

Fresh crop of fashion talent advances in Standard Bank business accelerator

[The Threads Accelerator](#), a fashion SME programme presented by marketing agency Nonzero and Standard Bank, has entered its second stage. Twelve fashion entrepreneurs - three each from Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town - have embarked on a 12-week programme designed to turn their fashion brands into fashion businesses.



At boot camps held throughout SA in October, the 12 tested their skills against a number of other fashion designers. All vying for one of 12 spaces on the Threads programme, participants had to have confirmed creative accolades and prove their business acumen through a series of activities. Found to be this year's best, the chosen candidates also had to have established fashion brands:

- Tshepo Mohlala of [Tshepo The Jean Maker](#), JHB
- Tshego Manche of [La Manche Clothing](#), JHB
- Junior Mmotla of [Mamagasehome](#), JHB
- Anthony Smith of [2BOP](#), CT
- Madja Robin of [Chimpel](#), CT
- Thabo Makhetha of [Thabo Maketha](#), CT
- Yameka Lize of [Refined Revolt](#), PE
- Asanda Mali of Mal'stones by [Asanda Mali](#), PE
- Evan Zemba of [WIC Designs](#), PE
- Lyndall Moodley of [Hannah Grace Maternity](#), DBN
- Jacqueline Munsami of [JSE Couture](#), DBN
- Sabiha Badsha of [Haya Collective](#), DBN

According to the organisers, the Threads accelerator was established as a response to a continent-wide problem, one that is especially prevalent in South Africa. "The global fashion industry is worth \$3 trillion, but Africa's efforts account for just 1% of that, even including the manufacturing and textile industry. We know that Africa doesn't lack creativity, talent and access to resources; the main stumbling block is the inability of entrepreneurs to turn their brands into viable businesses that create jobs and profits, and, so, make a positive impact on the economy.

"Small- and medium-sized businesses need to become the engine room of jobs and growth in the coming years, but poor planning is a major reason why as many as 70% of SMEs fail in South Africa – half of them within the first five years. Thus, skills training is inseparable from entrepreneurship: changes in- and outside a business will require sound strategies to meet the challenges involved, such as securing supplies, leveraging existing cross-border trade agreements and gaining access to markets. The Threads accelerator can teach entrepreneurs all of this."

To ensure a solid academic foundation, Threads partnered with E4Impact, an initiative of Italy's Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore that fosters sustainable development through impact entrepreneurship. Each week the accelerator tackles a specific area of business with some of South Africa's top minds as custodians. Modules cover finance and business plans, manufacturing, e-commerce, marketing, selling methods and more.

At the end of the 12 weeks, in March 2018, a programme winner will be selected by a panel of industry-experienced judges. The winner receives a package that includes a trade trip to Europe to meet top retailers and buyers, a sponsored Mercedes Benz for one year and an SME banking starter pack from Standard Bank.

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