

# Strengthening Legal Frameworks For Africa's Fashion Growth

Key Insights and Recommendations from FLAA's Fashion Law  
Panel at Lagos Fashion Week 2025

Prepared by the Fashion Law Academy Africa  
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## About This Insight Brief on Fashion Law

The Insight Brief on Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Africa's Fashion Growth has been developed by the **Fashion Law Academy Africa (FLAA)** to capture key discussions and learnings from our **Fashion Law Panel at Lagos Fashion Week 2025**.

This publication forms part of FLAA's ongoing commitment to advancing knowledge and thought leadership in the emerging field of fashion law through **research, education, and knowledge exchange**. The Fashion Law Insight Brief series translates insights from pivotal industry dialogues into accessible, evidence-based resources for students, practitioners, academics, and creative entrepreneurs working across Africa's fashion ecosystem.

While the panel was hosted in collaboration with **Lagos Fashion Week**, this brief represents the independent analysis and reflections of the Fashion Law Academy Africa. It underscores the Academy's belief that progress within Africa's fashion industry relies on **shared learning and institutional partnership** to bridge the gap between law, business, and creativity.

Through initiatives like this, the Academy transforms collaborative experiences into structured knowledge—fostering dialogue, research, and education that contribute to Africa's broader fashion development agenda.

## About the Fashion Law Academy Africa

The Fashion Law Academy Africa (FLAA) is an educational and research institution dedicated to advancing legal knowledge within Africa's fashion and creative industries. The Academy works to build a new generation of lawyers, scholars, and professionals equipped to understand and shape the legal dimensions of fashion and design.

FLAA's work spans academic research, professional education, and industry collaboration. Its initiatives include:

- **Publishing Africa's first Fashion Law Report** — featuring landmark cases, commentary, and materials on fashion law and policy across the continent;
- **Launching Africa's first Journal for Fashion Law and Policy** — a peer-supported platform to develop scholarship, provide publishing opportunities, and promote academic research in fashion law;
- **Developing the Fashion Law Handbook Series** — a practical reference for legal and creative professionals working at the intersection of fashion, business, and regulation;
- **Establishing the Fashion Law Accelerator** — a career-track program designed to train the next generation of fashion lawyers and law students;
- **Hosting events and public dialogues** with leading experts from the legal, fashion, and creative industries; and
- **Collaborating with credible platforms** such as Lagos Fashion Week and Beauty West Africa to connect academic research with industry realities and drive informed practice.

Through these efforts, the Academy continues to promote the study and teaching of fashion law across Africa, thereby building the intellectual foundation for a more informed, competitive, and globally connected fashion ecosystem.

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# Executive Summary

The Fashion Law Panel at Lagos Fashion Week 2025 convened leading voices from law, business, and creative enterprise to examine how stronger legal frameworks can drive sustainable growth and protect creativity within Africa's fashion industry. The session, themed “Protecting Creativity Through Law and Building Strong African Fashion Brands,” explored how early legal structuring, intellectual property awareness, and access to justice intersect with the continent's growing creative economy.

This Insight Brief, developed by the Fashion Law Academy Africa (FLAA), distils the key insights and recommendations shared during the session into actionable lessons for legal practitioners, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and educators.

Speakers emphasised that legal preparedness must begin at the earliest stage of brand development. Many fashion businesses are founded without sufficient corporate structure or legal planning, leaving them vulnerable as they scale. As one panellist noted, “Entrepreneurs should have the law in place at the beginning, not when they are in trouble.” Another added that fashion businesses must be structured “to accommodate growth even in years to come.”

A second theme centred on intellectual property awareness and documentation. Participants urged creative professionals to register their works and maintain proper records of ownership and contracts. As highlighted in the discussion, ideas alone cannot be protected; legal protection begins with formal registration and consistent documentation.

However, the conversation also acknowledged barriers to enforcement. The high costs of representation and litigation were identified as major deterrents to creatives seeking justice, contributing to the scarcity of fashion-related court cases. Panellists agreed that affordability and access to legal services must be addressed to strengthen protection mechanisms across the continent.



Description: FIA SS26 Collection at Lagos Fashion Week 2025  
Credit: Insignia Media

Taken together, these insights reinforce three overarching conclusions:

1. Legal literacy is a foundational element of brand growth and sustainability.
2. Stronger institutional and legal frameworks are needed to support the creative economy.
3. Collaboration between academia, industry, and policymakers is key to building a resilient and equitable African fashion ecosystem.

This publication forms part of the Fashion Law Academy Africa's mission to advance research, education, and thought leadership in fashion law. Through initiatives such as the Fashion Law Report, Fashion Law Journal, Handbook Series, and Accelerator Program, the Academy continues to promote the development of a robust legal culture that empowers Africa's creative industries to thrive.

# Context and Rationale

The relationship between fashion and law in Africa is undergoing a quiet but crucial transformation. The continent's creative industries are expanding, and this is primarily driven by youth innovation, digital connectivity, and global visibility. However, the absence of robust legal frameworks has become increasingly apparent. What once operated informally at the intersection of art and commerce now demands structure, governance, and protection.

Fashion, by its nature, thrives on originality and identity. Yet originality without protection is precarious. Across African markets, designers are building strong creative signatures but often without the legal frameworks to safeguard them. Intellectual property filings remain sparse; contractual documentation is inconsistent; and enforcement mechanisms are, in many cases, prohibitively expensive or inaccessible. The result is an uneven playing field where creative value dissipates too easily before becoming institutional capital.

This makes the problem not only a legal one but also a developmental one. The fashion economy mirrors broader questions of how law responds to culture, how regulation adapts to creativity, and how innovation can be formalised without being stifled. As Africa's fashion ecosystem becomes more globally connected through trade, technology, and media, the need for legal literacy and structural awareness has never been more pressing.

FLAA's Fashion Law Panel at Lagos Fashion Week 2025 was conceived as a forum for dialogue between the legal and creative communities. The conversation revealed recurring themes familiar to scholars and practitioners of fashion law: early-stage brand structuring, the cost of enforcement, the limits of copyright and design protection, and the broader question of how African brands can build enduring commercial identities.



The insights captured in this brief reflect a growing recognition that law must not only respond to fashion's challenges but also anticipate them. Strengthening legal frameworks for Africa's fashion growth, therefore, requires more than reactive regulation; it calls for an integrated approach that connects research, policy, and practice.

Through this publication, the Fashion Law Academy Africa advances that mission by bridging scholarship and industry through education, research, and knowledge exchange. By documenting and disseminating these discussions, the Academy contributes to a foundational body of knowledge that will help define the emerging discipline of African fashion law, ensuring that creativity is not only celebrated but institutionally protected.

## Session Overview: The Fashion Law Panel at Lagos Fashion Week 2025

The Fashion Law Panel at Lagos Fashion Week 2025 represented a deliberate effort by the Fashion Law Academy Africa (FLAA) to shift the conversation on fashion law in Africa from abstract awareness to structured education and practical engagement. Curated and moderated by the Academy, the session formed part of a



Description: FLAA Fashion Law Panelists at LFW 2025  
Credit: FLAA



broader institutional commitment to embedding legal literacy within Africa's creative industries.

Anchored around the theme “Protecting Creativity Through Law and Building Strong African Fashion Brands,” the panel convened three leading voices shaping the continent's emerging fashion law landscape: Nosa Garrick, Senior Partner at F. A. Garrick & Co. and Head of Ashcorp; Kikelola Ojewale, Partner at Dentons ACAS-Law; and Anne Oti, Founder of Africa Fashion Law. Collectively, their perspectives bridged private practice, entrepreneurship, and industry advocacy, illustrating how law can serve as both infrastructure and strategy for Africa's creative economy.

**The discussion centred on three guiding questions:**

- What early legal steps must emerging fashion brands take to protect creative work and ensure scalability?
- What are the most common legal oversights within Africa's fashion industry, and how can they be avoided?
- How can existing legal frameworks evolve to support brand protection and cross-border competitiveness better?

The panel's dialogue revealed several recurrent themes. Speakers agreed that legal preparation must begin at the inception of a brand, not as a remedial step when challenges arise. Garrick emphasised the need for corporate consistency and forward-looking structures that can accommodate growth over time.

**"CREATE A CORPORATE STRUCTURE THAT CAN  
GROW WITH YOUR BUSINESS AND ACCOMMODATE  
ITS FUTURE." — NOSA GARRICK**

Kikelola Ojewale expanded this point by introducing the concept of an "**intellectual property portfolio**", a comprehensive documentation system that tracks a brand's creative and commercial evolution. She highlighted that enforcement remains a systemic challenge, observing that the high cost of legal representation continues to limit litigation and dispute resolution within the fashion sector.

"AS A CREATIVE OR A FASHION BUSINESS OWNER IN  
THE INDUSTRY, YOU NEED TO HAVE AN  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PORTFOLIO. AND BEYOND  
REGISTRATION, ALL SUBSEQUENT ENGAGEMENTS  
OR COLLABORATIONS SHOULD BE DOCUMENTED."  
— KIKELOLA OJEWALE

Annie Oti underscored the importance of proactive legal engagement, arguing that entrepreneurs must "have the law in place at the beginning, not when things go south." She called for sustained industry awareness through seminars, conferences, and professional education to bridge the gap between law and creative practice.

"LEGAL STRUCTURE SHOULDN'T BE AN  
AFTERTHOUGHT. SAFEGUARD YOUR BUSINESS  
BEFORE THINGS GO WRONG, NOT WHEN THEY DO."  
— ANNIE OTI

A consistent thread throughout the session was the recognition that the lack of accessible legal frameworks is one of the most significant barriers to growth for African fashion brands. While creativity and innovation abound, institutional support and regulatory clarity have not kept pace. The conversation, therefore, framed fashion law not merely as a protective mechanism, but as a developmental tool—one essential to building sustainable brands, investor confidence, and cultural legitimacy in global markets.

Audience engagement reflected a clear appetite for continued dialogue and training. The panel's candid exchange illuminated both the opportunities and structural limitations within the current system, ultimately positioning law as a catalyst for transformation rather than a constraint.

## PANELISTS AT A GLANCE



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# Key Insights and Discussions

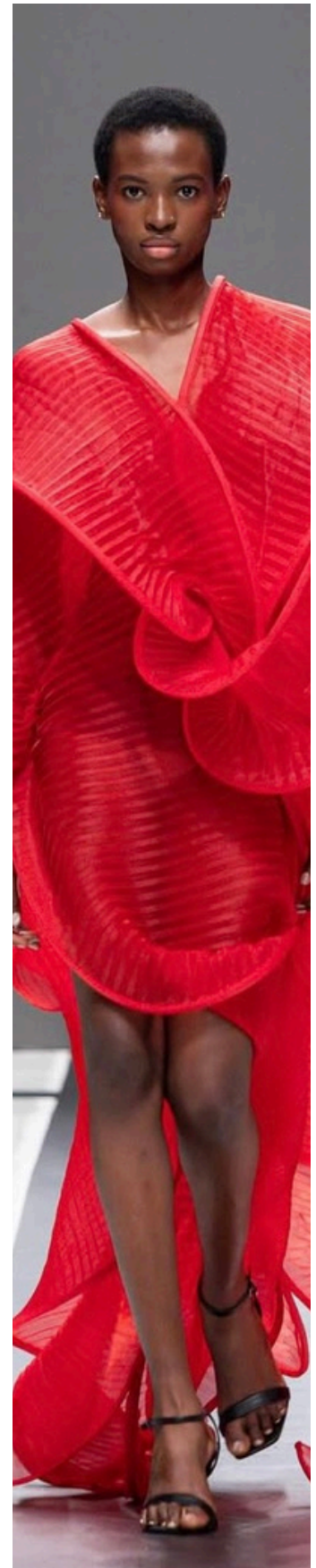
## 1. Protecting Creativity Through Law

The panel underscored a central truth: without legal structure, creative innovation remains economically fragile. **Protection must begin at the point of creation**, not after commercial success or public recognition.

Fashion entrepreneurs often underestimate the role of early-stage brand structuring. He observed that while most brands focus on visual identity and product design, few establish a formal legal personality capable of entering contracts, attracting investment, or owning intellectual property. The absence of corporate consistency, he warned, can lead to disputes over ownership, royalties, and brand control as the business scales.

Speakers collectively reinforced that registration, not originality alone, confers enforceable rights. From trademarks to design patents, formal protection serves as both a shield and a commercial asset. Yet, the conversation also exposed systemic barriers: the high cost of representation and litigation, limited access to specialised IP practitioners, and a general perception of the law as inaccessible or punitive. These barriers have curtailed the development of a robust body of fashion-related case law in Nigeria and across the continent.

Ultimately, the discussion reframed legal protection as a strategic advantage, not a bureaucratic burden; an investment that signals professionalism, supports international expansion, and preserves creative authorship in an increasingly competitive market.



Description: LFJ at LFW 2025  
Credit: Insignia Media

## **2. Building Strong African Fashion Brands**

A recurring theme across the session was that the strength of an African fashion brand is not measured by creativity alone, but by the structures that sustain it. The panellists agreed that sustainable growth demands a balance between artistic vision and legal foresight.

The discussion extended to scalability. As African brands increasingly target regional and international markets, cross-border legal considerations, including trademark registrations across multiple jurisdictions, export contracts, and distribution agreements, become imperative. Without this infrastructure, brands risk dilution, imitation, or contractual disadvantage in global dealings.

The speakers agreed that strong brands emerge from a culture of compliance and strategic planning, where legal systems evolve in tandem with creative innovation. By integrating law into brand development from the outset, African designers can build businesses that endure, attract funding, and compete credibly on global platforms.

## **3. Strengthening Legal Awareness and Capacity**

Beyond the technicalities of protection and structure, the panellists converged on one vital message: awareness is the first form of empowerment. Legal education enters the entrepreneurial process only after disputes arise. There is a need for a proactive approach through embedding legal literacy into the business culture of fashion.

Workshops, masterclasses, and continuing education programs can bridge the gap between legal professionals and creative practitioners. This call resonated with the Academy's broader mission. The Fashion Law Academy Africa has positioned itself as an institutional hub for this form of capacity building, translating complex



regulatory concepts into accessible knowledge for designers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers alike.

In sum, the panel highlighted the need for legal capacity-building ecosystems, a network of law schools, bar associations, and fashion industry bodies committed to professionalising the creative economy through continuous education and institutional reform.



Description: Cynthia Abila at LFW '25  
Credit: Insignia Online (Kola Oshalusi)



Description: Cynthia Abila at LFW '25  
Credit: Insignia Online (Kola Oshalusi)



Description: LFJ at LFW 2025  
Credit: Insignia Media



# Recommendations and Future Priorities

Drawing from the panel's dialogue, the following recommendations outline a pathway for advancing fashion law practice, education, and policy across Africa:

- **Embed Legal Education in Creative Practice:** Introduce targeted legal literacy programs for designers, stylists, and entrepreneurs. Law schools and fashion institutions should develop joint curricula to ensure that future professionals understand both intellectual property and the fundamentals of commercial law.
- **Institutionalise Brand Structuring Frameworks:** Encourage early incorporation, partnership agreements, and IP registration as standard procedures for emerging brands. Industry incubators and accelerators should include legal onboarding as part of their startup development models.
- **Improve Access to Legal Support:** Establish a regional network of pro bono or subsidised legal clinics specialising in fashion and creative law. Such initiatives could lower the cost barriers that currently inhibit litigation and contractual enforcement.
- **Develop a Continental IP Strategy for Fashion:** Advocate for harmonised IP policies under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) framework. A unified approach would simplify cross-border registration, reduce duplication, and enhance brand protection within African markets.
- **Encourage Public-Private Collaboration:** Partnerships among ministries, IP offices, and fashion councils can raise awareness, foster policy coherence, and drive institutional investment in the creative economy.
- **Document and Disseminate Case Studies:** Continuous documentation of legal



Description: JZO SS26 Collection at Lagos Fashion Week 2025  
Credit: Insignia Media

- precedents, brand growth journeys, and dispute resolutions will create a repository of knowledge, helping both lawyers and creatives navigate real-world challenges.
- **Sustain Dialogue Through Annual Forums:** Building on the success of the Lagos Fashion Week session, FLAA should institutionalise recurring panels, white papers, and insight briefs that track the evolution of fashion law and its socio-economic impact in Africa.

# Conclusion: Advancing Africa's Fashion Law Agenda

The Fashion Law Panel at Lagos Fashion Week 2025 marked another step in the ongoing effort to frame fashion not only as a creative enterprise but as a legal and economic frontier for Africa. The discussions revealed a maturing understanding within the industry that legal frameworks are not peripheral, but foundational, to sustainable fashion growth.

From intellectual property and brand structuring to awareness and capacity building, the conversation reaffirmed that Africa's fashion future depends on a deliberate alignment between creativity, commerce, and law. Each speaker emphasised a common truth: while African designers have mastered the art of innovation, their long-term competitiveness will rest on the systems that protect, formalise, and scale that innovation.

For the Fashion Law Academy Africa (FLAA), this Insight Brief reinforces our commitment to education, research, and knowledge exchange. The insights gathered here will inform future programming, including the Fashion Law Accelerator, the forthcoming Beauty Law initiatives, and handbook publications. More broadly, they contribute to shaping a regional agenda; one that recognises fashion law as a driver of intellectual capital, job creation, and cultural diplomacy across the continent.

As the field continues to evolve, collaboration will remain essential. Partnerships between academia, industry, and policymakers must deepen to produce the data, policy tools, and professional competencies needed to sustain growth. Through continued dialogue and evidence-based research, FLAA seeks to help build a future

where every African creative operates within a system that values, protects, and rewards originality.

The journey toward a coherent African fashion law ecosystem has begun. What remains is to nurture it, with knowledge, structure, and collective will.

