
Funding and education	4
Funding challenges	4

Coding	Frequency
Future expansion	2
Global expansion and market presence	7
Government support and growth potential	2
Government support and partnerships	6
Growth and challenges of the brand	3
Growth during COVID 19	2
Handcrafted products and luxury	2
Heritage and design aesthetic	4
Impact of covid	19
Impact of social media engagement	5
Importance of business side of fashion and building communities	3
Importance of craftsmanship and artisans	4
Importance of influencer marketing	4
Importance of physical presence	3
International expansion	41
International growth and shipping challenges	2
International growth	4
International presence	7
Internationalization and market attributes	6
Internationalization and partnerships	11
Internationalization challenges	2
Internationalization strategy	7
Knowledge of the fashion business	3
Logistics and warehousing	4
Luxury and brand perception	15
Luxury branding	7
Luxury fashion and couture	4
Luxury market and internationalization	3
Manufacturing and production	9
Market challenges	3
Market classification and pricing	3
Market focus	3
Market presence and expansion	6
Marketing and brand awareness	9
Marketing and brand positioning	12
Marketing and branding	19
Marketing efforts	10
Marketing strategies	34

Coding	Frequency
Measurement and evaluation	4
Measurement of marketing efforts	5
Meeting consumer needs and localization	2
Motivation for international expansion	4
Networking and partnerships	3
Online store and e	6
Partnership and collaboration	3
Partnerships and stakeholders	4
Penetrating new markets	3
Perception and authenticity	2
Perception and branding in the luxury industry	6
Perception of luxury	7
Performance and recognition	3
Personal journey and passion for luxury brands in Africa	5
Potential for growth in the luxury market	6
Price and value	5
Product manufacturing and distribution	14
Production and logistics	4
Production and quality issues	3
Production challenges	2
Quality standards and returns	3
Returns and customs taxes	2
Role of partnerships and collaborations	12
Sales and marketing	9
Sales channels	4
Sales performance	3
Shipping and logistics challenges	4
Showcasing African brands	3
Social impact and sustainability	6
Social media and digital marketing	7
Starting a brand and financial backing	3
Strategies and considerations	4
Success and growth	4
Support and recognition	3
Support and tax incentives for creative businesses	2
Sustainability and ethical practices	4
Target markets and expansion	6
Textile development and craft as a way to grow the economy	2

Coding	Frequency
Trademark and copyright	2
Unclear financial status	3
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