

Why SA needs sustainable fashion awards

When it comes to the South African fashion industry, we're in a bit of a predicament. It's imperative to encourage more sustainable and eco-friendly fashion, not only for climate reasons but for socioeconomic ones too. Locally produced sustainable and eco-friendly fashion (also called slow fashion) has to compete with cheap, imported fast fashion, which is made mostly from fossil-fuel-derived synthetic fabrics.



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The truth of the matter is that sustainability and social inequality are deeply intertwined. By prioritising sustainable, locally made textiles and products, we ultimately support the South African economy, create more jobs, strengthen communities and reduce the impact of imported fast fashion on the environment.

South Africa currently imports most of its textiles and finished products. According to the government-commissioned report 'Designing Climate-Compatible Industrial Strategies for South Africa: The Textiles Value Chain', retail sales of imported clothing, footwear and textiles totalled more than R175bn in 2018, while the 800 local clothing manufacturers generated a significantly smaller revenue of R19bn in the same year.



Making cotton sustainable requires science, investment and governance

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At the same time, according to GreenCape, a non-profit organisation that drives the widespread adoption of economically viable green economy solutions, about 6% of our country's total landfill waste is made up of textiles.

How do we change things?

Twyg, a South African sustainable-fashion and beauty non-profit, is on a mission to inspire a fashion and textile industry that's kind, fair, inclusive, diverse, nature-friendly and sustainable, and that embraces circular design principles. One of the ways the solution-driven platform champions this path is by hosting the annual Twyg Sustainable Fashion Awards.

Across 10 categories – Emerging Designer, Accessories, Innovative Design and Materials, the Nicholas Coutts Award, Farm-to-Fashion, Social Impact, Retail, The Tastemaker Award, Trans-Seasonal Design and Footwear – Twyg selects winners who implement sustainable, ethical, circular and regenerative design. The winners with the highest scores in each category are then eligible for the Changemaker Award, which recognises a designer whose career embraces sustainable and circular design practices.

The annual awards, first launched in 2019, not only celebrate South African designers, innovators, influencers and activists, awarding them for their hard work, but also project their groundbreaking work to a larger audience. This in turn encourages consumers to shop sustainably and invites the next generation of designers to take a sustainable approach.

Nominations for the 2023 Twyg Sustainable Fashion Awards are in, and judging is currently underway. The finalists will be revealed on 14 November 2023, and the winners will be announced at an awards ceremony in late November in Cape Town.

Change is happening, but to change everything, we need everyone!

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