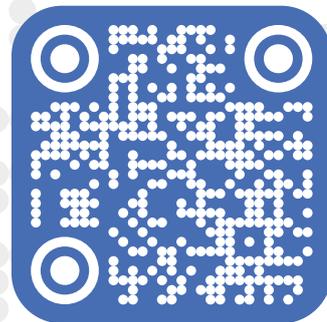


COMMONWEALTH FASHION INNOVATION



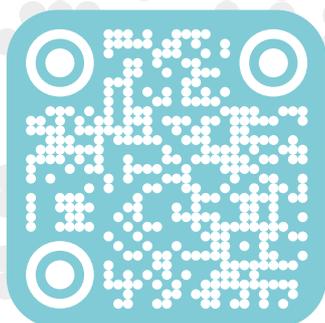
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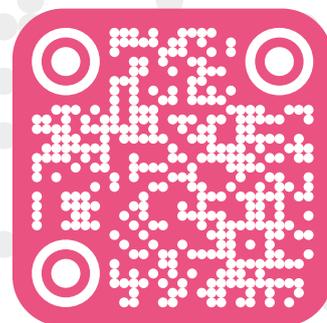
PACIFIC



ASIA



CARRIBEAN
AND AMERICAS



EUROPE



Introduction

This report, funded by Innovate UK, is the first to highlight the potential of the Commonwealth Fashion Council to further the values and aspirations of the Commonwealth Charter. It outlines the landscape of fashion innovation today and the range of opportunities this presents for the UK economy and the Commonwealth as a whole.

We want this report to inspire governments, agencies, fashion industry leaders and entrepreneurs across the 56 Commonwealth nations into action to spur change for the better.



Reasons for optimism

This report shows there is good reason for economic optimism across the Commonwealth nations. Their combined GDP in 2022 was approximately US\$14 trillion, and this figure is estimated to reach US\$19.5 trillion in 2027. The opportunities this growing economic power represents – not least for the fashion industry – are significant.

This growth is supported by the Commonwealth trade advantage, which gives on average 21% lower trade costs between Commonwealth country pairs thanks to what our countries have in common: the English language; similar legal systems; a commitment to freedom of speech; and mostly common financial systems.

Trends in the growth of intra-Commonwealth greenfield Foreign Direct Investment during the pandemic similarly show promise, while the power of diaspora plays an important part in bridging and creating fashion industry opportunities between countries.

Commonwealth textile and clothing exports

In 2021, Commonwealth countries together exported US\$135.6 billion worth of textiles and clothing, accounting for 15% of global textile and clothing exports.

Our tables provide more detail on which Commonwealth countries are leading the way – including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the UK and Malaysia.

Introducing the Commonwealth Fashion Council

Daniel Hatton founded The Commonwealth Fashion Council (CFC) in 2018 because he saw how, with 56 nations on board, it could have a huge global impact. Based in London, it has already succeeded in fostering innovation, sharing expertise, promoting diversity and inclusivity, nurturing creativity and supporting sustainable fashion practices. This report outlines just some of the exciting success stories that the CFC has been involved with since its inception.



Executive Summary



The Commonwealth Fashion eco system spanning 56 nations, 5 geographical regions present an incredible opportunity for UKs future economy. Collectively, this dynamic 2.5 billion growing and emerging market with projected GDP US\$ 19.5 trillion by 2027 shares a common purpose and joint action for sustainable development. This report, focussed on Commonwealth fashion innovation, sustainable development and entrepreneurship eco systems; aims to unravel; the opportunities, insights across the myriad of connections to strengthen partnerships, knowledge sharing and global connectedness. UKs global connectedness plays a crucial role in leading the future of sustainable fashion focussed on people and the planet. This global challenge offers the opportunity for unifying alliances a call to action the world needs addressing now for systematic change – a pivotal shift in the fashion industry.

-Thushara Sabreen Innovation Lead Creative Industries Innovate UK

Action groups for change

We talked to Dr Jeff Ardron - he told us about the power of the Commonwealth Blue Charter, to which all 56 nations have voluntarily agreed. A key element of the Blue Charter is how it can foster action groups to instigate change. This inspired us to think about creating a Commonwealth Fashion Charter.

'Blue fashion' and fish leather

The global value of the ocean and coastal resources and industries – or the blue economy – is estimated at USD\$3 trillion per year.¹ This spells opportunity for rising stars in the world of sustainable blue fashion, such as fish leather. This waste product is not just sustainable, it's durable, beautiful and versatile. Many luxury brands are already using it in clothing and apparel.

Innovation and opportunity

Here, we touch on the fashion industry's adoption of AI, NFTs and fashion collectibles, the opportunities presented by the metaverse, the technology of supply chain tracking, robotics, digitally deliverable services (DDS) and the opportunities presented by STEM driven fashion. Not forgetting of course the challenges to innovation adoption and the existing inequalities that technology adoption can exacerbate.

Looking ahead

With no global body to represent or regulate the fashion industry, the CFC has the potential to bring together governments, policymakers and industry to improve fashion industry practices. We'd like every government to appoint someone to lead on participation, and we'd like to see a Commonwealth Fashion Innovation Fund to encourage innovators to create new products and services that will benefit Commonwealth citizens.

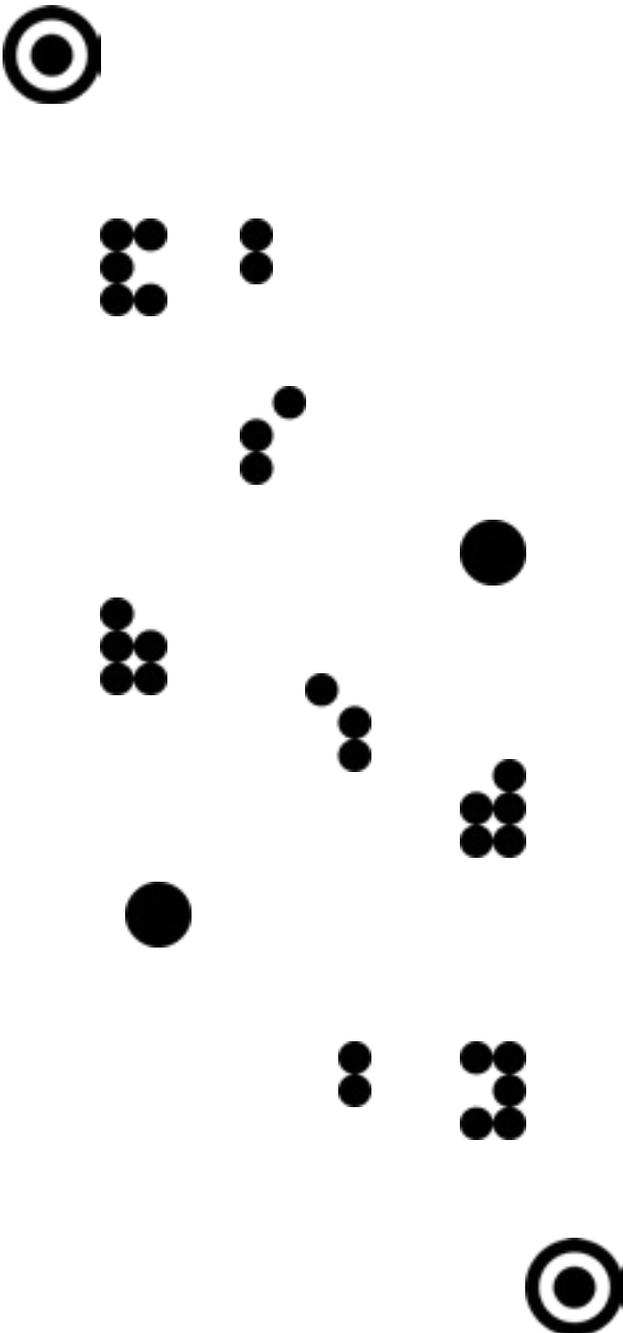
Commonwealth fashion stars across the region

The second half of our report goes into some of the fashion organisations that are spearheading innovation across the entire Commonwealth region, with examples that we find particularly inspiring. It spans Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/ocean2022/facts-figures>

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The Commonwealth today a growing force on the global stage

The economic power of the Commonwealth network is growing. With a combined GDP in 2022 of around US\$14 trillion, which is estimated to reach US\$19.5 trillion in 2027², the opportunities this growing economic power represents – not least for the fashion industry – are significant.

The guidance, mutual support and benefits offered through the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda, the Commonwealth Blue Charter and now the Commonwealth Fashion Council, are helping boost this growth, post-pandemic, in a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable manner.

A large part of this growth is down to a growing appetite and talent for innovation across the 56 Commonwealth nations. And with the Commonwealth representing a population of 2.6 billion, with a billion middle-class consumers, 40% of the global workforce and half of the top 20 global emerging

A woman with green eye makeup and large hoop earrings stands in a room with a pink wall. She is wearing a white patterned blouse with a black floral pattern and a black skirt with a white floral pattern. She is also wearing zebra-print high-heeled boots. A white plate with a black floral pattern is mounted on the wall to her right. A white electrical outlet is visible on the wall to her left.

The youthfulness of the Commonwealth is a really exciting factor in the potential of fashion innovation. Decades of funding have boosted innovation in fashion – both in the UK and across some Commonwealth nations – meaning there is much for the next generation of fashion creatives and entrepreneurs to feel optimistic about. I feel privileged to be able to play a part in nurturing their development, and supporting the growth of the fashion industry across our 56 nations.

-CFC founder Daniel Hatton

cities, its potential to shape global industry and spending habits is huge. Then there is the youth factor with, on average, 60% of the Commonwealth population is under the age of 30.³

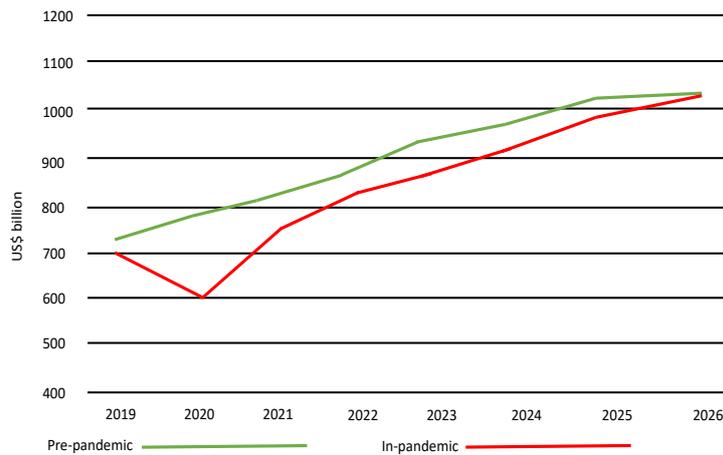
The future’s bright

Neishaa Gharat, Lead for Commonwealth fashion programmes said:

“Many Commonwealth economies are very dynamic. India is growing very fast, so is Malaysia. Other countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda are all coming up. And most of these emerging economies have young populations who are innovative, very digitally savvy and also have significant buying power.”

This positive outlook is backed up by research, which shows that intra-Commonwealth trade prospects are predicted to be on course with pre-pandemic levels by 2027 (see graph below).

Commonwealth trade prospective in the short and medium term 2022-2026



Our significant trade advantage

Helping spur growth is the Commonwealth trade advantage, which remains strong, giving on average, 21% lower trade costs between Commonwealth country pairs. This is largely thanks to what our countries have in common – the English language, similar legal systems (so aiding any IP disputes), a commitment to freedom of speech and mostly common financial systems. The fashion industry is no exception.

As the graph shows, in 2021, intra-Commonwealth exports of goods and services reached an all-time high of US\$768 billion dollars, up by nearly \$150 billion from the previous year. For 2022, we estimate that these exports will have surpassed US\$800 billion. We project that intra-Commonwealth exports will exceed US\$1 trillion by 2026.

³ Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council <https://www.cweic.org/commonwealth-advantage/>

Trends in intra-Commonwealth greenfield Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Trends in the growth of intra-Commonwealth greenfield Foreign Direct Investment during the pandemic similarly show promise.

Greenfield FDI is where a company establishes new operations in a foreign country. These new (green) facilities could be sales offices or a manufacturing facility, created from scratch.

According to the 2021 whitepaper, Beyond the Pandemic: Commonwealth Trade and Investment Prospects, intra-Commonwealth greenfield investments fared noticeably better than global greenfield flows in 2021. There were 726 intra-Commonwealth greenfield project announcements in that year, up from 517 in 2020 and just shy of the pre-pandemic average of 751.

The combined value of capital investments through intra-Commonwealth greenfield FDI increased from US\$22.1 billion in 2020 to \$30.3 billion in 2021.

The power of diaspora

The Commonwealth’s strong diasporic community, which is already playing an important role in driving trade and investment between member countries, remains under-utilised. The potential in this community lies in the demand for what are known as ethnic, nostalgic and identity goods, so providing an important bridge into new markets – and key to the growth of a thriving, pan-Commonwealth fashion industry.

The size of the Commonwealth’s textile and clothing trade

In 2021, Commonwealth countries collectively exported US\$ 135.6 billion worth of textiles and clothing, accounting for 15% of global textile and clothing exports. This consisted of \$92 billion in clothing exports and \$43.6 billion in exported textiles.

The Commonwealth’s top exporters of clothing and textiles are listed in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively, below.

Table 1: Top 10 clothing exporters in the Commonwealth, 2021

Country	Value (US\$ million)	Share of Commonwealth clothing exports (%)	Share of global clothing exports (%)
Bangladesh	35,812	38.9	6.5
India	16,150	17.6	2.9
Malaysia	14,538	15.8	2.6
Pakistan	8,456	9.2	1.5
United Kingdom	5,558	6.0	1.0
Sri Lanka	5,385	5.9	1.0
Canada	2,012	2.2	0.4
Singapore	1,333	1.4	0.2
Lesotho	484	0.5	0.1
South Africa	482	0.5	0.1

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat (calculated using WTO Stats)

Table 2: Top 10 exporters of textiles in the Commonwealth, 2021

Country	Value (US\$ million)	Share of Commonwealth textiles exports (%)	Share of global textiles exports (%)
India	22,233	51.0	6.3
Pakistan	9,188	21.1	2.6
United Kingdom	3,227	7.4	0.9
Bangladesh	2,135	4.9	0.6
Malaysia	2,004	4.6	0.6
Canada	1,631	3.7	0.5
Singapore	824	1.9	0.2
Sri Lanka	461	1.1	0.1
South Africa	454	1.0	0.1
New Zealand	314	0.7	0.1

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat (calculated using WTO Stats)





The Commonwealth fashion industry is well positioned to unite the potential of second and third generation diasporas in the north, with growing markets in the south that have young, tech savvy populations. The benefits to host countries and countries of origin are extensive, including greater diversity, cultural exchange, market expansion, sustainable development, economic growth and innovation. This makes the Commonwealth fashion scene today really vibrant and globally relevant.

-Arif Zaman, Executive Director, Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBWN)



Daniel Hatton founded The Commonwealth Fashion Council (CFC) in 2016 and launched at Buckingham Palace in the presence of TRH The Princess of Wales and The Duchess of Edinburgh in response to the fact that there was no global body for fashion. Its aim is to encourage a more connected, energised and responsible fashion sector, and with 56 nations embracing this opportunity for change and consensus, the CFC can have a huge global impact.

Based in London, the CFC can enable governments, organisations and business leaders to come together for mutual benefit. Due to similar legal and regulatory systems across the Commonwealth, policies can be adopted globally that could instigate movements that can create a ripple effect of positive change, enabling the sharing of innovations and expertise for the common good.



It promotes diversity and inclusivity by showcasing work from the fashion industries of a range of countries and cultural backgrounds, and fosters creativity and innovation by providing a platform for emerging creatives and entrepreneurs. The CFC can give these emerging creatives and entrepreneurs important networking opportunities, so they can connect with industry professionals, buyers and potential collaborators – including tech organisations.

This all helps to increase the visibility and exposure of emerging talents on a global stage, and supports the development of member countries' fashion industries, which in turn creates jobs, increases exports and promotes cross cultural understanding.

Not least, the CFC supports sustainable fashion practices by promoting designers who use ethical and eco-friendly production methods.

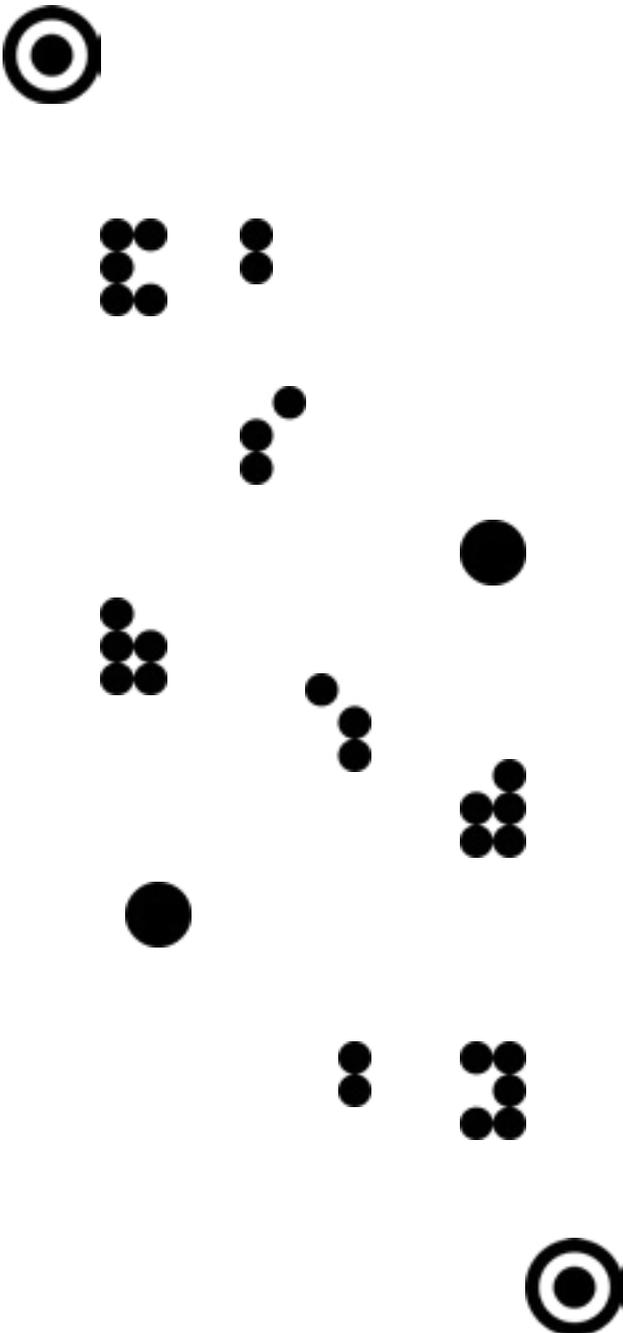
As Daniel says: "Fashion is one of the top five most polluting industries on the planet. Can you imagine if 56 nations agreed on action in their fashion industries? The results and impact would be felt across the globe – and it would harness such a powerful sense of common purpose. That's the potential of the Commonwealth Fashion Council. And having this global body based

here, makes London a centre for really exciting opportunities in learning, sharing and growth across the Commonwealth fashion sector."

He adds, "I'd like us to establish a Commonwealth Fashion Charter that helps Commonwealth governments to come together to tackle major issues to preserve our planet for future generations. It can also enshrine best practices for work conditions, so elevate fashion as an industry."

Daniel concludes, "If 56 fashion industries can work together with shared values, language and similar legal systems, it will be good for the planet, for people and give hope for the future – it makes total sense. We've already become a nominating partner of The Earthshot Prize founded by HRH The Princes of Wales, that puts sustainability front and centre in the private sector. We're hoping that the CFC can help foster transparency to avoid opaque practices such as greenwashing – and go further by creating our own charter that all Commonwealth nations will want to sign up to."





Contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This blueprint for a more sustainable world included 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call on all countries to come together to solve the world's key challenges.

The goals feature a series of targets and indicators to help drive action around specific economic, social and environmental issues. They also highlight the need for greater global collaboration and partnership. Organisations, businesses and individuals across the fashion sector have a critical role to play in reducing the industry's negative environmental and social impacts, and therefore in making a positive contribution to the 2030 Agenda.

Through our work to support and grow sustainable fashion practices across the Commonwealth, we are already playing

a part in achieving the SDGs. We believe we can bring together governments, policymakers and industry to improve fashion industry practices – and drive significant positive change that could impact the lives of millions of people.

These seven SDGs have been identified as the primary goals where the Commonwealth Fashion Council and the industry more broadly is already contributing, and where we have the greatest potential to add further value.

Goal 4: Quality education

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Goal 5: Gender equality

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production

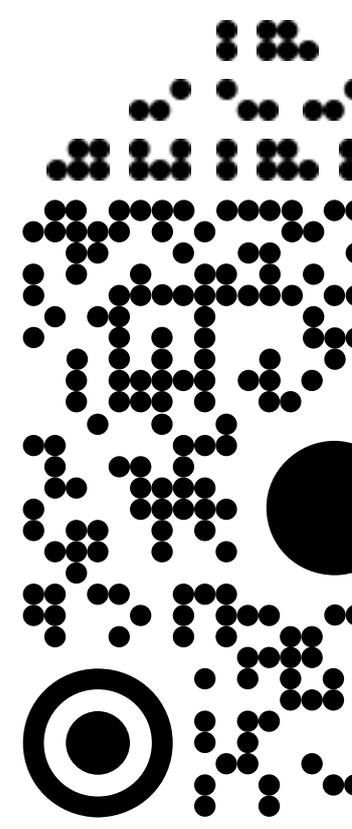
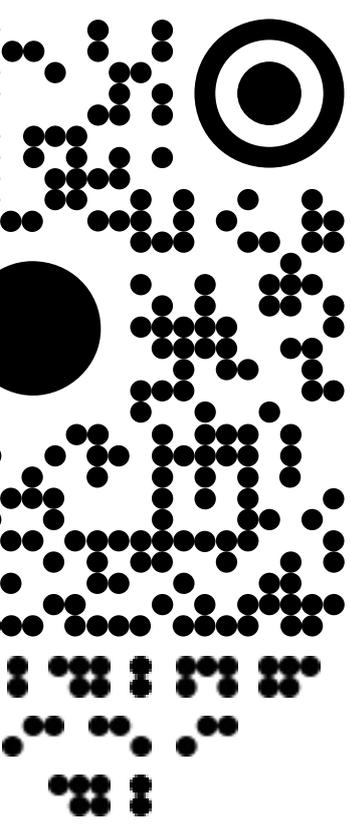
Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

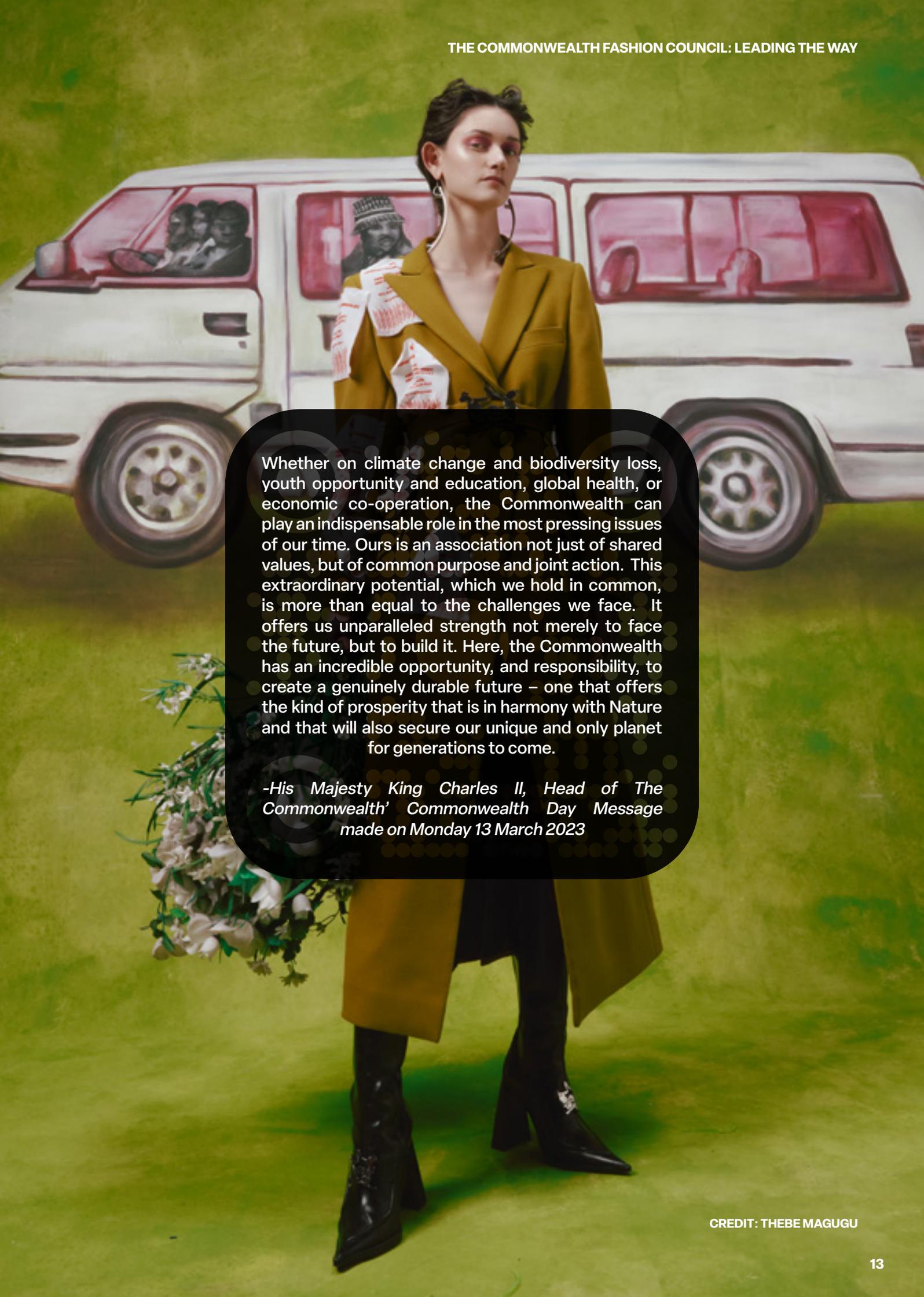
Goal 14: Life below water

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Goal 15: Life on land

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.





Whether on climate change and biodiversity loss, youth opportunity and education, global health, or economic co-operation, the Commonwealth can play an indispensable role in the most pressing issues of our time. Ours is an association not just of shared values, but of common purpose and joint action. This extraordinary potential, which we hold in common, is more than equal to the challenges we face. It offers us unparalleled strength not merely to face the future, but to build it. Here, the Commonwealth has an incredible opportunity, and responsibility, to create a genuinely durable future – one that offers the kind of prosperity that is in harmony with Nature and that will also secure our unique and only planet for generations to come.

-His Majesty King Charles II, Head of The Commonwealth' Commonwealth Day Message made on Monday 13 March 2023

CFC achievements to date

- We worked with KOCO (Knit One Change One in the Pacific) to support knitting hubs across southern India. These hubs help women with maths, plus reading and writing in English, to help them increase income in order to support their families.
- We partnered with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) to develop a series of events on Blue Fashion. (see box on Blue Fashion on 14)
- We partnered again with UNFAO, and the Nordic Atlantic Cooperation, to put on a Blue Fashion event in Nairobi, Kenya. This saw designers and producers making a splash with their colourful creations inspired by and sustainably sourced from the sea.
- Delivered an event, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Fashion Exchange, at the opening Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London. Uniting fashion designers and artisans from across the Commonwealth, partners for this event included Matches Fashion, Swarovski, Walmark Company and

Buckingham Palace, with the support of the Princess of Wales and the Duchess of Edinburgh.

- Our education initiatives include:
 - A partnership with the University of Herefordshire, with whom we created the first ever Commonwealth Fashion Education Symposium. Following the symposium, the CFC is now investigating short courses on areas such as global fashion governance, which explores transparency and accountability.
 - Following the symposium, the CFC is now creating short courses on areas such as Global Fashion Governance, which explores values such as transparency and accountability.
- The Commonwealth Fashion Film Collective (CFFC), based in Singapore, to harness the fashion and film industries of the Commonwealth. (see case study on 13)
- We partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Nordic Atlantic Cooperation to put on The Blue Fashion event in Nairobi, Kenya. This saw designers and producers making a splash with their colourful creations inspired and sustainably sourced from the sea.

THE COMMONWEALTH FASHION FILM COLLECTIVE

The Commonwealth Fashion Film Collective (CFFC) launched in Singapore, to harness the fashion and film industries of the Commonwealth. The CFFC aims to build a community of knowledge, expertise and appreciation for the fashion film industry while advocating for collaborations.

Fashion films are short videos produced by brands, designers, filmmakers, storytellers and artists that put fashion centre stage. Traditionally 30 seconds to 10 minutes in length, they are quickly growing in prominence as the key channel for products and brands to tell their story. Not least because they provide an alternative and very cost-effective way for designers to showcase their collections – which can potentially be seen by billions – year round.

It all started with the Canadian International Fashion Film Festival (CANIFFF), which is

the home of the first ever Commonwealth Fashion Film Award category.

CANIFFF commissioned a “State of the Industry” report. This found that, of the 47 fashion film festivals around the globe, the Commonwealth is only represented in the UK, Australia, South Africa and Canada. The report also identified Africa and Asia as potential areas of new business.

The CFC saw the opportunity in harnessing not only the African and Asian fashion film scenes, but also in harnessing other nascent fashion film industries from across the Commonwealth. And so the Commonwealth Fashion Film Collective was born – to celebrate the best fashion films in the world, and advocate for growth and prosperity amongst the fashion and film industries around the Commonwealth.

From Commonwealth Charters to action groups

We can learn from the Commonwealth Blue Charter, which all 56 nations have agreed to, and which exists to meet commitments for sustainable ocean action.

Dr Jeff Ardron - he talks about a key element of the Blue Charter being the ability to create action groups, which would of course apply to a Fashion Charter:

“So a country comes to us and says we’re really concerned about an issue – then they create an action group on that topic and other countries participate voluntarily. The voluntary participation is important because it means that countries that are not interested don’t show up – and we can move much more quickly. I think that could apply brilliantly to the

fashion industries across the Commonwealth, where action groups can move nimbly and lead on change.”

He adds, “I’d love to see a ‘sustainable oceans fashion challenge’ based on marine materials like fish leather and seaweed.”

Charters and action groups support significant opportunities to map and build on creative ecosystems that benefit the fashion industry, but which can also influence industries beyond fashion. The integration of STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) learning, or STEAM with the addition of the arts, marks a key opportunity for the business of fashion – and the storytelling around it. For example, harnessing technology, empowering women and improving sustainability are cross-industry concerns. Working together, and learning together, are a powerful part of the solution.

THE BLUE ECONOMY, BLUE FASHION AND FISH LEATHER

Blue Fashion forms part of the broader Blue Economy, currently worth USD\$3 trillion. The relatively new concept of the Blue Economy encourages the sustainable exploitation, innovation and stewardship of our oceans – and their life-giving ‘blue’ resource.

The worldwide ocean economy is valued at around USD\$3 trillion per year. Judged by country standards, this makes it the one of the largest economies in the world – and it’s set to grow.

Rising stars in the world of sustainable blue fashion are seaweed dyes and fabrics, along with fish leather, which is durable, sustainable and versatile. Fish leather is simply fish skin that is transformed from lowly waste into a high fashion, luxury leather. It is nine times stronger than mammal leather thanks to multi-directional fibres providing 90 newtons of tensile strength, and comes with a gorgeous range of scale patterns.

It’s innovative, but it’s also nothing new. Indigenous groups living on coasts and rivers from Scandinavia to Asia to Alaska have used fish leather for centuries. More recently, environmental policies have in cases reduced fishing rights, but the use of fish skin is seeing a resurgence thanks to trends in sustainable fashion, with ancient, traditional techniques being reclaimed by indigenous peoples and forward-looking businesses.

Today, fish leather is used by Jimmy Choo, Dior, Prada, Christian Dior, Louis Vuitton, Puma, Gucci, Nike and BMW amongst others, showing just how the economics of fish-dependent communities can be benefit from the buying power of luxury consumers.

And with increasing consciousness amongst consumers, the facts of animal leather processing (made with toxic, non-renewable chrome), and vegan leather production (that contributes to plastic pollution), fish leather becomes an obvious, ecologically ethical choice – especially popular amongst younger consumers.

The numbers speak for themselves. In the UK alone, fish skin constitutes 5% of the 193,000 tonnes of UK salmon farmed each year. Then there are 12,903 tonnes of rainbow trout and 631,000 tonnes of wild fish caught.⁴ Creating garments and accessories from this waste material creates employment, gives brands exotic scale patterns and feeds a healthier, more circular economy.

The future of fish leather looks set to be bright, with the global market expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 5.5% to 2030.⁵

Sharing expertise in the art of fish skin leather processing between Commonwealth nations will boost this growth industry, and many are already making moves or watching this space with interest. We at the CFC would encourage the creation of action groups to move the industry forward, for example to promote the establishment of fish leather hubs across the UK.

If the UK succeeds in harnessing this low-value waste into high-value materials, so boosting skills development and ocean awareness, this could provide a valuable blueprint for many to follow suit. Large ocean nations could in particular benefit economically from establishing fish leather processing plants.

⁴ Sea Fish <https://www.seafish.org>

⁵ Industry Growth Insights <https://industrygrowthinsights.com/report/global-fish-leather-market/>





With today's knowledge and technology expertise spreading much faster internationally than in the past, there is much to be excited about. Globalized production and innovation networks lead to catch-up and convergence with the innovation frontier and the fashion industry is no exception.

On the whole, the ability of middle- and lower-income economies to integrate and adapt leading technologies is on the rise. However, even if an economy grows, the benefits don't necessarily reach the whole population. Income gaps are widening in both advanced and emerging economies. However, at the same time, income inequality between countries has decreased over the last two to three decades.



Business and policy practices can aid productivity growth, which includes keeping international learning and technology flows open. For emerging and developing countries that need to catch up, the CFC can play a part in fostering these flows of learning and technology, so keeping alive the possibility of quick productivity wins across the board. Key strengths emerging from the fashion industry include work in AI, blockchain, frugal innovation and more. See below for a round-up of the latest innovations in play.



Web3 and decentralization

Where Web 1.0 offered users mostly readable content, Web 2.0 allowed people to create content and so enabled direct relationships between brands and consumers. Web3 is a further evolution – into a decentralised online ecosystem that is based on the blockchain.

This decentralisation has given rise to the DAO, or decentralised autonomous organisation. DAOs are collectively owned and blockchain governed, and because no one can own a blockchain, they exist outside standard legal business entities. Formed and governed by their own members, they have neither CEOs nor boards of directors.

One fashion industry example is Red DAO, which came to prominence when it spent roughly \$2 million on Dolce & Gabbana's digital couture NFTs.

DAOs can, some say, offer a new model for ownership, investment and creative direction, allowing broader and more democratic participation in the fashion industry. Theoretically, any individual can set up shop. But there are detractors who say that DAOs overpromise and underdeliver. Whatever your views, it's a space worth watching.



NFTs, or non-fungible tokens, and the metaverse (see below) are further examples of Web3 in action.



“For the Australian fashion and textiles industry to not only survive, but thrive, it’s imperative that we collaborate to explore, trial and adopt new innovations and technology.”

Australian Fashion Council

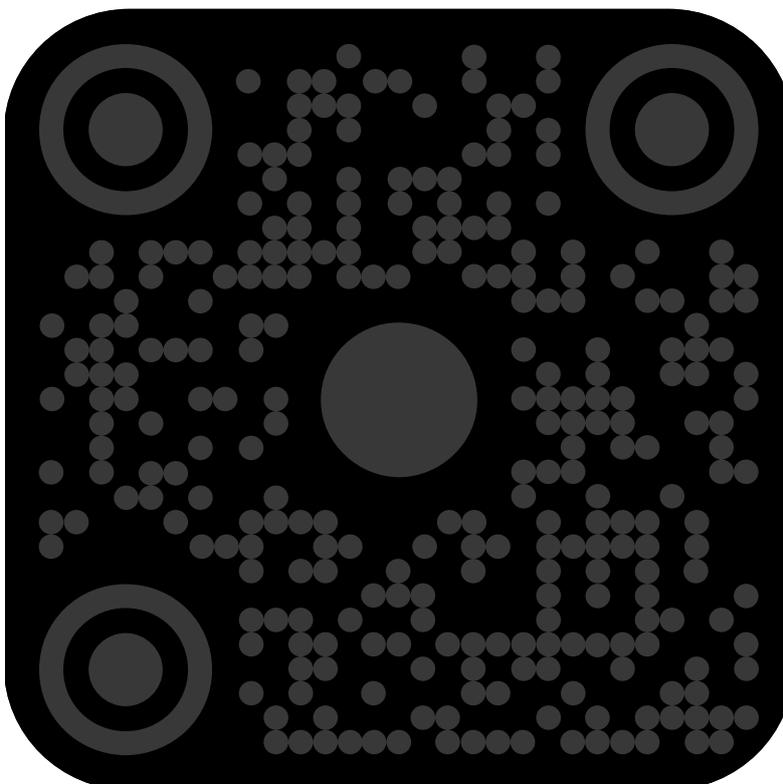
Generative AI

In the next three to five years, generative AI could add \$150 billion, conservatively, and up to \$275 billion to the apparel, fashion, and luxury sectors’ operating profits, according to McKinsey analysis.

The possibilities for marketing are extensive. For example, the use of generative AI to brainstorm campaign strategies, product campaign content, and create virtual avatars for every marketing channel — and fast.

Creating viral video isn’t an exact science, however the more you produce, the higher the chances are of trending, and therefore of increasing visibility and sales. Generative AI can create short-form videos quickly and cheaply, according to current trends in viral content.

It can also help with personalised customer communications - at scale. According to McKinsey, Companies that excel at personalisation increase revenues by 40% compared with companies that don’t leverage personalisation.⁷



Marketers can now choose the type of content they want to create, describe what they need, add target audience and tone, and an AI tool can create several options to choose from. With further applications across supply chain, design and virtual try-ons, this is one powerful business tool – and it’s only just begun.

More broadly, AI can also help clients to measure and benchmark the impact of their media placements, which can fuel more impactful campaigns and better customer engagement. See Vestico in our Regional Profile section on p40. This London-based startup uses AI to show shoppers fashion and beauty products

on images of people who are physically similar to them.

As well as presenting many opportunities, it is widely reported that AI will need careful management to remain a positive force. The Commonwealth Secretariat, together with a consortium of global firms, start-ups, universities and non-profits, have come together to bridge the digital divide, including the artificial intelligence (AI) gap, to help empower Commonwealth citizens, with a particular focus on the association’s 33 small states.

⁷ The Commonwealth Library <https://www.thecommonwealth-ilibrary.org/index.php/comsec/catalog/view/956/952/8194>



Time to unite, to save people from a relentless cycle of risk

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) is the world's chartered body for occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals and is an accredited Commonwealth organisation. IOSH supports over 50,000 professionals in 130 countries, including 38 Commonwealth nations. With its vision of a safe and healthy world of work, it is committed to promoting ethical, transparent, safe and healthy working environments for all workers and across global fashion supply chains.

The global textile and garment industry employs hundreds of millions of people. These workers are disproportionately exposed to various occupational hazards and risks, including hazardous chemicals, mechanical dangers, ergonomic risks, psychosocial factors and physical risks, including work-related violence and harassment.

The industry's relentless cycle of rapid production schedules, cost-cutting pressures and opaque supply chains can lead to the exploitation of labour, unsafe working conditions, unsafe working practices, and depletion of the environment and its natural resources. Use of innovative technology and the effects of climate change can also have an impact on workers' health and safety, while workers across fashion supply chains may be experiencing modern slavery or working in the informal

economy, where human and labour rights are at risk.

Through IOSH's work, including our documentaries, we have witnessed how workers can be particularly vulnerable in small-scale and informal settings, enduring harsh working conditions without adequate OSH standards. However, we can also see how good OSH can support a transition to formality and to decent work.

The race to get the highest quality at the lowest price, with the fastest delivery, has turned due diligence within supply chains into a multifaceted, universal challenge that demands transparent reporting and disclosure, ethical oversight and accountability at every stage.

IOSH calls on all parties to forge a global commitment to ensuring decent work for all and upholding workers' rights, dignity and health and safety standards. Due diligence must be made mandatory and should demonstrate

responsible sourcing practices and the ratification of international labour and OSH standards at a national level.

This particularly relates to Convention 155 ‘Occupational Health and Safety’ and Convention 187 ‘A Promotional Framework for Occupational Health and Safety.’ This is about securing the International Labour Organization (ILO) Fundamental Principle and Rights at Work, which includes a safe and healthy working environment, whereby everyone has a role to play. At a national level with governments, policy-makers and regulators - we call for OSH policies, frameworks, action plans and programmes to be in place and enforced. We expect employers and businesses to follow the IOSH principles of good OSH, and to have transparency, disclosure and reporting across supply chains.

Standing firm with the Commonwealth Fashion Council, IOSH shares a vision of responsible business practices enabling the fashion industry to stay ahead of the curve of

evolving consumer expectations and regulatory demands. It is a vision that will enhance brand reputation and long-term resilience.

True transformation and innovation of the fashion industry can only come if we work together to reduce any negative impacts on the planet, people and their communities. And by harnessing the global reach and appeal of the fashion industry, we can drive the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Commonwealth Fashion Council is well-positioned to drive meaningful change across the fashion value chain. For this reason, IOSH supports the implementation of a Charter that includes health and safety principles, standards and capacity building. The provision of health and safety awareness, education and skills are important for all if we are to drive a cultural shift of change towards innovative supply chains and decent work for all





I'm optimistic about the potential of digital assets sales generating inter-commonwealth trade. For example, a designer in Fiji could create a digital garment with the measurements of a buyer in India. This new system of buying products can allow for designers to generate income and for the buyer to use local materials and tailors to create a unique item of clothing that would be more personal to the consumer – and help local businesses close to the buyer.

-Daniel Hatton, CFC founder

NFTs and fashion collectibles

Fashion brands are releasing their own digital products in the form of unique, digital assets known as non-fungible tokens (NFTs).

Burberry, Gucci and Louis Vuitton are amongst the brands to have created their own NFTs, banking on the idea that owning a designer-created digital work is as attractive as a tangible accessory.

Designers have collaborated with gaming platforms to display their NFTs, but as it currently stands, there is no widely adopted virtual world where purchases can be shown off, and metaverse user numbers are still hugely outnumbered by those on Instagram or TikTok.

Recently the CFC designed Commonwealth Fashion NFTs, the proceeds from which helped support our work. Buyers could also order a physical pair of limited-edition shoes created by Sheffield-based Goral & Son.

See also Port Of Spain Fashion Week and WYLD FLWR in our Regional Profiles on p37 below.

Frugal innovation

Frugal innovation is about developing products and services for low-income consumers, and spans low-tech to high-tech solutions that find ways of doing more with less (see Frugal Fashion Innovations, below). The opportunities are huge, not least for emerging economies for whom resourcefulness has led naturally to innovation over the years. These are lessons that the UK can adapt too.

We have two good examples of frugal innovation organisations in our case studies section – Phool (see p), and Graviky (see p32).

Smart manufacturing

Smart manufacturing practices allow production to be monitored and fine-tuned with precision. Via automation, AI, data analytics and the Internet of Things (IoT), it can improve efficiency, aid quality control and reduce costs. For the fashion industry, there are multiple applications.

For example, IoT-enabled machinery can analyse real-time data to find bottlenecks and improve overall efficiency. And quality control can be aided by machine vision systems that can inspect garments at various stages of production, identifying flaws.

FRUGAL FASHION INNOVATIONS

From tea leaves to T-shirts

Ceytea is Unilever's instant tea factory. It's based in Agarapathana, in the heart of the hills of Sri Lanka. For years, the businesses generated five tons of waste tea sludge every single day. They were looking for ways to reduce this waste, and ways to reduce tea stains on their uniforms, when they were approached by a research scientist from SLINTECH, Sri Lanka's leading nano-tech institute. She was researching natural dyes.

Ceytea and SLINTEC partnered with garment-dyeing and wash firm Dynawash, and after a few years of research and development, created an effective dye that met industry standards.

Today, alongside their instant tea powder, Ceytea produces the base ingredient for a range of natural fabric dyes, under the name T-Hues. They manufacture all their own workwear, plus naturally dyed scarves, shawls, hoodies and t-shirts to retailers such as the UK's Marks & Spencer.

Brewed fabric

A recent study by Manchester Metropolitan University has found it could be possible to make sustainable fabrics. Bacterial cellulose, or BC, can be grown in a solution of black tea, sugar and kombucha.

Researchers analysed the material's suitability for making clothes and found it to be highly resistant to scuffs and scratches, concluding it could be best suited for protective work wear or motorbike leathers. Other potential uses include absorbent medical dressings, beauty products and filters.

Wheat waste turns wearable

As agricultural waste, wheat straw is discarded or burned in the fields. Using it in textiles would be a huge step in a more sustainable direction.

The UK is estimated to produce around 10 million tonnes of cereal straw a year, which is mainly used in animal bedding, feed and more recently bio-energy. As with fish skin and fisheries, the UK's agricultural sector has an abundance of waste that can be utilised and scaled. And for farmers of course, it's another potential revenue stream.

Sustainable fibre technology companies Spinnova and Foitum have worked together to develop prototypes of clothing made of wheat straw-based fabric - without the use of harmful chemicals.

The straw is processed to turn cellulose into fibre, and the new textile was used to create a knitted T-shirt, a jacket, and a skirt, which were showcased at the Textile Exchange Sustainability Conference in Vancouver.

Smart factories can provide greater flexibility and customisation to meet customers' changing needs, and this responsiveness is enabling businesses to remain competitive. One example is custom designs, where customers want a limited-edition product without the lead time and expense this would ordinarily entail.

When it comes to sustainability, smart manufacturing can help organisations lower their environmental impact - for example by monitoring energy usage and powering down equipment when it's not in use.

The metaverse

Despite reduced audience numbers, fashion brands are banking on the growth of the metaverse, where their presence is a growing trend. Last year's Metaverse Fashion week presented an immersive, digital fashion experience where visitors explored clothing

from luxury brands. It saw significant engagement, with 108,000 unique participants, a 60% increase in on-brand searches, 7,000 + digital garments purchased and 7 billion impressions across global press coverage and social media.

The technology of transparency

Textiles production has an extremely long and complex supply chain, which can be completely opaque to brands and retailers.

Blockchain technology can track and verify the use of sustainable fibres all the way from fibre to garment via a digital 'fibrecoin.' This ensures transparency and reliability throughout the entire production line and beyond.

Another approach is biodegradable tracking technology. This is embedded into the raw material and functions as a kind of passport





during the entire production process.

These are timely tools given current consumers' growing appetite for ethical fashion – especially among younger generations. And given that there are 50 million modern slaves working today, according to a [recent UN report](#), blockchain can play a powerful part in removing the financial incentives for this practice. See also WYLD FLWR on p37 of our regional profile section.

Robotics

Robotics is helping fashion companies drive business efficiencies in their warehouses, stores and factories. Once the stuff of sci-fi, robots routinely roam warehouses, collecting and transporting goods much more efficiently and accurately than humans.

It has led to a heightened level of service that can give fashion brands the edge, e.g. same day delivery.

Bitcoin

With the potential UK launch of brand-new digital currency Bitcoin (decision due in 2025), come huge potential opportunities. Not least, this more transparent digital currency could encourage or reward sustainable fashion practices and purchases. Used across the Commonwealth – or beyond – as a global fashion currency, a blockchain enabled Bitcoin would improve traceability and could

begin to stem the ethical or environmental harms of fast fashion.

Bitcoin would also fall in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which are pushing the banking sector to do more to implant these goals in all they do. And with global trust in the City of London combining with London's reputation as a fashion powerhouse, this new currency has all the ingredients of a success story.

Innovation and digitally deliverable services (DDS)

All these innovations depend on digital, which doesn't just facilitate sales, but helps companies work better, faster and cheaper. Across all industries, the Commonwealth's combined DDS exports accounted for 71% of total services exports (compared to 64% worldwide), up from 59% in 2019.⁸

Brendan Vickers comments, "There's been a huge upturn

⁸ The Commonwealth Library <https://www.thecommonwealth-ilibrary.org/index.php/comsec/catalog/view/956/952/8194>

since the pandemic in the number of services exports that are now digitally deliverable – 64% globally. Trust is a big component of digital delivery and trade and I think that in Commonwealth networks you have that implicit trust already. It's a very significant element of the trade advantage."

He concludes, "Digitalisation does present an opportunity for growth, but the problem of a growing, global, digital divide isn't going anywhere and needs to be addressed. This won't be easy."

Challenges to innovation adoption

Innovation isn't a magic wand, and technology adoption can be arduous and time consuming. Furthermore, economic uncertainty and capital costs can also dull the appetite for technology investments, while skills shortages can slow the adoption of new technologies.

More broadly, innovations in fields such as robotics and AI require societal acceptance and new regulatory frameworks which can delay adoption countrywide. The CFC needs to support small fashion businesses to ensure they don't get left behind.

STEM AND STEAM DRIVEN FASHION

We believe the UK could be a world leader in next generation fashion education by focusing on driving STEM and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths) related advances in the global fashion industry. This will not only benefit the UK economy, but the Commonwealth as a whole, as creatives and entrepreneurs from around the world connect and collaborate with the support of the CFC.

What does this mean for creatives entering the fashion industry?

There has been a radical shift over in the past couple of years that there is a growing and urgent need for people with the right technology skills and knowledge to keep pace with changes in the fashion industry.

"Technological innovation within the fashion sector is challenging conventional paradigms. The appetite for change is at the forefront

of a dynamic movement driven by a need to reduce its carbon footprint, reduce its reliance on natural resources, tackle over production and over consumption. Digital and virtual environments continue to challenge and change the way we think and communicate, educate and conduct business. The knowledge and skills required in a rapidly changing industry is not solely focused on a stereotypical preconception about fashion education, but a sophisticated and multi-faceted approach to creativity in design, science, and technology. Tomorrow's generation of fashion professionals require a multitude of skills not limited by creative design learning alone, but an ability to navigate emerging technology, interrogate data and find scientific solutions to the challenges the planet faces today."

- *Interim Associate Dean of School, Academic Quality and Assurance School of Creative Arts University of Hertfordshire, Tony Rosella*



Funding innovation in fashion

Looking ahead, we'd like to see a Commonwealth Fashion Innovation Fund. This would encourage innovators to create new, commercially viable products, processes and services that will benefit Commonwealth citizens and contribute to UK and Commonwealth GDP throughout the 56 nations.

The fund would encourage Commonwealth regions (Asia, Africa, Europe, Caribbean & Americas & Pacific) to collaborate and form innovative coalitions, and would embody the values and aspirations of the Commonwealth Charter, signed by His Majesty King Charles II, Head of the Commonwealth.

Innovation, coupled with our shared language, mean that the diverse network of the Commonwealth could lead the way by trading with transparency and focusing on ethical goods. This would help to counter the frequent opaqueness and greenwashing within the fashion industry, and could eventually pave the way to rewarding customers for ethical purchases. Bitcoin could be a powerful catalyst for this change.



We recommend establishing a Committee of Commonwealth governments to fund multilateral programming for Commonwealth Fashion innovation, with this committee having one member nation per Commonwealth region.

A shared vision

Over the longer term, more can be done in the sharing of knowledge, reports, and best practices – even the creation of entire movements that help resolve global issues. We'd like to see the creation of a Commonwealth Fashion Charter, similar to the Commonwealth Blue Charter that has focused on better coordination to protect oceans, rivers and lakes within the Commonwealth. A Commonwealth Fashion Charter could help foster change and consensus, supporting sustainability of raw materials on land and sea, fuelling innovation and improve pay and work conditions for the poorest.

With currently no global body to represent or regulate the fashion industry, and a lack of coordination between governments, the CFC has the potential to be a cornerstone of the global fashion industry, and a platform for governments, policymakers and industry leaders to come together for the good of people and the planet.

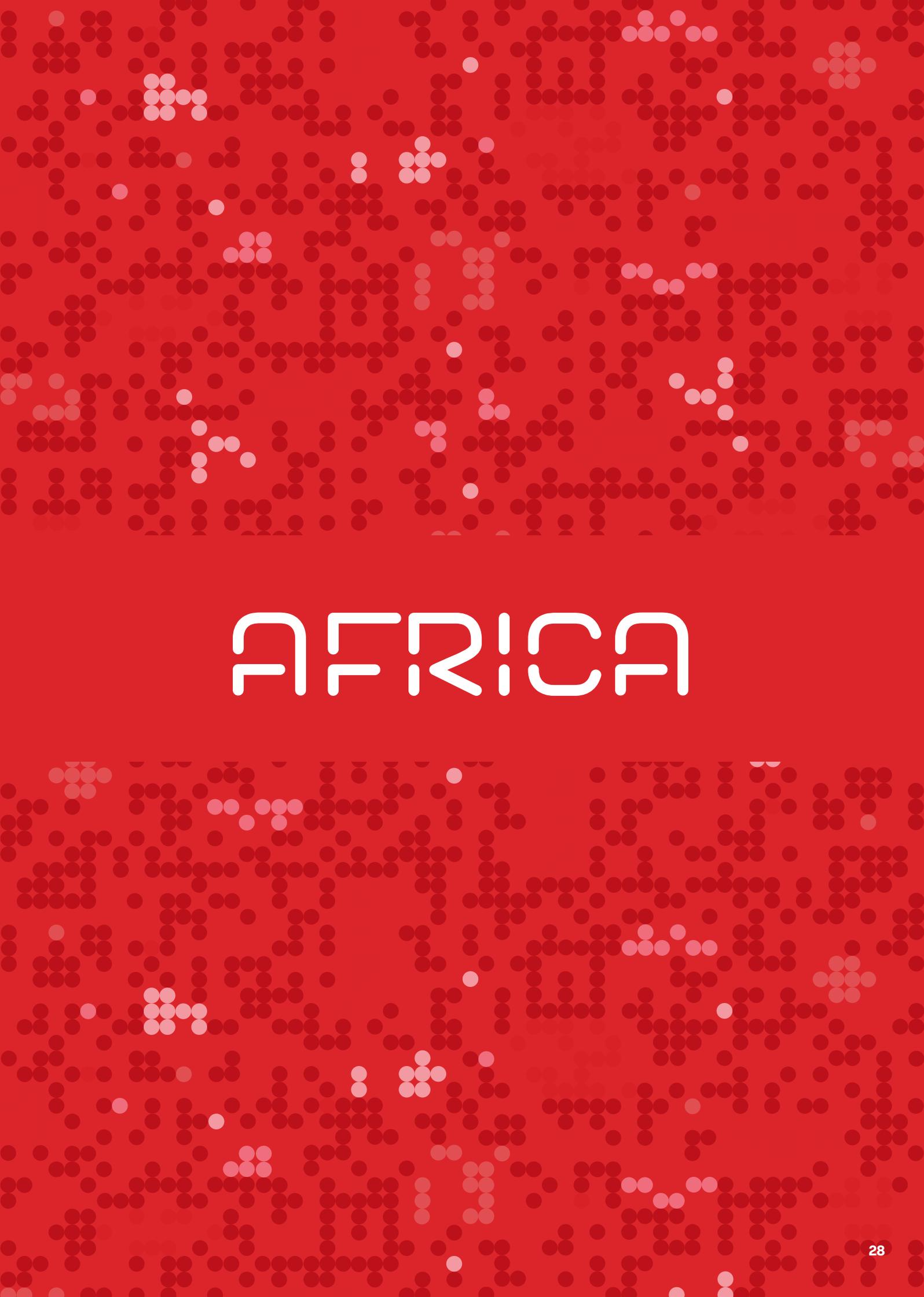
We'd like every government to appoint someone to lead on participation, and the better the coordination, the better the results. We have only to look at the success of the Commonwealth Games as an excellent blueprint for what is achievable. Similarly, the success of the Commonwealth Blue Charter, where coordination is leading to better protection of our oceans, rivers and lakes.

The Commonwealth Fashion Council is a valuable platform for establishing and strengthening contacts between businesses, investors and consumers – both intra-Commonwealth and beyond – for new trading and investment opportunities. It can nurture partnerships that extend the boundaries of fashion's influence with creative ecosystems and action groups that are cross industry. And it is a valuable platform for encouraging a youthful demographic to get involved in shaping the future of a strong, connected and innovative Commonwealth fashion community.



Are you ready to get involved? Contact the CFC and together we can start making it happen.





AFRICA

Capturing fashion trends across the entire continent of Africa is not only difficult, but is often found to be reductive since each country has its own unique identity. What is evident though, is that there is a collective desire to elevate authentic African fashion, from designers to producers, over western alternatives – particularly second-hand clothing.

The huge quantities of second-hand clothing donations from the West are a blessing and a curse for many African nations. As of 2015, Oxfam estimated that 70% of clothes donated in Europe ended up in Africa. Though charitable clothing donations are viewed by many people as a fundamentally positive and generous act, challenges with the quality of items, as well as the state of the materials, render large portions of those donated unusable. What's more, the constant, high-volume influx of clothing floods many countries' regional fashion markets, making it hard for African fashion brands, with their own locally designed and produced goods, to compete.

But now, brands across the region are finding innovative

solutions to the challenges created by imported second-hand clothing.

Focus topic: *Quantity over quality: crafting opportunities from the oversupply of second-hand clothing imports*

Buzigahill

Buzigahill is the brainchild of Ugandan designer Bobby Kolade. With his own eponymous fashion label and a stint at Balenciaga to his name, Kolade returned to his roots with the launch of Buzigahill in spring 2022. Its first project, 'Return to Sender', reworks clothes taken from second-hand clothing markets in Uganda to give them an 'upcycled' aesthetic. Giving these clothes a new identity, the brand then resells them back to the Global North where they were originally sourced from.

Lukhu

Lukhu is a Kenyan technology company that strives to revolutionize the African apparel industry by offering



CREDIT: LUKHU



CREDIT: LUKHU



CREDIT: LUKHU



CREDIT: THE REVIVAL

“As a majority of Africans consume secondhand clothing, and over \$300 million worth of secondhand clothing is imported into Africa, our company’s objective is to ensure that this ecosystem is sustainable. Our approach to sustainability comprises three fundamental principles: economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability. To achieve these principles, we aim to develop the operating system for fashion commerce in Africa to encourage sustainable consumption.”

- Rey Mungai, Co-founder & Chief Executive Officer of Lukhu

a sustainable e-commerce platform for fashion. The platform provides a range of tools for businesses to manage and grow, as well as making it effortless for consumers to discover and purchase clothing and footwear. By addressing pain points such as the absence of integrated payments and fulfillment solutions, Lukhu ensures a seamless experience for users. It achieves this through its secure wallet for transactions and neighbourhood pick-up and drop-off points for swift and efficient delivery. As of April 2023, Lukhu boasts over 3,600 users and 120,000 clothing listings, a majority of which are secondhand. The company has recently launched the ‘Shop My Lukhu’ initiative to promote sustainable fashion practices, including circular consumption.

Thebe Magugu

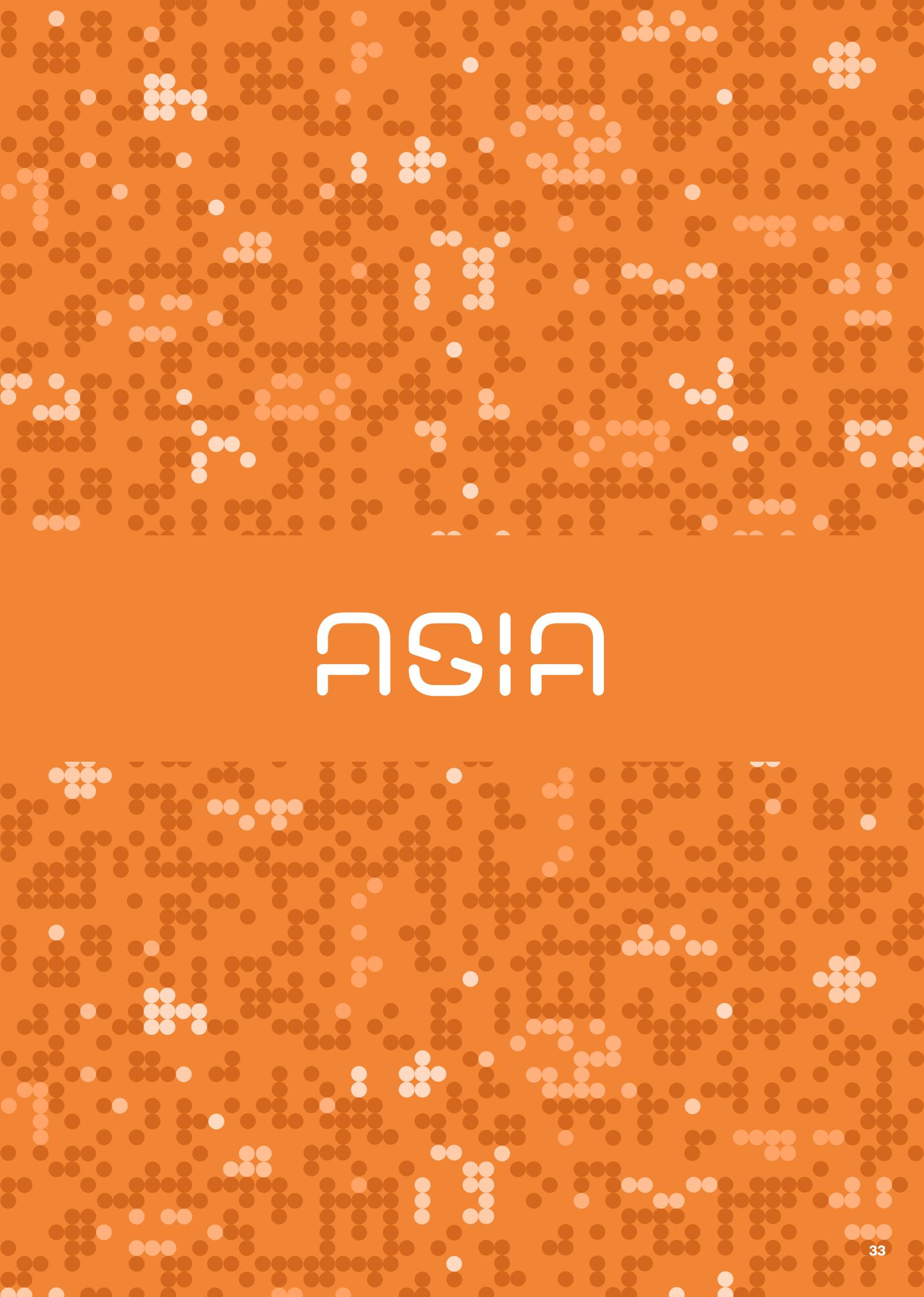
A fashion designer from South Africa, Thebe Magugu used his 2023 collection titled DISCARD THEORY, along with its accompanying documentary, to promote ‘trickle up’ fashion in Africa. The collection itself sources clothing from Dunusa, a busy area in Johannesburg where second-hand items are sold (also an isiZulu word for ‘bending over to pick things up’). Magugu aims to subvert the idea that quality garments are passed down from the upper class once used. Instead, he gives new and luxurious life to second-hand clothing, adding subtle slits and tears to communicate the throwaway nature of fast fashion.

THE REVIVAL

THE REVIVAL is a community-led non-profit organisation focused on upcycling and sustainable design. It conducts research and operates out of Kantamanto, the largest second-hand clothing market in Ghana and West Africa. The organisation estimates that 40,000 tons of clothes end up here each year – mainly from western countries – and half of this is discarded. Aiming to improve fashion education and raise awareness about sustainability, THE REVIVAL employs local craftsmen and collaborates with fashion students from local and international universities – as well as members of the public – to create new outfits and art from materials found in Kantamanto. It has also created an online fashion course that explores the environmental impact of fast fashion in Ghana, and the localised solutions that have been created



CREDIT: THEBE MAGUGU



ASIA

Across Asia's eight Commonwealth member countries, drivers of fashion industry trends range from religious and secular holidays such as Eid and Chinese New Year, to global issues like pollution and climate change.

With real-life implications of environmental damage felt across Asia, innovators working in fashion are stepping up, demonstrating exciting solutions to combat air, land and water pollution. Sustainable decision-making from established designers and fashion start-ups is helping to highlight the important role that fashion can play in bringing about positive environmental change in the region.

Focus topic: *Tackling pollution with creative sustainable fashion solutions.*

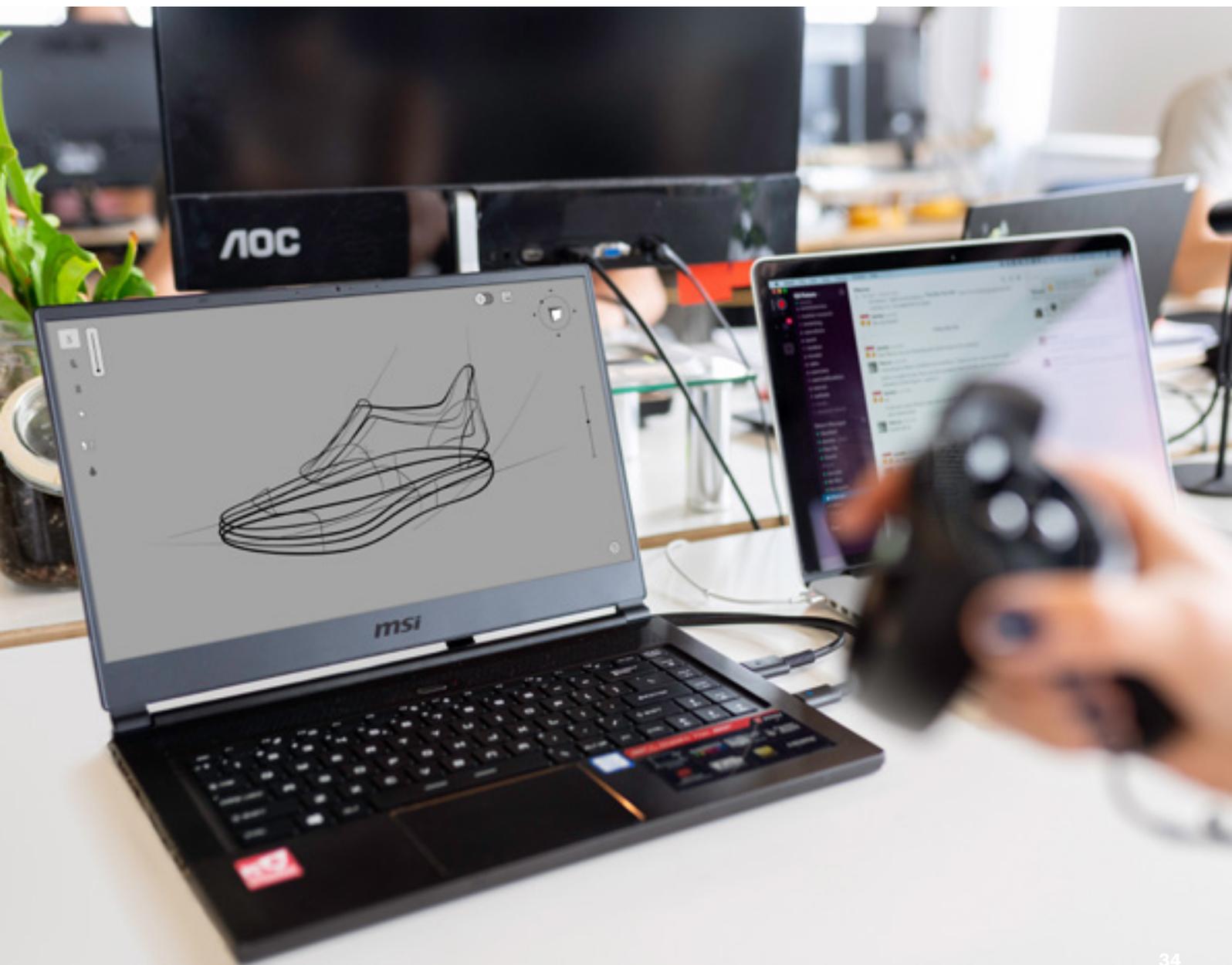
Rahemur Rahman

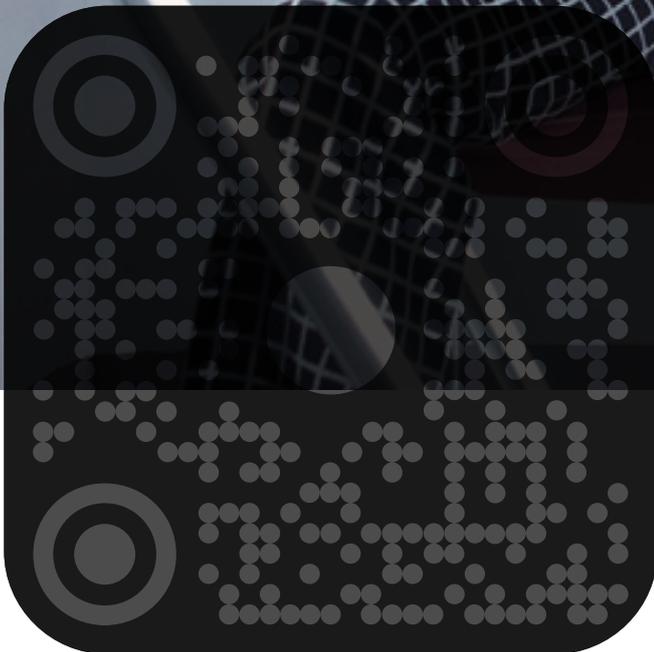
In 2019, [Rahemur Rahman](#) became the first Bangladeshi

fashion designer to show at London Fashion Week. London-born, he collaborates with Bangladesh-based company Aranya Crafts to create sustainable, ethically produced textiles for his work. The craftspeople in Bangladesh that Rahman works with are dedicated to preserving traditional South Asian dyeing techniques, and every single item from Rahman's collection has a poplar seed sewn into the lapel or waistband. That way, when the item is finally discarded, the material will biodegrade and the seed will grow into a tree.

Graviky Labs

Based in the USA but with global operations, [Graviky Labs](#) collaborates with factories in India to sequester particulate carbon emissions and other residual carbon pigments into various kinds of usable materials – including ink for printed clothing. One such product, AIR-INK, has been used by the sustainable fashion brand [Pangaia](#) to



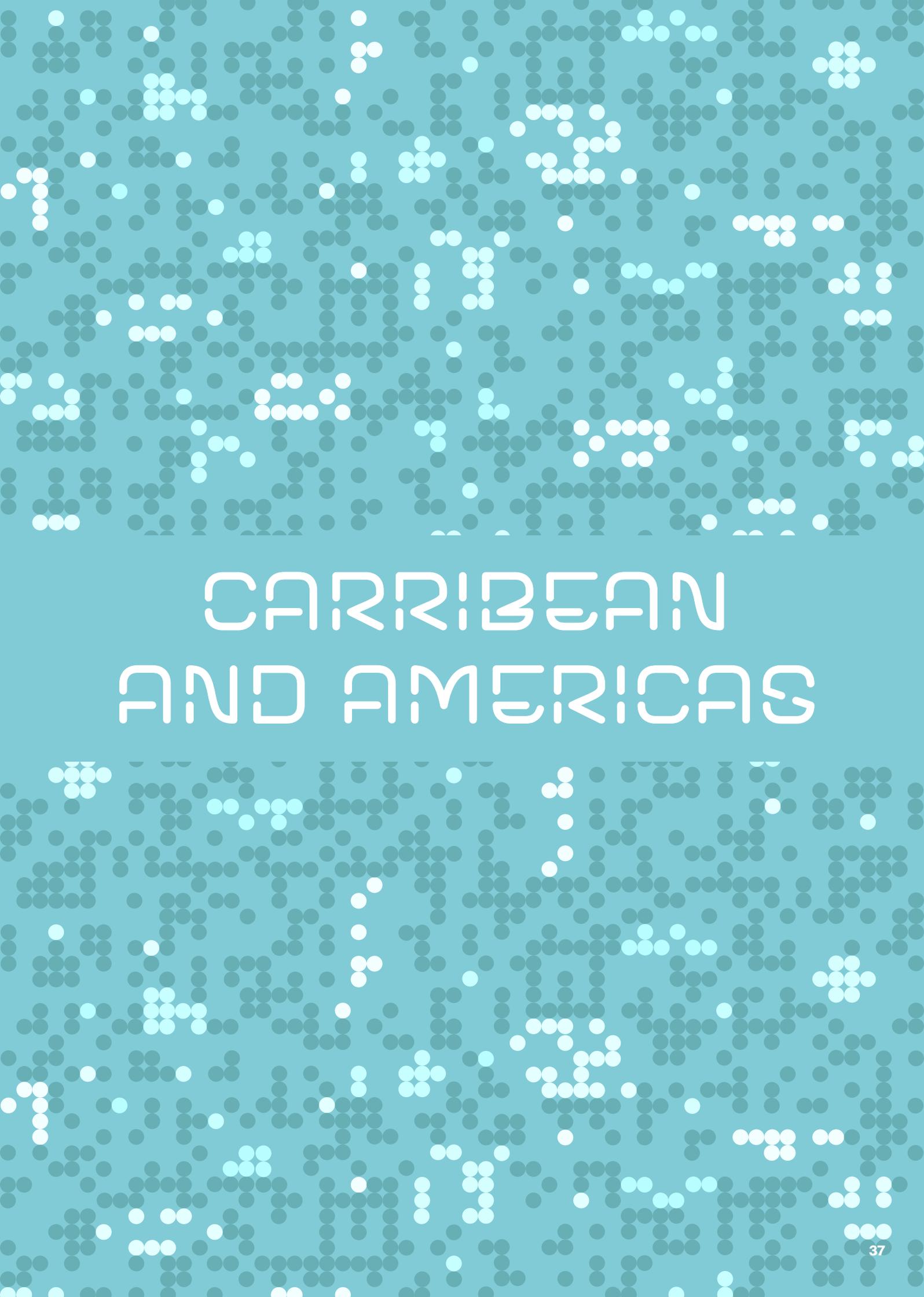


create the world's first apparel printed with air pollution. Indian fashion designer Nitin Bal Chauhan also produced a collection at Lakmé Fashion Week, titled COUNTDOWN, which used Graviky ink for printing and painting. Founded in 2016 by Anirudh Sharma and Nikhil Kaushik, Graviky Labs is a start-up spawned from an MIT project that sought to recycle the carbon emissions polluting the air to create something usable. A single 30ml pen of [AIR-INK](#), which can be bought online, is made from the equivalent emissions of a vehicle running for around 45 minutes.

Phool

Discarded by temples and worshippers, the millions of flowers polluting the Ganges often contain pesticides that make the river toxic and dangerous. In an effort to recycle and reduce the build-up of pollution in the river, Ankit Agarwal collected the floral waste and turned it into incense sticks. But after seeing the unused fibres on the factory floor turn to a thick, mat-like substance, Ankit's business – [Phool](#) – changed tack. Now, they create 'Fleather' – a sustainable alternative to leather – from the thousands of tonnes of floral waste found in the Ganges. An [Earthshot Prize](#) finalist in 2022, Phool's model creates employment opportunities for marginalised people in local communities; today it employs more than 160 female 'flowercyclers', with a future goal of expanding to more than 5,000.





CARRIBEAN AND AMERICAS

While the fashion markets in the majority of this region's nations are small, there is a collective desire to keep up with the digital innovations that are changing the face of the global fashion industry.

From NFTs to 3D printing software, digital technology is being utilised to create more profit, but also to make the industry more appealing and accessible. To ensure that the Caribbean and Americas remains attuned with the latest tech innovations in fashion, companies in the region are taking steps to educate industry members. Empowered with the knowledge to navigate the developing digital landscape, fashion creatives are being given the tools to

compete with global industry peers.

Focus topic: Empowering the region's fashion industry through education in innovative digital technologies.

Port of Spain Fashion Week

Port of Spain Fashion Week (POSFW) is held in Trinidad and Tobago's capital. Putting industry innovation at the fore, the five-day event aims to offer an experience that inspires and educates fashion creatives in the Caribbean while offering them a platform to showcase their work. In 2022, the event saw designers take part in 'metaverse



CREDIT: CANADA'S FASHION INNOVATION CENTRE



fashion innovation centre

CREDIT: CANADA'S FASHION INNOVATION CENTRE

training' through expert-led workshops, enabling them to tap into the growing virtual fashion market. Twenty Caribbean fashion enterprises of varying scale were educated in the creation and marketing of NFTs, with the workshops demonstrating how they could transition their fashion brand onto a digital platform. To further facilitate the region's move towards digitalised fashion, POSFW then launched the Fashionverse in early 2023 – the first all-digital fashion experience in the Caribbean.

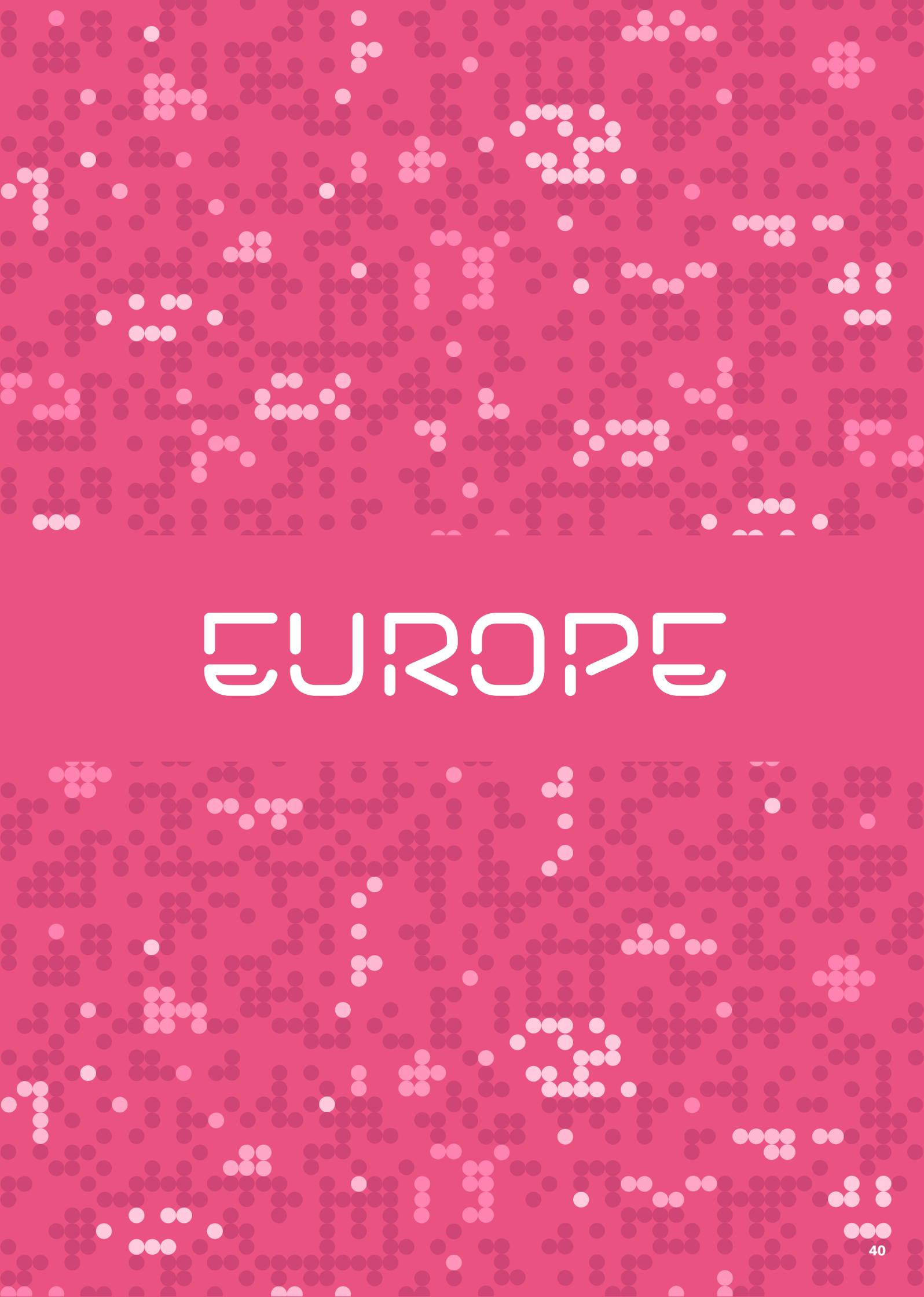
WYLD FLWR

Founded by Trinidadian fashion designer Anya Ayoung-Chee, WYLD.FLWR is a designer brand that produces both physical and digital clothing lines. With a tangible presence in the NFT world, WYLD FLWR set up Wallet & Wine, a weekly live Instagram event that walks viewers through the process of setting up a crypto wallet. By imparting this fundamental knowledge of digital finance in fashion, the WYLD FLWR founders are bridging the gap between the regional creative and technology sectors, generating interest and encouraging local people to explore the

digital innovations that are shaping the future of fashion. Ayoung-Chee launched her own NFT, WYLD TING, last autumn, with 15% of all sales directly contributing to the Spool Project, a Women's Livelihood Initiative in Trinidad and Tobago.

Fashion Innovation Centre

Creating clothing samples for production with apparel-industry 3D software, Canada's Fashion Innovation Centre (FIC) also runs multiple educational courses on the fashion technology it works with – including CLO 3D, Browzwear and VR/AR. Its founder, Roz McNulty, is a 3D apparel consultant and educator who delivers guest lectures on digital fashion, while the FIC itself runs online courses on CLO 3D, a next-gen clothing visualisation software. At FIC, the aim is to 'create a place for the learning and displays of the future, past and present of fashion'.



EUROPE

Tapping into post-Covid social trends, fashion companies in Europe are seeing an increased demand for wellness-focused products and services. This has created huge opportunities for tech innovators to use profitable fashion strategies as a force for good.

From digital retail to performance and fitness enhancement, technology is helping generate social benefits from fashion. In the UK, fashion start-ups are competing to design creative and helpful new ways for shoppers to access and purchase clothing, and in doing so are developing a more positive environment that benefits brands and buyers.

With consumers now more intent on looking after themselves in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic,

fashion brands are bidding to meet this rise in wellbeing-conscious consumers. Fitness and wellbeing is a growing industry, with a market size in Europe worth \$2.17 billion in 2022. But there are other innovative ways that brands are pitching themselves in the socially responsible mould. Whether breaking down inclusivity barriers or discouraging fast fashion, Europe is seeing a new wave of businesses working to help fashion make a positive social impact.

Focus topic: *Harnessing tech innovation to position fashion as a force for good*

Prevayl

Prevayl is a smart sportswear brand by the innovators from Prevayl Innovation. Prevayl's own SmartWear™ is

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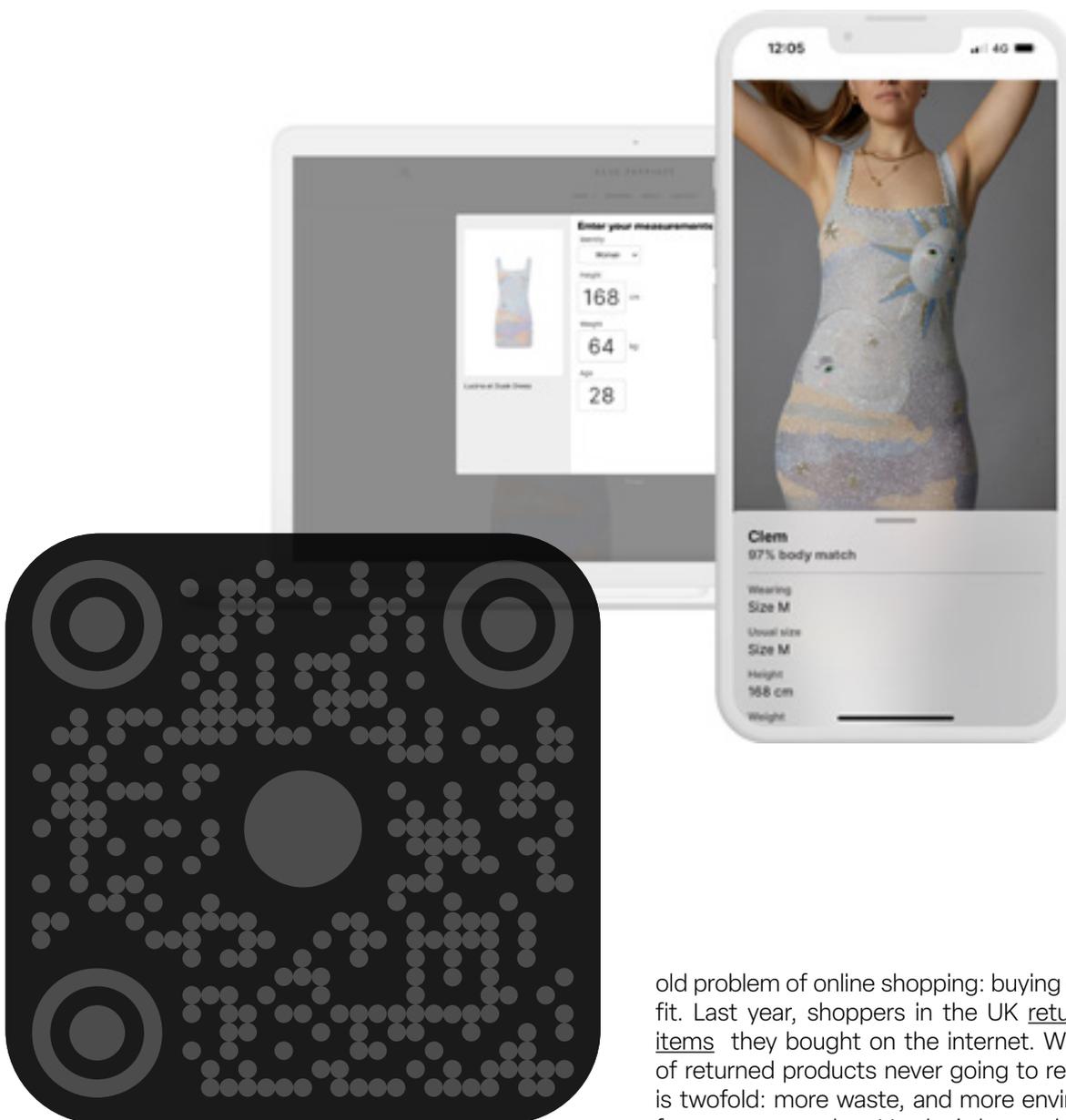


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CREDIT: VESTICO

a range of premium sportswear enhanced with clinical-grade ECG, engineered to meet the growing demands for deeper personal health data. Developed alongside Premier League footballers, Rugby League players and Paralympians, SmartWear™ is designed for anyone who wants to level up their athletic performance. The integrated clinical-grade ECG technology enables SmartWear™ to track various health metrics – from heart rate and heart rate variability to recovery status to readiness to perform. So, whether you're preparing for a CrossFit competition or trying to adopt a more active lifestyle, Prevayl gives you the necessary data to achieve your goals on your terms.

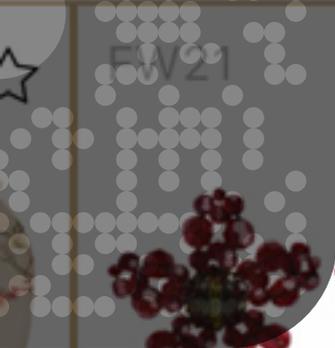
Vestico

Harnessing cutting-edge AI technology and user-generated content, [Vestico](#) has created a platform that represents each individual shopper, allowing them to see what clothes look like on someone with their own body shape. The software serves as an antidote to the age-

old problem of online shopping: buying clothes that don't fit. Last year, shoppers in the UK returned 40% of the items they bought on the internet. With a high portion of returned products never going to resale, the problem is twofold: more waste, and more environmental impact from transportation. Vestico's innovative solution to this problem informs and inspires shoppers, empowering them to make confident, conscious purchase decisions. For retailers, this means higher revenues with fewer returns. Shoppers who use Vestico return their items 17% less than other shoppers, demonstrating the company's tangible impact on UK fashion.

Drest

In an effort to combine gaming, styling and digital retail, Lucy Yeomans – the founder of [Drest](#) – created a mobile gaming company that lowers the drawbridge to luxury fashion and welcomes everyone in. It enables users to adopt the role of a stylist using real-life clothing and beauty lines. Luxury brands from Gucci to Cartier, and Stella McCartney to Burberry, are available, receiving significant exposure through the game's virtual world. Drest aims to use digital for good, with the company donating a percentage of profits to numerous charitable organisations.



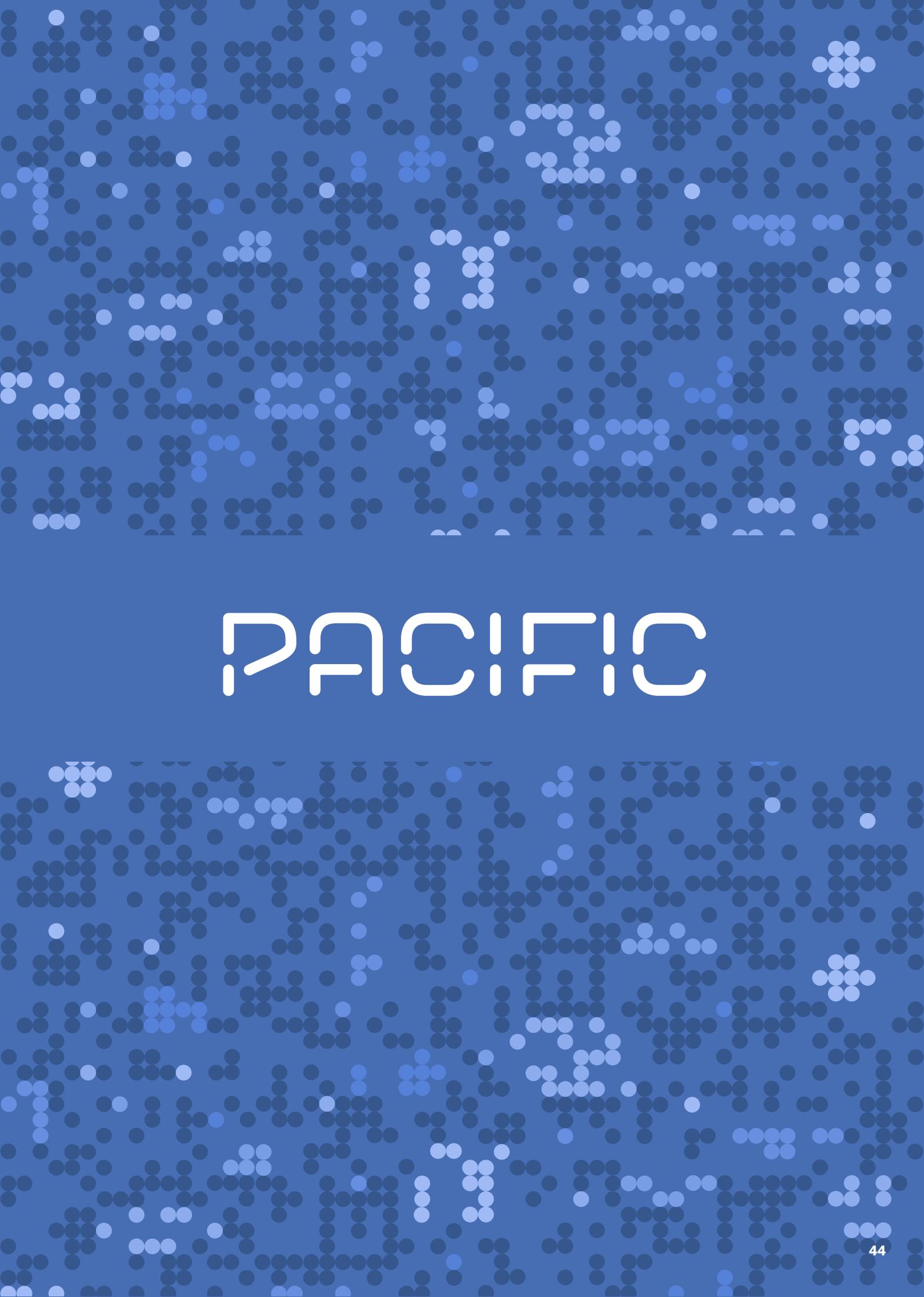
FW22



SS20



CREDIT: DREST



PACIFIC

Despite its size, the fashion industry in the Pacific region is now beginning to take a more progressive approach to the fashion market. With sustainability and slow fashion at the heart of trends in some areas of the region, ethical and responsible shopping is being focused upon by innovative brands looking to increase the spotlight on inclusive fashion.

Each with their own unique take on the fashion market in the region, these brands are helping to make the industry more inclusive. Adaptive fashion – clothing designed for people with physical or sensory disabilities – is an area seeing real progress, while plus-sized activewear is also a growing market. Collectively, these Pacific-based brands are making it known that fashion is for everyone.

Focus topic: *Promoting inclusive clothing in a bid to reduce barriers to fashion.*

EveryHuman

Based in Sydney, Australia, [EveryHuman](#) is an online marketplace built with adaptive fashion in mind. It celebrates differences and seeks to dismantle the perception that fashion is only for certain people, with certain body types. The EveryHuman user experience is designed to enable shoppers to filter the clothing lines to suit their needs, with ‘sensory friendly’, ‘easy closures’ or ‘seated wear’ listed as some of the options. With designer brands such as Tommy Hilfiger and Dr Martens now selling on the site, EveryHuman’s business model is helping encourage big-name brands to design clothes with inclusivity in mind.

JAM the label

[JAM the label](#) is an inclusive fashion label, designing stylish clothing that is accessible for anyone to wear. Founded by occupational therapists, Emma Clegg and Molly Rogers,



FIX
THE
SYSTEM,
NOT
ME



CREDIT: JAM THE LABEL



CREDIT: JAM THE LABEL



CREDIT: LULAH COLLECTIVE

the Australian brand's goal is to shake up the fashion industry and 'cater for the 15-20% of people globally with a disability who have traditionally been excluded from mainstream fashion'. JAM featured heavily in Australian Fashion Week 2022, a landmark event which saw the first adaptive clothing runway. As part of its mission, the label collaborates with the disabled community at each stage of its fashion production, consulting on designs and ensuring behind-the-scenes roles are available to people living with a disability. The result is innovative and functional clothing that incorporates universal features like magnetic zip closures on jackets (for one-handed use) and coats with removable back-panels, suitable for wheelchair users.

Lulah Collective

In the midst of the 2020 lockdown, New Zealander Nicole Gaviria founded [Lulah Collective](#), a plus-sized activewear business, from her friend's garage. Drawing on her experience as a therapist, Nicole noticed the pattern of women struggling with their body image in the face of harmful body standards and 'fitspo' (fitness inspiration) used by the majority of activewear brands. After receiving financial backing from The Princes Trust Aotearoa, Lulah Collective initially launched with a pair of leggings and sports bra, and is now extending its range. The inclusive nature of the stylish activewear seeks to better represent and celebrate the diverse range of body shapes in New Zealand, advocating for self-love and body positivity.

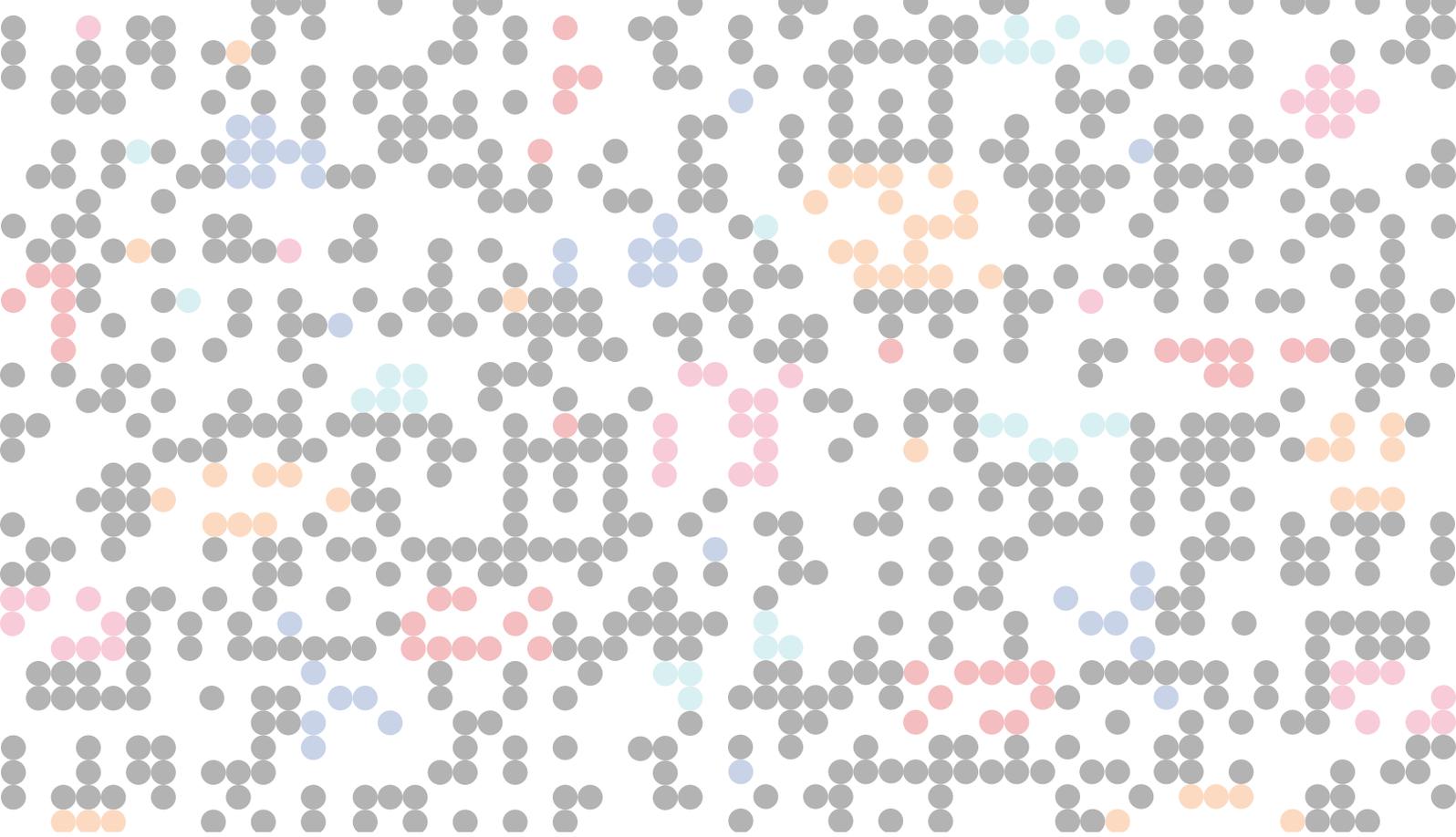
"We believe in universal design as the innovative way forward to help people get dressed easier while also addressing local and global challenges in fashion. Change is slowly happening and we're here to push this further and lead by example with the community."

– Emma Clegg and Molly Rogers,
founders of JAM the label

"Lulah Collective is the creative expression of my dreams and values. I wanted to create an activewear brand that created a space for women to love their fuller figures through joyful movement and forge some fiery change in the plus-size fashion industry."

– Nicole Gaviria, founder of
Lulah Collective





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