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Analysing the Diverse Industry.**

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Abstract

The fashion industry comprises a variety of jobs that range from fashion designers, models, stylists, photographers and much more. Designers find their influence and muse in several elements, whether it be in persons, places and things to name a few. This research study is mandatory as it introduced the idea of the standard and reputation the fashion industry possesses in the Caribbean, but more specifically in Trinidad and Tobago. Additionally, the thought of being a rising fashion designer sparked several questions, with all sharing the same theme of if women are successful in this industry that is considered to be male-dominated.

Hence the title for this research project, which is labelled “The Key Success Factors and Challenges Faced by Trinidadian Women in Fashion: Analysing the Diverse Reputation”.

This study aims to answer the research questions based on the aforementioned title, where an investigation will occur using a mixed sequential method of both the qualitative (interview) and quantitative (questionnaire) methods of research, and are employed to examine the findings. With the assistance of different graphs and charts, the data collected will be discussed and analysed, referring the information to the research questions at hand, which is inclusive of; “What are the key success factors faced by Trinidadian women in fashion?”, “What are the challenges that Trinidadian women in fashion encounter?” and lastly, “How does the diverse reputation of the industry make a difference for women?”. Moreover through thorough research and analysing of the data collected, it was suggested that despite all the challenges women face within the fashion industry, providing support for women in leadership roles can be seen as one of the biggest initiatives recommended for improving the diversity and inclusion of the fashion industry, particularly for female designers.

Keywords: fashion designers, women, traditional roles, diverse reputation, key factors, challenges.

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Introduction

It is no surprise that in today's society, women all over the world are pursuing leadership roles in various companies. Caribbean women, specifically Trinidadian women, within the creative and cultural industries, are slowly changing the game and creating a space that is no longer deemed as a male-dominated work field. "Undeniably, female leaders in the arts are everywhere." (Berkeley, 2024). The influence that Caribbean female entrepreneurs have within different industries, specifically in fashion is a very impactful and insightful contribution. "Female participation in the creative and cultural fields, also appears healthy" (Berkeley, 2024).

Substantially, being an entrepreneur in the fashion industry within the Caribbean region entails an exotic and disparate nature, compared to countries from the Eastern and Western hemisphere, as fashion designers in the Caribbean form a fraternity of enterprising artists (Drakes, 63).

This research paper serves the purpose of providing information with regards to the success factors and challenges that Caribbean women face on a regular basis, when working as entrepreneurs in the fashion industry. It also analyses how diverse the reputation of the industry can be and the different methods it took to achieve the successful statuses and the renown stature for women entrepreneurs in the Caribbean. Firstly, readers are introduced to a fair amount of history regarding the misconceptions and stigmas that women faced in the past revolving around the traditional roles that society has afflicted on them. Following this information, an idea of the key success factors and challenges is given in detail, with mention of how fashion designers in Trinidad gained success in the fashion industry that is proclaimed to be male-dominated. To ascertain such information, different methods of investigation

transpired and are used to compare and contrast the various experiences encountered, between Caribbean women and Trinidadian women.

Rationale

Within the context of the Caribbean, it can be argued that female fashion designers have endured a lot of misconceptions and challenges to gain respect and withhold a respectable regard in the fashion industry, in order to be successful and create a diverse reputation. “But for women in the creative and cultural sectors, equality is a complex and frustrating concept .” (Berkeley 2024). This statement represents a fraction of the difficulties and misogyny that women entrepreneurs encounter in their respectful industries, whether it may be in fashion, music and arts among others. As an individual who would like to further pursue an occupation in the area of fashion design, selecting this specific research topic is one of the main objectives, as it can be useful for other Caribbean women who may possess the same career path.

Parameters

This study’s focal point is that of Trinidadian women however, it is only limited to four categories of women which will aid in examining the societal changes in accepting female entrepreneurs and by extension fashion designers, the stigmas women endured to be successful and the factors that assisted in paving the way for a diverse working environment. The first group of women is that of single mothers who are of mixed-races and are solely fashion designers or entrepreneurs in Trinidad. The second group are stay-at-home mothers of different ethnicities, whose only income derives from being a fashion designer and business owner. Thirdly, a group of young women who are either starting their college journey or who are deep within their college journey and are about to graduate, but have started their fashion

design business along the way. Lastly, the final group of women will be those who work full-time at corporate or office jobs and oversee their fashion business in their free-time or as a hobby they work overtime on.

Objectives

This study aims to efficiently impart data that concisely represents the expected achievements and goals of this research project titled, “The Key Success Factors and Challenges faced by Trinidadian Women in Fashion: Analysing the Diverse Reputation in the Industry”. To begin, this work is intended to identify the main personas that are being influenced and may or may not have been affected by the different misconceptions and societal labels that were inflicted upon them. Subsequently, an assessment of the consequences that affected the career paths and livelihood of these women, due to the challenges that they had to endure will be examined. In addition to the consequences, the key factors that contributed toward the success and turning point of their careers, will be assessed in order to draw observation between the highs and lows of acquiring a reputable status within the fashion industry in Trinidad and by extension, the Caribbean.

Research Questions

1. What are the key success factors faced by Trinidadian women in the Fashion Industry ?
2. What are the challenges that Trinidadian women in fashion encounter ?
3. How does the diverse reputation of the industry make a difference for women ?

Methodology

Collecting and utilising the data found is very necessary and is seen as one of the most important and major functions for this research project. This research project utilises the aid of both primary oral sources and secondary documentary sources. Correlating with the data collection, is the methods in which it was employed throughout. The genre or variant of the study, includes that of a cultural and social study, as it discusses the societal changes within the different environments in the cultural industry in Trinidad, in reference to adapting to the modern ways of women becoming entrepreneurs and being successful in their businesses. Moreover, the research approach applied is that of a qualitative method of conducting research and interpreting data.

The use of primary oral sources to collect data is very vital to the completion of this thesis. Via the use of interviews, data revolving personal experiences and stories were collected and used to enhance the content of this study. Two interviews were conducted; one with a current model, fashion designer and owner of a marketing agency and the second, with a business owner who has several businesses but managing a marketing agency is her top priority. Both

interviewees are young Trinidadian women, between the ages of 26-30 years old, of mixed races and are both mothers.

The second source of data is that of secondary documentary sources, where several journal articles, literature, magazines and newspaper editorials were used. The variation of these sources were very helpful in collecting data that is factual and had evidence to back up all work written. This allowed for validation and reputable data that assisted with the research developed and ensured that the information collected worked in accordance to the objectives and themes of this research project. Moreover, there were many sources and publications that research for this research project originated from and thus, allowing one to evaluate the effectiveness of these writers; Paul Pounder, Sean Drakes and Dr. Natasha Ramkissoon-Babwah among several others. The purpose of this evaluation is to not only compare and contrast the different limitations and opportunities that some women in one Trinidad may experience as opposed to those in other islands of the Caribbean. It will also illustrate the type of society that these women are granted in order to work and successfully run their businesses, all the while ensuring that they gain a steady clientele and ensure they obtain a known stature within the fashion industry.

On account of the objectives and themes of this study revolving around the misconceptions and societal labels that Trinidadian women faced in order to have a successful career in fashion design, it is only appropriate for the genre and variant of the study to that of a cultural and social one. The purpose of this is to portray the different cultural influences on Trinidadian women as well as, the societies of some of the Caribbean islands. Different social challenges and factors played a huge role in the conformation of accepting the modern era of women working, but also becoming entrepreneurs in different fields, especially in fashion design. The cultural aspect plays a huge role in the distinct culture that Trinidad and some

Caribbean islands comprise and the influence it has on the designers, their prints, fabrics and work in general.

Due to the extent of the research project, several types of qualitative methods of conducting research and interpreting data are used. Firstly, there is a portion of historical qualitative research method that is employed, as a means to gather data on the past cultural and societal perspectives with regards to the topic of women working and abandoning the traditional roles inflicted upon them. In addition to that, both interviews and questionnaires were employed as well. There was a face-to-face interview, which occurred for a maximum of 45 minutes to an hour. During this interview, ten questions based on the topic and objectives of the thesis were asked and were accompanied by follow-up questions based on the interviewee's responses.

This particular interviewee was a Trinidadian of mixed race, light-skinned and a single mother. She owned several businesses, all within the fashion industry, but her main stream of income came from a marketing agency that connects models with events and brands. The second interview was via telephone, as this interviewee is a first-time mom, who is balancing being a housewife, a model, fashion designer and owning a marketing agency as well. She is also of a Trinidadian nationality, mixed race and light-skinned. Both females were young and shared similar experiences, however there were distinct differences that were evident, mainly stemming from their different backgrounds and upbringings. Indulging in these interviews allowed for a personal view on the fashion industry within the Caribbean and the different narratives of how challenging it is to gain a respectable reputation within the industry.

To conclude, collecting data for this study involved a lot of research which resulted from the use of different primary oral sources and secondary documentary sources. In addition to the collection of data, ensuring that the data was properly utilised implicated the right sources to accurately describe the cultural and social variants of the study and ensuring that it aligned with the topic, themes and objectives of the research project. Moreover, using various types

of qualitative methods to conduct research and interpret the data, enhanced the research study with the use of personal experiences and perspectives.

Chapter One: Literature Review

In order to ensure that the research questions of this study are appropriately investigated, a discussion on the background and history of the stereotypes and societal labels that have influenced and affected women in fashion is explored. This chapter presents the historical context of this research study, by examining the different traditional roles that Trinidadian women and by extension, women from neighbouring Caribbean islands endured before diverging onto the paths of becoming entrepreneurs and managing their own businesses. Additionally, this chapter explores the key success factors and challenges that female designers in Trinidad endured along their journey and how the diverse reputation of the fashion industry impacted their careers.

History of Misconceptions and Societal Influences on Women in Fashion

Traditional gender roles and stereotypes continue to guide the unequal division of labour between women and men at home and in the workplace (Healy, 2024). Both conscious and unconscious gender bias in the workplace can create invisible barriers that limit women's career choices and advancement to senior levels of the hierarchy (Healy, 2024), as well as opportunities to be their own bosses. Traditional occupation roles attributed to women are related to caring for others (e.g, homekeeper, nurse), and require communal characteristics

(e.g, kind, sensitive) (Eagly et al., 2000). These traditional roles without a doubt influenced women, by deterring them from pursuing their dream professions due to the societal obligations appointed to them. Subsequently, the traditional roles appointed to men are more common to revolve around leadership and authoritative positions which require a more aggressive and courageous personality. Considering that women possess a nurturing and hospitable character, society creates the construct that women are not supposed to attain occupations that allow them to be leaders or roles that are considered high in the occupation hierarchy. Due to this social construct, women who desire to be entrepreneurs, managers, chief executive officers, among various other job positions, find it difficult to achieve these dreams and be successful at it. However, according to writers in the Frontiers article, in the last two decades, along with the deepening social and economic changes, the social role of women and men began to undergo vivid modifications. Women ratified the misconceptions and stereotypes of not being able to accomplish the same role a man maintains in a business or company, by acquiring more leadership positions such as becoming managers, business owners and obtaining political roles, to name a few.

In a research paper written by the International Labour Organization, it stated that “a gradually increasing number of women have become business owners and employers in the Caribbean”, to which 20% of that number are women from Trinidad and Tobago. This exemplifies the growth that women are making with regards to expanding their careers, breaking barriers and following their dreams. Amidst the figure of 20% being female entrepreneurs from Trinidad and Tobago, 5% belong to the fashion industry. Although the fashion industry has always been perceived as a male-dominated industry, in recent years, women have been taking charge and building a reputation for themselves. This occurred on the account of several factors that assisted women in starting and building their businesses and brands, with an opportunity to get the recognition and reputation that female designers

deserve. Some of these factors include; trade missions, virtual fashion exhibitions, entrepreneurship programs and also, funding offered by the government for entrepreneurs with a plan and purpose, among other factors. In a news article by the OACPS (Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States), a virtual fashion exhibition hosted by the Trinidad and Tobago Fashion Company Limited, was the topic of conversation and it quotes that “seventy-five percent of the top tier designers in the GVC programme have female owned and operated businesses”. This is a perfect representation of how female fashion designers are exceeding the misconceptions and stereotypes that they should and/or can not execute a leadership role that originally and traditionally belongs to a man.

The Key Success Factors Faced by Women in Fashion

“The Caribbean is a region with a rich history of female leadership, achievement and activism..”, is a statement made by Mr. Siddharth Chatterjee, UN Resident Coordinator in China, at a joint event by Women Ambassadors of the Caribbean in Beijing and Women’s Leadership in the Caribbean. He also quotes that women’s “achievements serve as important examples of resilience, determination, and the possibilities of fighting for gender equality, justice and human rights”. These two quotes embody the recognition that Caribbean women deserve with regards to defeating the misconceptions society labelled them with. In today’s society, Caribbean women have the leverage of owning their own businesses and becoming entrepreneurs due to several elements, which were investigated and are examined in the following paragraphs.

As previously mentioned, Caribbean women have been breaking barriers and building their own status within the last two decades. Fashion designers in Trinidad however, were given the opportunity to experience different procedures to assist them in the start-up of their businesses and establishing exposure, as well as a strong clientele. The first example of this,

is the partnership between The University of the West Indies and FashionTT, to expand the fashion industry's entrepreneurial status via mentorship and training. "This program seeks to improve the business operations of our designers and increase their sales, exports and job employment through it. We also aim to support our designers to build sustainable businesses and an improved standard of life that contributes to the country's economy." (Lisa Marie Daniel, 2023). Since the launch of FashionTT (Trinidad and Tobago Fashion Company Ltd), designers have not only increased their revenue by 136%, but they have also penetrated new markets inclusive of (and not limited to) France, Dubai, United Kingdom and Australia.

The second example of a key success factor faced by female Trinidadian designers, correlates with another project administered by FashionTT. In March 2022, the Virtual Trade Mission Platform was launched for eleven designers, in Trinidad and Tobago where the majority were females and this resulted with some designers obtaining consideration for international buyers and one designer joining Macy's international site. This platform allowed local designers to expand their businesses internationally and advance onto global runways and stores. One local designer who experienced the fashion industry internationally is Meiling Esau, who was one of the eleven designers that participated in the virtual trade mission and also happens to be amongst the most renowned designers in the Caribbean. In an interview with the Exceptional Caribbean Blog, Meiling spoke about thirteen factors that contributed to her success in the fashion industry and stated that many of them were applicable to other ventures in life. There were four factors that resonated with the purpose of this research project, the first being; to be professional. According to Meiling, ensure that you give good service, deliver on time, meet your deadlines and exceed the expectations of your customers. In addition to this, despite the hardships that may attempt to hinder one's success, whether it may derive from difficult customers, misogynistic clients or even difficulty with the production aspect of the business, it is beneficial to remain professional at all times. Creating

one's own platform is the second factor that Meiling described as one of her thirteen P's to success in the fashion industry. She mentioned that as a region, the Caribbean needs to make its own mark and the only way to execute this is through the deliberate work of designers. Meaning that, designers locally and regionally, should not wait on an invite or seat at the table (to succeed), but should implement and plan methods to create their own platform that permits society to be aware and take notice of the change that is transpiring. The third factor to success in the fashion industry is to pivot. "Pivot is the new black", is a term used in the fashion industry that implies adapting to new challenges and not allowing external challenges to affect one's work. As female designers in a male-dominated industry, this is vital information that can be useful throughout one's career, especially when dealing with inequality in the industry either through stolen creative ideas, unfair salaries or biased clients. According to Meiling, "You must adapt to the challenges and turn those challenges into opportunities. Look for new ways of reaching your markets and conducting your business to stay relevant and alive. And embrace technology as a key pivoting tool". The final 'P' to success is that of partnership, to which Meiling believes that it is a key factor that can build up the fashion industry. Designers, especially young, upcoming designers should collaborate with one another and work together to enhance both brands and by extension, the common goal of excellence in the fashion industry. Collaborating and partnering with other designers, encourages exposure to different clienteles, new markets and can even improve a designer's creative capabilities.

To conclude, women in the fashion industry have accomplished a lot and are still achieving different goals to this day. There is no doubt that these designers, both locally and regionally, face obstacles frequently, but with the assistance of various platforms and techniques, succeeding in the fashion industry can be obtainable. Apart from those platforms being a key

method of gaining success, designers can also heed advice from local designer Meiling Esau and her thirteen “P’s” to success in the fashion industry to which some were mentioned.

The Key Challenges Faced by Trinidadian Designers in the Fashion Industry

Although the majority of the traditional misconceptions were addressed and proved wrong, women still endure the hardship of being employed in industries that are considered to be male-dominated. A distinct example of this is that of the Fashion industry but for the purpose of this research project, a discussion on the fashion industry within Trinidad and by extension some Caribbean islands is examined. “Unfortunately, beyond the performance there is considerable anecdotal evidence that points to our creative sector being a rather gender-unequal space, specifically as it relates to the business of the arts.” (Berkeley, 2024). Female fashion designers experience the same inequality and gender-bias factors that women around the world encounter on a day-to-day basis. In former times, factors such as; an uneven access to education, job segregation and much more, played a big role in hindering women from applying for jobs and having successful turnouts. Nowadays, due to a change in the social and economical environment, those factors are less likely to influence the success rate of a woman’s opportunity at a new job. There are however, new factors that women encounter in their professions especially with roles that are considered to be managerial, executive, directive and authoritative.

To begin, there is the tragic ongoing issue of sexual harassment in the work force, but specifically in the fashion industry. “Fashion comes and goes, but abuse and harassment will never be in-style, despite the prevalence of sexual assault in the fashion industry.” (Boucher LLP, 2023). Maintaining a job in the fashion industry as a female, can be challenging despite the role or job that one possesses, whether it may be as a designer, model, creative consultant, stylist, photographer and much more. Often times sexual harassment occurs due to a male

worker receiving less clients, recognition or even attention compared to a female worker and in order to prove their masculinity or machismo, the end result of sexual assault is inevitable. Some female designers may be approached with an offer to collaborate by other male designers either on the set of a photoshoot, or backstage at a fashion show and if their offer is declined by the female, they tend to grope and inappropriately touch them as a form of threat. Unfortunately, designers are not the only women in the industry that experience this type of behaviour from men, but it is also very prominent with models. In one of the interviews conducted for the findings of this research study, one of the entrepreneurs commented on their experience being sexually harassed on a photoshoot. For the purpose of confidentiality, her identity remains anonymous but she mentioned that a male designer inappropriately touched her under the guise of assisting her with her garments for the photoshoot. She described the feeling as an unexpected yet uncomfortable emotion and admitted that it did affect the way she conducted herself whilst working on the set. This encounter has unintentionally left a peculiar impact on the model, as she confessed that working with designers, whether it be male or female, is now a difficult task for her. Unfortunately, this is an issue faced by female designers in the industry, as models who may have been sexually harassed by male designers throughout their career, consider it difficult to comfortably work and execute concepts given to them on photoshoot sets.

Apart from sexual harassment, females also have to endure the societal expectations that question their ability to succeed in a leadership role, as well as receiving salaries that are an underpayment to the amount of responsibilities and workload that they perform. In the case of being a fashion designer in Trinidad and by extension, an entrepreneur in the arts and culture industry, being underpaid or discredited is often seen. In addition to this, there is also the issue of women's creative work being stolen or their time being taken advantage of and wasted. "Organisations ask for a proposal, do not hire you, but then ask someone else

(usually male as Cherisse recalls) to produce a piece of work very similar to what you proposed.” (Berkeley, 2024). Additionally, misogyny is often present in the careers of a female fashion designer. Within the same interview conducted with the anonymous entrepreneur, she recalled that opportunities that were once declined or taken away from her sometimes returned if a male colleague accompanied and/or replaced her at meetings. This exemplifies the level of trust that clients have in women who are leaders and are at the position to make the executive and directive decisions.

In conclusion, there are undoubtedly a number of challenges that women face not only in the fashion industry but in the workforce overall. Although there are still traditional misconceptions that sometimes negatively impact their journey, female designers also have to face the modern challenges of sexual harassment, misogyny, stolen creative directives and threats to name a few.

The Impact of an Industry with a Diverse Reputation on Female Designers

Living in a county or region that is famous for diversity in its cultures, religion and ethnicity can be seen as both a positive and negative outlook. “The Caribbean is famous for its vibrant fashion industry, which is powered by the blend of different cultures and ethnicities. The fashion industry here is very unique and diverse, with designers showcasing a range of styles that incorporate traditional Caribbean attire with current fashion trends.” (Lashely, 2023). The diverse reputation that the fashion industry has on female designers influences the creativity of their designs, patterns, styles and production techniques. Apart from this, it also influences their mode of work and the manner in which they conduct their businesses, locally and regionally. A discussion of how female designers are impacted positively and negatively by the diverse reputation of the fashion industry, is explained in the following paragraph.

Commencing with a positive impact, fashion designers are at the advantage of being surrounded by a vibrant mix of cultural and historical influences that shape their designs and patterns. With influence from African, Spanish, East-Indian, Indigenous people and even European cultures, inspiration is all around in the Caribbean. This can be perceived as a positive impact as it encourages fashion designers to remain rooted in their culture and stay true to who they are, building their identity in the fashion industry with the pride of belonging to the Caribbean and their respective home island. In addition to this, there is a rapid growth of body diversification in the fashion industry, where models no longer have a standard appearance but instead represent different body types (shape and size), skin tones, heights and hair textures. This encourages designers to step out of their comfort zone and create garments that are inclusive of all individuals, ensuring that they feel good in their skin and are comfortable in the clothes that they wear. Moreover, this type of diversification can be seen as an influence on female designers who may derive from the same backgrounds as their models and clientele, or may even embody the same features and body types, hence encouraging a diversification in their style and representation.

Subsequently, there are negative impacts of working in a diverse industry as female fashion designers. Although there are positive factors of originating from a place of multiethnic cultures, races, skin tones and classes, these factors can also be seen in a negative manner. In Trinidad and Tobago, the division of race and colour remains a prominent issue in today's society. Unfortunately, this is an issue that affects the clientele of designers, as well as the chance of exploring different markets and new target audiences. Some individuals prefer to support and purchase clothes from a designer that they can identify with, meaning someone who possesses the same complexion, race and body type. Hence affecting the amount of clients a designer retains. Additionally, designers face the issue of working in a small local market, which indicates difficulty in attaining raw resources and materials, a lack of

manufacturing hubs and the long standing issue of competition from foreign markets and brands. “The might of Chinese and other foreign competition is the biggest challenge today... But this does not mean we should not even try to compete: we should focus on unique, creative, well-made products.” (Hunt, 2015). In short, there are various positive and negative impacts on female designers in an industry that withholds a diverse reputation. Although the negative factors may outweigh the positive factors, designers can create opportunities from the challenges at hand and expand their innovations and skills, which can aid in the success of their businesses.

To conclude this chapter, a distinctive discussion revolving around the history of misconceptions faced by women in the fashion industry can be comprehended specifically, as it correlates with the key success factors and challenges endured by these designers throughout their careers. Pursuing a career in a male-dominating industry has its difficulties, however female designers continue to prove that they can become renowned designers amidst the diverse reputation of the fashion industry in Trinidad and subsequently the Caribbean.

Chapter 2: Presentation of Findings

The main objective for conducting this research project is to gather information that assists future designers and women in the fashion industry, in achieving a successful career in a male-dominated industry. To accomplish this, the researcher delved into three core areas of the study in order to understand the key success factors faced by Trinidadian women in the fashion industry, the challenges that Trinidadian women in fashion encounter and lastly, how the diverse reputation of the industry make a difference for women. In addition to gathering research based on existing literature that contributed to the topic of the study, the researcher also conducted a mixed exploratory design method to further examine the topic at hand.

Qualitative Method of Results (Interview)

This research study employed a mixed methods approach in collecting and interpreting data. The first method that the researcher utilised was that of a qualitative research method, by conducting interviews with individuals who are a part of the fashion industry. This method was applied in order to investigate and identify the different themes and variants of the study,

as it applies to the aforementioned topic. This particular section highlights the findings gathered from the interviews and is then presented with further results in the following section.

There were two different interviews conducted on separate days, with two different women who are a part of the fashion industry but share similar backgrounds. Each interview occurred for a maximum of forty-five minutes to an hour, where ten primary questions based on the research questions of this study were asked, in addition to follow-up questions based on the responses from the interviewee. A few common themes derived from both interviews, which can be assessed via their demographic and working experience but also comprised distinct differences when it relates to their background.

Demographics

Both interviewee's were asked to give consent and honest responses at the start of each interview and were then asked to give their age and profession (see appendix A). Both interviewee's were females within the age group of 26-30 years old and both worked within the fashion industry. The first interviewee is a mixed-race Trinidadian, with a light-skin complexion and curvy body. She recently became a first time mother and currently resides with her boyfriend and baby. She is an entrepreneur, having started off in the fashion industry as a service provider (nail technician and spa esthetician), then became a model, fashion designer and currently owns a marketing company that hires individuals (male and female) to promote different brands and companies. Likewise to the first interviewee, the second interviewee shared common aspects. Being a mixed-race Trinidadian, with a light-skinned complexion and slim body, she is also a single mother living alone with her four-year old son. Unlike the previous interviewee, she started her work career in the corporate world, before

quitting her job and starting a marketing company which connects models with events and brands. She recently started a new business, doing women's hair during the Carnival season.

Background

A distinct difference between both females was that of their upbringing. The first interviewee came from a family that already made a name in the entertainment industry and due to networking and partnering with certain individuals, they eventually had connections in the fashion industry. This can be classified as nepotism, as she grew up within the industry and had connections to assist her with different favours. Admittedly, she did mention that when launching her marketing company, she utilised her connections in the fashion industry to secure her first round of contracts and eventually her success capitalised from that.

In contrast to the first interviewee, the second person interviewed had a different family background. Neither of her parents were in the fashion industry nor in any industry relating to it. She spent a lot of her time at her aunt's house and even began working and providing for herself at the age of 16 years old. Her success in the fashion industry came as a result of networking at different events and eventually building connections that assisted her in achieving roles that she never imagined she would attain at her young age.

Work Experience in the Fashion Industry

The first interviewee had an ample amount of experience in the fashion industry prior to obtaining different permanent and managerial roles. Her journey began as a service provider, lending her talent as a nail technician and spa esthetician to close friends, who were models. After a few years, whilst being on set as a supportive friend, she was approached by a fashion designer who commented on her beauty and plus-size body- making it known that he was interested in collaborating with her to showcase diversification in his clothing line. That

encounter was the beginning of her modelling career, to which she has been doing for the past ten years even during her pregnancy and post-partum. After being in the industry for quite some time, she decided to venture into designing and will be launching her own Monday wear line in time for Carnival 2026. This experience has also allowed her to start a marketing agency that permits companies to use models as brand ambassadors, for different executions that may occur.

Similarly to the first interviewee, the second interviewee also manages a marketing agency that connects models and dancers to a variety of brands, allowing their careers to gain exposure and showcase their talents. However, her experience is limited to five years as compared to the first interviewee, as prior to starting this business, she worked a corporate 9-5 job. Having enough of not following her dreams, she quit her job and founded her company as well as, launching her own hair business a short while after. Although she may not be as hands-on and fully into the fashion industry right now, she does have future plans to collaborate with a popular mas camp and assist in the production and design elements of carnival costumes.

Quantitative Method of Results (Questionnaire)

In this second section, the researcher gathered the data that was previously examined from the qualitative findings and employed it for the survey data from participants in this research method (see appendix B). A total of 25 surveys were distributed online to random participants, who were among the age group 18-30 years old and were also a part of the fashion industry in Trinidad and Tobago. Each survey contained 15 questions that derived from the thematic findings examined in the first section. Moreover, the researcher discovered three different sectors that derived from the themes of the findings when distinctly analysing the data. The sectors include; 1. the demographic and personal information, 2. the success

factors and challenges and lastly, 3. the diversity and reputation. The main objective in analysing this data, was to explore the perceptions of whether or not the fashion industry is viewed as male-dominated, as well as the factors and challenges that impacted a female designer and/or entrepreneur's success in the industry, having relate to the three research questions for this study.

The Demographic and Personal Information

The age group of this sample size differed from that of the first section, as participants were among the ages 18-30 years old for this section. It also contained the participation of males as well, as compared to only having two females in the first section. Further analysis shows the comparison of both the male and female participation and their age groups. The sample size represents females (20) and males (5) (see fig. 1).

Points scored

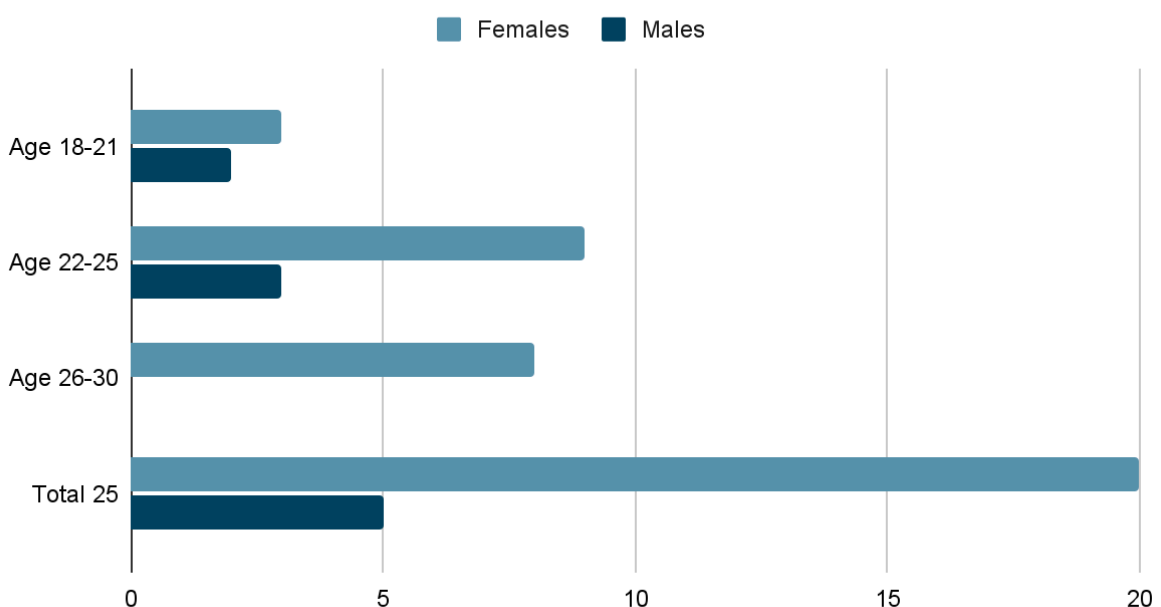


Figure 1. Shows the survey sample (25) of Females vs. Males

It can be portrayed through the data collected that the number of female participants outweigh the number of male participants by 95%, resulting in the minority of 5% male participants.

Further analysis demonstrates the number of participants that belonged to each age group, where the age group 22-25 years old acquired the most participants from both genders. There were 9 participants from the female sector that were among the ages 22-25, compared to the 3 participants that were from the 22-25 age group and were males. In the age bracket 26-30, there were no male participants but, however, resulted in 8 female participants. Subsequently, the female sector once again had more participants in the 18-21 age group, with 3 participants, compared to the 2 participants that were males in the same age bracket.

Among the number of current roles in the fashion industry, the occupation of a model has the highest number of participants in this survey. This results in 15 of the participants being models, as opposed to the 5 individuals allocated to being a fashion designer. The two occupations that had the lowest participants were that of a photographer securing only 3 of the participants and lastly, 2 persons toward the occupation of a service provider (see fig. 2).

Points scored

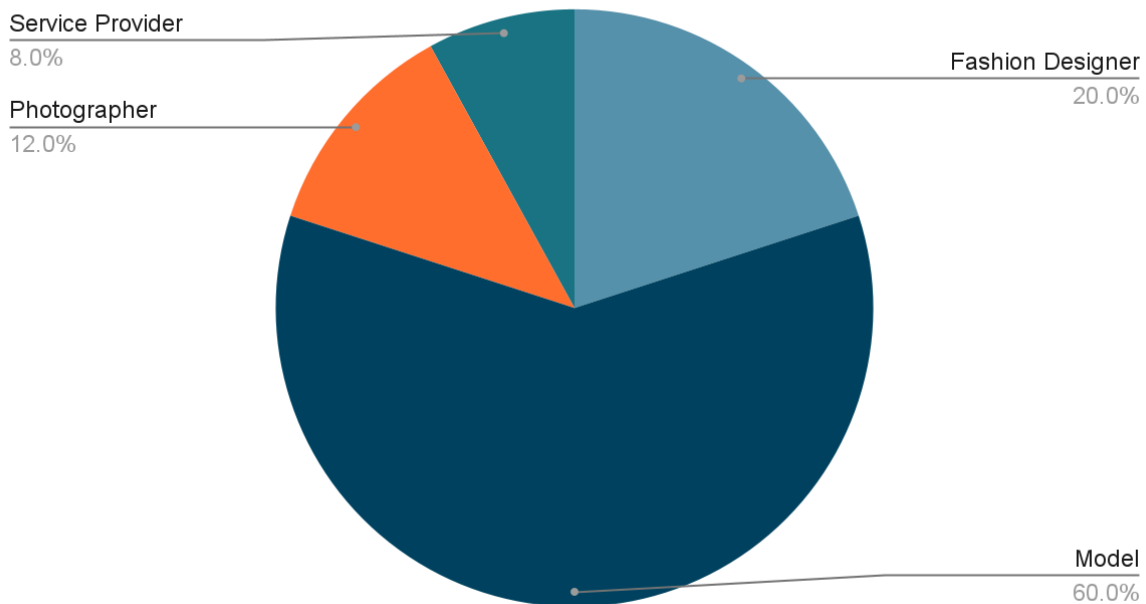


Figure 2. Shows the Percentage of the Current Roles in the Fashion Industry

The figure illustrated represents the percentage of individuals that are currently involved in the fashion industry and participated in this survey. The role of a model has the highest number of participants, gaining 60% of the overall percentage. The second highest role was that of a fashion designer, which received 40% less than the role of a model and secured 20% of the participants. Additionally, the remaining two roles involved in the survey were that of a photographer and service provider, which had a total of 20% between them. 12% of the participants were photographers and the remaining 8% were service providers, thus leaving the option 'other' with no participants.

The Success Factors and Challenges

In this part of the survey, participants were asked four questions that were based on the perceptions of the key success factors and challenges faced by women and female designers in the fashion industry. Among these questions, there were 3 open-ended questions and 1 close-ended question.

Participants were asked their opinion on what the biggest challenges that women in the fashion industry faced, based on findings that were analysed in sector one. The option for the ‘traditional misconceptions regarding the role a woman has in society’, received the second-highest number of results, with 4 participants. In third place, receiving a vote from 3 participants, is the option of ‘lack of role models in leadership positions’. The options for ‘diversity beyond gender’ and ‘all of the above’, received the lowest number of participants, with the first gaining 2 individuals and the latter only receiving 1 participant. It can be seen that the majority of participants chose the second option, which was that of ‘working in a male-dominated industry resulting in a lack of gender equality’ (see fig. 3).

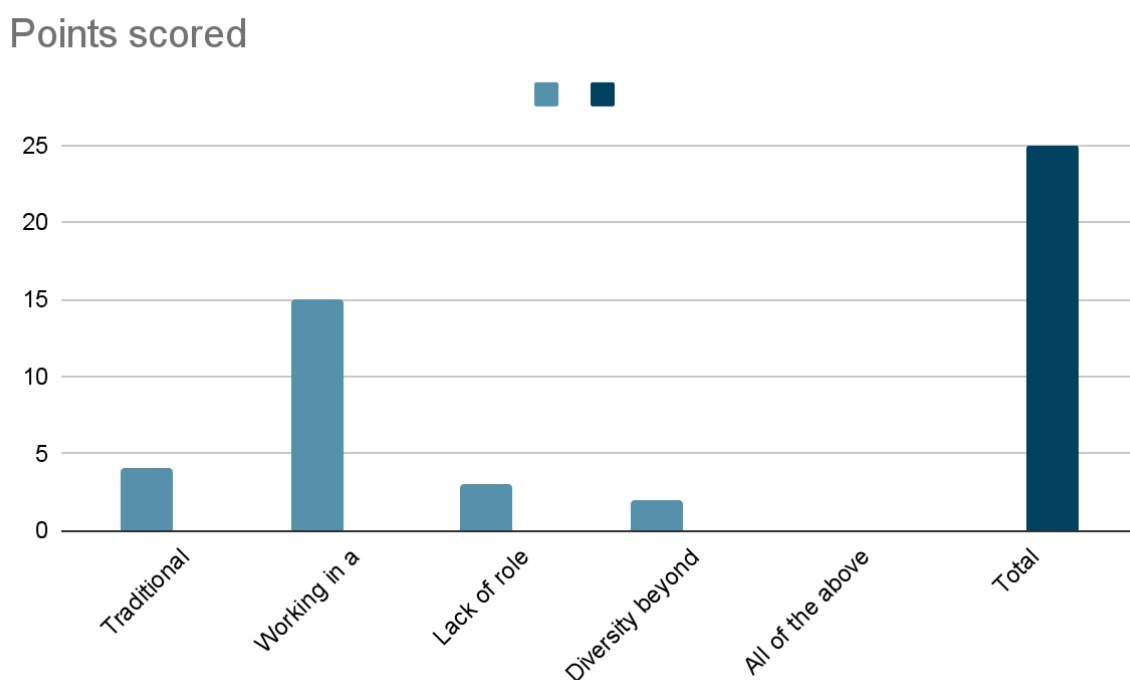


Figure 3. Shows the perceptions of the biggest challenges faced by women in fashion

The illustration that is figure 3. Shows the perceptions of the participants on what they believe are the biggest challenges faced by women in fashion. Leading the options with a majority of 60%, is the option of ‘working in a male-dominated industry resulting in a lack of gender equality’. The remaining options had low percentages, with the lowest being ‘all of the above’ which received a percentage of 4%.

The Diversity and Reputation

Generalising the thematic findings linked with that of section 1, the researcher was able to investigate the reputation of the fashion industry in Trinidad and Tobago, in terms of diversity and inclusion. There was a varied level of responses when it came to the options given, with the minority (1 person) choosing the last option, being that the reputation is non-existent. The

majority of respondents, which were a total of 12 participants, chose the second option of there barely being a reputation for diversity and inclusion. A tie of 5 participants each chose the first and third option, to which they agreed that Trinidad has the best reputation and also that the reputation for diversity and inclusion needs to vastly improve, whilst the remaining 2 participants thought that none of the options were valid (see fig. 5).

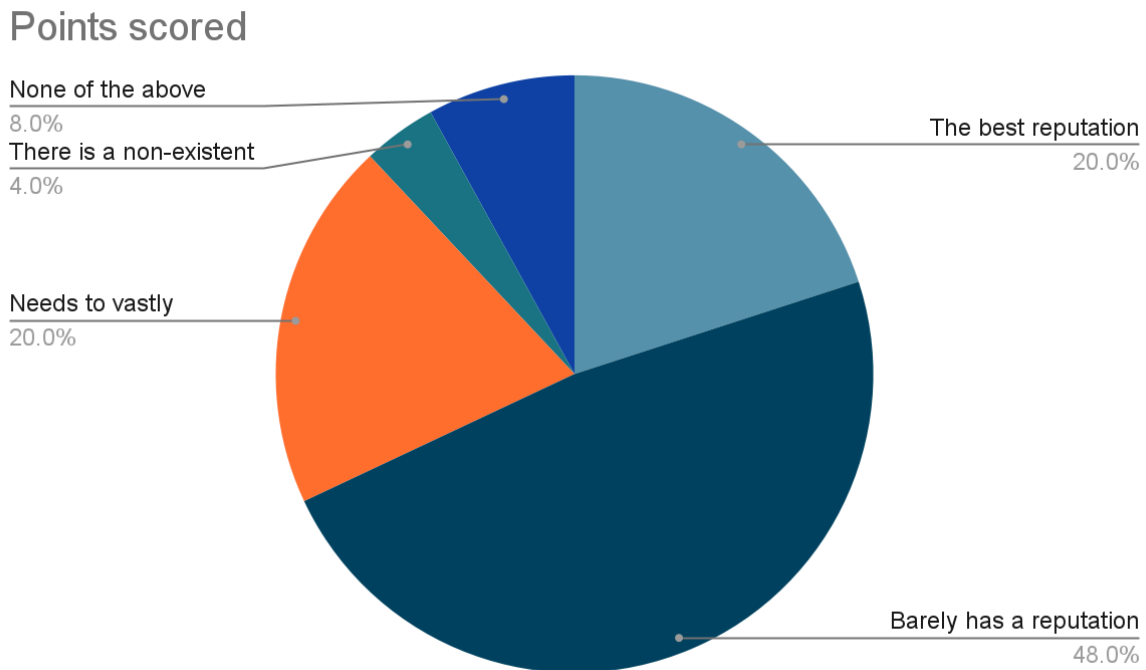


Figure 4. Shows the Reputation of the Fashion Industry in Trinidad and Tobago

It can be noted that there is a tie (20%) for the fashion industry's reputation being the best there is in Trinidad and Tobago, as well needing to vastly improve. The majority of participants (48%) however, selected the option of there barely being a reputation for diversity and inclusion. The last two options of there being a non-existent reputation which had a percentage of 4%, along with the last option of disagreeing with the others, 8% of participants selected that none of the options given resonated with them.

Furthermore, participants were given four options to select from with regards to what initiatives they believed could improve the reputation and diversity in the fashion industry, particularly for female designers. There was a fair level of answers, with close results among the last 3 options. The first option had the least number of participants, with 4 persons choosing the initiative of implementing feedback platforms. The majority of participants,

totalled to 8 persons, believe that providing support for women in leadership roles, is the better initiative. 7 participants agreed to organise inclusive social events, whilst 6 individuals thought the better option is to execute mentorships for upcoming designers (see fig. 5).

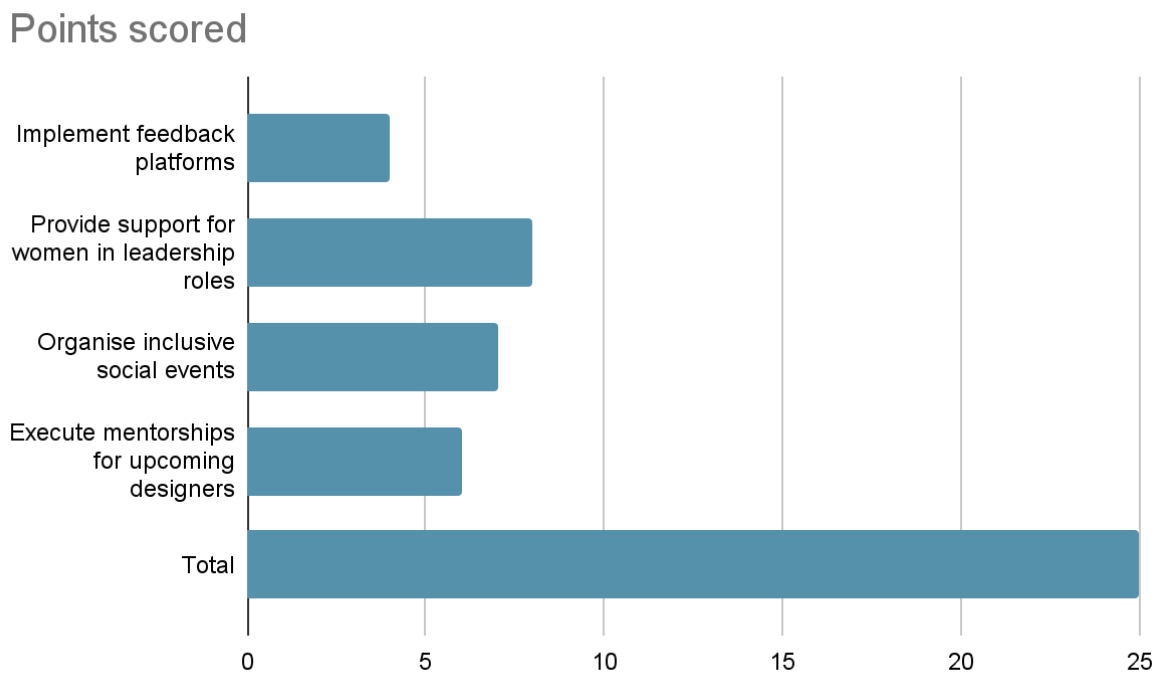


Figure 5. Represents the initiatives that can improve the reputation of the fashion industry in Trinidad and Tobago, for female designers

After carefully analysing the results from this survey question, it can be found that 32% of the participants have strong feelings toward providing support for women in leadership roles, as an initiative for improving the reputation and inclusion in Trinidad's fashion industry, particularly for female designers. Additionally, 28% chose to organise inclusive social events, whilst 24% selected the option to execute a mentorship for upcoming designers. This results in the first option of implementing platforms for feedback to receive the remaining 16% of selections.

This chapter presented the mixed methods of both qualitative and quantitative methods of research, in order to present the data and findings in a statistical manner to be analysed.

Through the use of both an interview and questionnaire, the researcher was able to investigate

and gather the relevant data necessary for the results of the research questions of this study. In the following chapter, a more in-depth analysis takes place.

Chapter 3: Discussion and Interpretation

This investigation occurred for the sole purpose of gaining answers for the research questions mentioned in chapter one of this research study. As such, based on the findings from the qualitative and quantitative research method designs, this chapter aims to outline these specific results and statistical data.

As discussed in chapter one, the fashion industry is deemed as a male-dominated industry that still engages in the misconceptions and societal stereotypes of women. When asked in the survey what was perceived as the biggest challenge faced by women in the fashion industry, 60% of the respondents agreed that working in male-dominated environment negatively impacts the creative work of female designers and it inevitably results in a lack of gender equality. In addition to this, there were not positive responses in relation to the type of diverse reputation that the fashion industry in Trinidad and Tobago maintains. The majority of participants favoured the option of there barely being a reputation, which in today's society is unacceptable.

Although there are several challenges and trials that female designers and workers in the fashion industry have to face on a daily basis, the dedication and motivation that females exude is an inspiration to always turn challenges into opportunities. Women face several factors that try to hinder their work, however they continue to work toward their goals and focus on the successful factors that allowed them to gain a renown reputation for themselves in the fashion industry.

Conclusion

To summarise, it is no surprise that the fashion industry remains a male-dominated industry, that despite the amount of work and dedication exuded by female workers in the industry, it still remains the same. This research study serves as a purpose to examine the different factors that influence the way the industry develops, with regards to the female fashion

designers and entrepreneurs in the industry. With the aid of objectives and research questions, this researcher was able to conduct an investigation that assisted in the findings of the research questions.

A series of literature was examined throughout the first chapter, as a means to distinguish how common the traditional roles of women are still prevalent in today's society, despite barriers and societal stereotypes being broken. In addition to discovering the different key factors and challenges that women in fashion face, when working in an industry with a diverse reputation.

Moreover, the second chapter allowed for a presentation of the findings via qualitative and quantitative research methods (interviews and a questionnaire). The results of this was presented in the form of charts and graphs, to further assist in understanding the result of the findings.

Lastly, the final chapter concluded in a lengthy discussion the correlation of the findings to the research questions. This was followed by a conclusion, comprising the limitations that the researcher faced as well as, the recommendations that can be acquired if further research on this topic is to be completed.

Limitations

Throughout the duration of collecting and gathering data for this research study, the researcher was faced with two minor problems. Firstly, the limited amount of information for articles and literature for the fashion industry in Caribbean islands, as well as the limited sources for local stories and experiences from established fashion designers.

Recommendations

Following the findings of the survey questions asked, based on the research questions of this study, the researcher can recommend the three points that derived from the most popular

question of what initiatives can be implemented to improve the reputation and diversity of Trinidad's fashion industry, particularly for female designers. The following are the most recommended initiatives:

- Provide support for women in leadership roles
- Organise inclusive social events
- Execute mentorship for upcoming designers

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Appendix A (Interview Questions)

Good Afternoon,

My name is Nyah Mohan, I am a final year student at the University of the West Indies, currently embarking on the HUMN3099- Caribbean Studies Project, where I am conducting a research study entitled, "The Key Success Factors and Challenges Faced by Trinidadian Women: Analysing the Diverse Reputation in the Industry". This interview serves as an experiment to gain the necessary and additional information from direct sources, such as yourself. This is not an exam, hence there are no right or wrong answers and all responses, along with your identity will remain anonymous and respected with the highest level of confidentiality.

Thank you in advance for your consent and participation.

Do you give consent to participating in this interview?

Yes

No

1. How long have you been a part of the Fashion Industry, as a female entrepreneur and designer? And why did you choose this particular industry?
2. How would you describe your journey, in terms of growing your business and maintaining a reputation in the industry?
3. What would you say are the top 5 things, whether positive or negative, that you have learnt throughout your time as an entrepreneur and designer in the fashion industry?
4. As a female entrepreneur, would you describe your experience within the industry as difficult or easy-going?

5. Would you say that there is a major difference in the way that males within the industry are treated, compared to females?
6. Can you share one of your unforgettable experiences (whether good or bad), whilst being a part of the fashion industry?
7. What are five key factors that you have acquired as it relates to your success as a female designer in the fashion industry?
8. What are five challenges that you have encountered as a Trinidadian woman, working in this industry?
9. Can you share what elements you believe are required to maintain a diverse environment within the fashion industry?
10. What advice would you give young girls, whose dreams are to become designers and entrepreneurs in Trinidad's fashion industry?

Appendix B (Questionnaire Questions)

Dear participant,

My name is Nyah Mohan, I am a final-year student at the University of the West Indies, pursuing a Major in BA Spanish. In order to complete my degree, I am partaking in the HUMN3099- Caribbean Studies Project, where I am conducting a research study entitled, "The Key Success Factors and Challenges Faced by Trinidadian Women: Analysing the Diverse Reputation in the Industry". This questionnaire serves as an experiment to gain the necessary data that will aid in the results of this investigation.

This questionnaire will take approximately less than ten minutes to complete. It is not an exam, therefore your responses can be honest and straightforward. Your identity, along with your responses will remain anonymous and respected with the highest level of confidentiality.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and consent.

Demographic and Personal Information:

1. What is your gender?

Female

Male

2. What age category do you belong to?

18-21

22-25

26-30

3. Are you a national of Trinidad and Tobago?

Yes

No

4. What country do you currently reside in?

5. What is your occupation?

6. What is your current role or involvement in the fashion industry?

Fashion Designer

Model

Photographer

Service Provider (Makeup artist or Hairdresser)

Other

7. How would you describe your feelings when engaging with a male designer or model?

Excited

Nervous

Neutral

Uncomfortable

Other

Section 2- Success Factors and Challenges:

8. Can you identify any specific qualities or skills that are important for women to excel in this particular industry?

9. Have you observed any successful strategies used by women to advance their careers in fashion? Please give an example.

10. What do you perceive is the biggest challenge faced by women in the fashion industry? Please select one answer.

- Traditional misconceptions regarding the role a woman has in society
- Working in a male-dominated industry resulting in a lack of gender equality
- Lack of role models in leadership positions
- Diversity beyond gender
- All of the above

11. Have you personally experienced or witnessed any gender-related biases in your fashion career? Please give an example.

Section 3- Diversity and Reputation:

12. How would you describe the reputation of the fashion industry in Trinidad and Tobago, in terms of diversity and inclusion?

- It has the best reputation in terms of diversity and inclusion
- It barely has a reputation for diversity and inclusion
- It needs to vastly improve the reputation for diversity and inclusion
- There is a non-existent reputation for diversity and inclusion
- None of the above

13. Do you think there are perceptions of female designers that affect their opportunities and experiences? Please give an example.

14. What initiatives do you think could improve the reputation and diversity of Trinidad's fashion industry, particularly for female designers?

- Implement feedback platforms
- Provide support for women in leadership roles
- Organise inclusive social events
- Execute mentorships for upcoming designers

Section 4- Future Aspirations

15. What do you envision for the future of women in the fashion industry in terms of representation and opportunities?
