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MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

DEVELOPING AN ONLINE MARKET PLACE FOR FASHION DESIGNERS IN UGANDA

By

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A project proposal submitted to the faculty of computing and informatics of Makerere University Business School in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of bachelor of business computing of Makerere University.

November, 2025

DECLARATION

We, the undersigned, declare that to the best of our knowledge, this proposal is our original piece of work, and has never been published or submitted for any award in any other University or Higher institution of learning.

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APPROVAL

This project proposal has been submitted with my approval as supervisor and my signature is here appended:

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SECTION ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

The fashion retail industry has undergone a major shift transitioning from primarily brick-and-mortar sales to becoming fundamentally driven by digital channels. This digital transformation has enhanced the online marketplace as the primary format for fashion sales with estimates indicating that over 70% of transactions in key global markets now occur on such platforms **(TeipeDigital, 2025)**. The most significant trend in this area is the **rise of** the particular audience designed marketplace model. Platforms like Far fetch (for luxury and independent boutiques) and ASOS Marketplace (for vintage and small brands) demonstrate that consumers prioritize designed selections and brand storytelling over standard mass-market offerings **(Bit Bag, 2023)**.

The expansion trend of e-commerce in Africa presents a landscape of both large opportunity and wide spread challenges. There is a strong region -wide vital to empower the creative economy by building reliable digital platforms and supply chain solutions **(Mastercard Foundation, 2021)**. Africa-focused projects have focused on handling core regional challenges such as providing integrated logistics, quality assurance and secure payments to support creative entrepreneurs in trading globally **(Mastercard Foundation, 2021)**.

Fashion designers continue to face challenges related to limited market access, high operational costs and inadequate digital infrastructure. Many designers rely heavily on physical boutiques, exhibitions or word-of-mouth advertising which restricts their visibility and growth **(The Bold Woman Fund, n.d)**. The development of an online market place can therefore provide a digital platform that connects designers directly with consumers. The availability of internet infrastructure many fashion designers need the necessary digital tools and platforms to market their products online and **(Ministry of ICT & National Guidance2020)**.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The absence of a centralized marketplace specifically designed for Ugandan fashion designers hinder the ability to connect with both global and local consumers.

There is an urgent need to develop an online market place that addresses these systematic gaps by providing a digital marketplace for showcasing designers' products, facilitating secure transactions and expanding the market presence of Ugandan fashion designers.

The global rise of digital market places has transformed the fashion industry although Ugandan fashion sector continues to face challenges in adopting and benefiting from online retail platforms. International markets have utilized digital technologies to enhance visibility, accessibility and sales for designers. Many fashion designers have remained restricted by limited access to affordable digital infrastructure, low online visibility and under developed deliver systems. This situation has to restricted market reach and reduced competitiveness.

1.3 Project goal and objectives

1.3.1 Project goal

To develop an online marketplace that connects Ugandan fashion designers with local and international customers.

1.3.2 Project objectives

- i. To analyze the current challenges and market needs of Ugandan fashion designers
- ii. To develop an online marketplace platform incorporating user-friendly interfaces.
- iii. To test an online marketplace.

1.3.3 Project scope summary

This project aims to develop an online marketplace dedicated to Ugandan fashion designers, enabling them to showcase, promote and sell their products.

Key activities consist of:

Conducting market research and needs among fashion designers and consumers to gather requirements (first 3 months).

Developing a user-friendly, secure online marketplace platform with features such as product catalogs, payment integration, and marketing tools (development phase: months 3 to 4).

Training selected designers on using the platform and online marketing strategies (ongoing during testing).

1.4 Anticipated significance of the project

By providing a centralized online platform, the project will solve problems such as limited market access and insufficient promotional opportunities for designers.

Specifically, the system will benefit fashion designers by giving them an accessible and secure online space to display and sell their products, reach a wider customer base and use of digital marketing tools to boost sales and brand awareness. This project will equip us with valuable technical, managerial, and industry-specific knowledge that can be applied to future digital innovation projects, especially those aimed at supporting local creative enterprises.

1.5 Project assumptions

Assumption 1: We assume that the necessary financial, human and technical resources required for the project including software developers, designers and marketing personnel will be available when needed throughout the project lifecycle.

Assumption 2: We assume that key users such as fashion designers, potential buyers will actively participate in research activities.

Assumption 3: We assume that the project scope will remain stable with minimal changes during the development process.

Assumption 4: We assume that the required technology platforms, software tools and integration capabilities (will be available and functional).

SECTION TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2. SECTION INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews existing literature related to online marketplaces, e-commerce systems and digital transformation in the fashion industry. It provides an overview of previous studies, theoretical concepts and technical developments. This review also highlights the challenges and opportunities of using technology into fashion marketing and sales. The aim is to build a foundation that will inform the system's design and development.

2.1 Online marketplaces and e-commerce systems

An online marketplace is a digital platform that connects sellers and buyers allowing them to trade goods and services through the internet (Turban et al., 2018). These platforms have transformed the global business environment by reducing operational costs and increasing market reach.

2.2 Fashion Industry and Digitalization

The fashion industry has increasingly adopted digital technologies to enhance design, marketing and sales processes. Online market platforms enable designers to showcase their products, interact with customers and receive feedback (Kim, 2020). For small-scale designers like. Lux designs, Veil with Tesi, Heavens Collections and bridals). digital marketplaces provide affordable opportunities to reach larger audiences and compete with established brands. However, many local designers still face challenges such as limited ICT skills, poor online visibility and security concerns related to digital payments (Kotler et al., 2019).

2.3 Fashion Designers

Independent fashion designers play a critical role in shaping the creative and culture of the fashion industry. They often operate within urban environments where creativity, culture, retail and design intersect (Heim, Ferrero-Regis and Payne, 2021). The authors highlight that these designers navigate challenges of limited visibility and resources while sustaining a distinctive fashion culture within their cities. Their research emphasizes how independent fashion designers contribute to redefining the meaning of a fashion city by linking creativity to local identity and

community (Heim et al., 2021). This perspective is important for understanding how local designers like Lux designs, Veil with Tesi and Heavens Collection and bridals can use online market places to promote their brands and maintain cultural relevance within the broader fashion industry.

2.4 Importance of online marketplaces in the fashion industry

Online marketplaces have become essential platforms for connecting fashion designers with broader consumer markets. They enable small and independent fashion designers to showcase their products globally, improve customer engagement and reduce operational costs (Turban, 2018). Digital platforms enhance brand visibility and allow businesses to compete effectively through data driven marketing and real time customer interaction (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). For emerging designers such as Veil with Tesi, online systems provide opportunities to expand their market reach and promote local creativity to a wider audience.

2.5 Challenges of online marketplaces in the fashion industry

Online marketplaces face numerous problems like; online security risks, lack of trust in digital transactions and limited access to reliable internet infrastructure in developing regions (Laudon, 2020). Additionally, fashion designers struggle with digital literacy, logistics management and maintaining customer loyalty in high competitive environments (Kim, 2020).

2.6 Implementation of online marketplace system

The successful implementation of online marketplaces depends on effective system design, user centered interfaces and secure payment integrations. Incorporating responsive design, real time communication and personalized recommendation improve customer engagement and retention (Traver, 2021). For local fashion designers implementation requires combination of technology adoption, stakeholder training and sustainable digital marketing strategies (Kotler et al., 2019).

2.7 Summary of literature

The reviewed literature emphasizes that online marketplaces are critical in promoting digital entrepreneurship and enhancing access to market. For fashion designers such systems bridge the gap between creativity and commerce by offering an accessible digital space for business operations. Successful implementation requires attention to usability and data security.

SECTION THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3. 1 Research Design

As a team we hope to choose Design Science Research (DSR) as the research method for our project. DSR is a systematic approach focused on creating and evaluating innovative artifacts such as models or systems designed to solve practical problems. The approach follows iterative steps which include, identifying the problem, defining solution objectives, designing and developing the artifact, demonstrating its application, evaluating its effectiveness and communicating findings (Smuts et al.2022).

We hope to choose DSR because it aligns perfectly with our goal of developing a functional, user centered online marketplace for Ugandan fashion designers. This method enables us to build a practical solution informed by user needs and tested in real contexts. By using DSR, the team will achieve the project objectives effectively by studying market needs, designing the platform, testing with users and refining the system based on evaluations ensuring a solution that is both relevant and sustainable.

Illustration of DSR Process:

Development of an online market place for fashion designers in Uganda using design science research method.

DSR Stage	Research objective to be addressed	Proposed methods	Expected results
1. Problem Identification and Motivation	To study and analyze the current challenges and market needs of Ugandan fashion designers.	interviews User meetings	Identifying key challenges faced by Ugandan fashion designers.
2. Define the Objectives for a	To test the digital online marketplace	Focus group discussions	Identification of system error that may

Solution		User meetings	affect user experience.
3. Design and Development	To develop the digital online marketplace platform with a user-friendly interface	Employ Agile software development methodologies, continuously building a prototype based on user requirements.	An initial artifact of the marketplace system with core features and user interface elements.
4. Demonstration	To test the digital online marketplace	Implement usability testing sessions and deployments with selected fashion designers and customers.	Validation of system readiness for real world use for fashion designers in Uganda.
5. Evaluation	To systematically evaluate the digital marketplace through user feedback and performance.	Conducting surveys	Qualitative data on user satisfaction, system strengths, weaknesses.
6. Communication	To document and share the research process, design decisions, and evaluation outcomes.	Presentations Reports	Showcasing of our system.

3.2 Project organization (Client)

The project targets distinct groups which are stated below along with their population figures.

The primary clients or user groups include;

- i. Ugandan fashion designers: There are approximately 3 fashion designers for our system as of 2025, representing the main creators and beneficiaries of the marketplace platform.
- ii. Buyers and consumers across Uganda interested in purchasing fashion items online.

In terms of population figures; the direct target population is around 244 registered fashion designers representing the work force that would directly benefit from the proposed online marketplace (**Uganda National Bureau Stastics, 2024**). The broader user base includes millions of internet users in Uganda, with over 14 million internet users in 2025, many of whom could potentially engage as online shoppers. (**Datareportal, 2025**). The clients of this project are three designers (3) and they are Lux designs, Veil with Tesi, and Heavens Collections and bridals. These are all sole proprietary businesses. And the estimated users are twenty users (20).

3.2.1 Sampling Technique

For our project users we will use a purposive sampling technique to select the sample. This approach is suitable because the project targets distinct groups are including Ugandan fashion designers, buyers, stakeholders and marketers all possessing specific knowledge to the study's objective. Our research team will use their judgment to identify and select participants of these key groups. This method allows an in-depth exploration of specific ideas relevant to the development of an online market place detailing the challenges, and the needs (**Turban et al., 2018**).

3.3 Sources of Project Data

This study will use both primary and secondary data sources to obtain the information required. Primary data will be collected through interviews conducted with our key stakeholders which are Lux designs, Veil with Tesi and Tendo's shoe collection, users and system administrators. These interviews will help gather first-hand information on designers' business operations, challenges in online marketing, customer engagement and expectations regarding the features and usability of the proposed market place (**Heim et al., 2021**).

Secondary data will be obtained from existing written materials such as textbooks, academic journals, previous research reports and publications related to e-commerce systems, digital marketing and online marketplaces. Additional reference will be made to institutional and government reports on ICT adoption and small business digitalization. The secondary

information will provide theoretical support and help identify best practices and trends relevant to the system development process.

3.3.1 Requirement] Elicitation [Data collection] Techniques

The project team will carefully study the existing business operations of fashion designers to understand how they currently market and sell their products. This process will help identify system requirements and areas that need improvement in the proposed system.

To collect the system requirements the system requirements, we will use interviews. Interviews will be conducted with our selected fashion designers as well as potential customers. This technique will help us gather detailed information about user needs, challenges in online marketing and expectations regarding the features and usability of the system. This will enable us gather accurate and user centered requirements for designing and developing the proposed information system.

3.4 System Analysis and Design Approaches

The project will adopt the Object-Oriented Design approach. This approach focuses on representing real world entities as objects that contain both data and behavior. (Satzinger, J. W., 2016). It is suitable for this project because the proposed online marketplace system involves multiple interacting entities such as Designers, Customers, Products and others. Using the object-oriented approach will make the system more modular, reusable and easy to maintain. It allows for better representation of relationships between different components and simplifies future updates with other systems.

3.4.1 Requirement Elicitation [Data collection] Techniques

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us gather accurate and user centered requirements for designing and developing the proposed information system.

3.4.2 Design Techniques

To ensure the successful implementation of the system, various design techniques will be applied to clearly define the system's structure, functionality and user interaction. These techniques will guide the development team throughout the design and implementation process. Entity relationship diagrams will be developed to represent the system's database structure. They will define entities such as designer, customer, product, order and payment and show how these entities relate to one another. This will ensure accurate data organization and smooth database design.

A system architecture design will be designed to show how the different components of the system such as the web interface, application server and database will interact. This will provide an overview of how data flows between users and system modules.

3.5 Anticipated Project Constraints

The development of the system may face several constraints that could affect the project's progress. However the research team has outlined possible measures to address these challenges as described below;

- i. Limited time for project compilation. The project may be affected by limited time to complete all phases including requirement analysis, design, and development and testing.
- ii. Limited financial and technical resources. The project may face challenges in acquiring advanced development tools or hosting services.
- iii. Possible user resistance and low participation. Some fashion designers may be reluctant to adopt the system due to unfamiliarity with online platforms.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This project involves interaction with human participants including fashion designers and potential customers to collect data for the development of the system. Therefore ethical

considerations will be observed throughout the research and development process to ensure the protection of participants and their information in the following ways;

- i. **Informed consent:** All participants will be informed about the purpose of the study and how their information will be used. Participation will be voluntary and individuals will have the right to withdraw at any stage without any consequence.
- ii. **Confidentiality and Privacy:** All personal data collected through interviews and discussion will be kept confidential and used strictly for academic purposes.
- iii. **Data protection and security:** Collected data will be securely stored in password protected files accessible only to the research team.
- iv. **Integrity and Honesty:** The research team will ensure that all data collected and presented are accurate, genuine and free from manipulation.

3.7 Timeline and Milestones

The project will be carried out over a period of approximately three months, following the stages of the Prototyping Model. Each stage will have specific activities and expected deliverables, as shown in the table below:

Phase / Activity	Description of Tasks	Duration (Weeks)	Expected Milestone / Output
1. Problem Identification & Requirements Gathering	Identify challenges faced by fashion designers (e.g. Lux designs, Veil With Tessi, heavens collections and bridal). Conduct interviews and observations to collect user and business requirements for the online marketplace	Weeks 1–2	Problem definition report and detailed requirements specification document completed.

	system.		
2. System Analysis & Design	Analyze gathered requirements and develop system design models including Use Case Diagrams, ER Diagrams and System Architecture. Prepare database schema and interface layout.	Weeks 3–4	Approved system design documentation and interface prototypes.
3. System Development & Prototyping	Begin implementation using HTML, CSS, JS and PHP, MySQL for the database. Develop main modules (user registration, product upload, product catalog, order management). Create and test the first prototype.	Weeks 5–8	Completion of first functional system prototype.
4. Prototype Testing & User Feedback	Conduct prototype testing sessions with selected users (fashion designers and customers). Collect feedback on usability, performance, and interface design. Document areas for improvement.	Weeks 9–10	User feedback report and prototype evaluation summary.

5. System Refinement & Final Documentation	<p>Refine the system based on feedback.</p> <p>Conduct final testing to ensure functionality and security. Prepare project documentation and final report for submission.</p>	Weeks 11–12	Final, tested, and refined system ready for presentation and submission.
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Disclosure and Declaration Statements:

This project report and system development represents original work carried out to address the needs of Ugandan fashion designers in creating an accessible online marketplace. All information presented is accurate to the best of the author's knowledge. Any assistance, sources, or references have been duly acknowledged. This work has not been submitted elsewhere for academic or commercial purposes.

We hereby declare that this project titled "Developing an Online Marketplace for Fashion Designers in Uganda" is our own work and effort. All data, findings and analysis have been gathered ethically with respect to confidentiality and integrity content and outcomes of this project and confirm that it complies with applicable institutional guidelines and ethical standards.

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APPENDICES

I. Proposed Project Budget:

This budget outlines the expected costs for executing the project covering all phases from planning and research through to final report production and system deployment.

Budget Category	Description	Estimated Cost(ugx)
1.Research and data collection	Costs associated with field work including transport, communication and other small costs for the interviewees and designers	60,000
2.system setup and infrastructure	Costs for the initial phase of deployment including internet bandwidth	130,000
3.Proposal and report submission	Costs for finalizing the project proposal and report including printing and photocopying.	30,000
4.Unforeseen expenses		20,000
Total project budget		180,000

II. Data Collection Tools we intend to use:

The team utilizes the following tools to collect both primary and secondary data. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of user needs, functional requirements and market necessary for the developing the online marketplace. The interview guide is the primary tool used for collecting qualitative data; the guides are structured to focus on key areas of the E-commerce system. The team also employs Document analysis to systematically review existing, published information which forms the theoretical foundation of the project. These include academic journals & textbooks, and existing E-commerce Platforms.

III. Schedule of Activities/ Gantt chart

