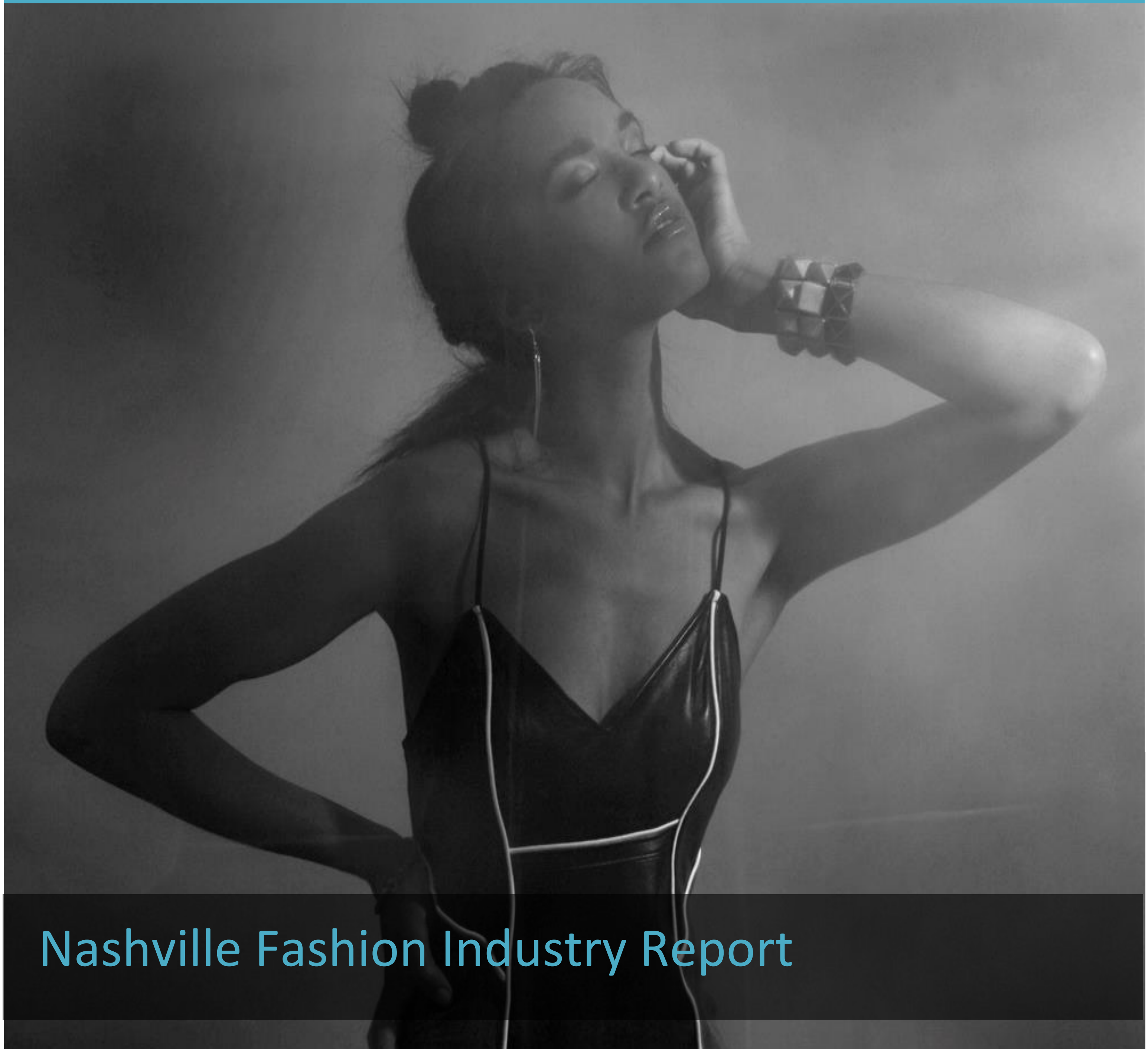


Nashville Fashion Industry Report

"There's a philosophy – a philosophy that I believe in whole-heartedly – that the most successful cities of the 21st century will be cities that attract the best human capital – people who are smart, creative, and entrepreneurial. As I said earlier, those are the people who drive innovation and industry. Their ideas and energy create jobs and grow the economy. They keep our city vibrant."

Mayor Karl Dean, 2013 State of Metro Address

April 2014

Executive Summary

Many Nashvillians were inspired by Abby White's article *Does Nashville have what it takes to sustain a viable Fashion Industry?* in the Nashville Scene last year prior to Nashville Fashion Week 2013. Abby was intrigued by Richard Florida's *Atlantic Cities* article from September 2012 naming Nashville 4th in the Top 20 US Metro Areas for Fashion Designers. From her interviews with fashion industry and arts professionals, she identified potential solutions for a sustainable fashion industry:

- Incubator program that provides mentorship, feedback, resources, education
- Solid business planning
- Small-scale production resources
- Advocacy and exposure
- Access to capital

Her article postulated that, clearly we have the creative talent, but need the necessary infrastructure designed to support and grow the local fashion industry. And as Jen Cole, Director of Metro Arts Commission, said in the article, "We know how to do this." The Entrepreneur Center is a clear example of "if you build an eco-system, they will come," success. The focus and cohesion that the Health Care Council, Technology Council, and the Music Council have brought to their respective industries in Nashville is immeasurable.

The work that the Metro Arts Commission, The Arts & Business Council, and others are doing to help attract and retain creative artists and makers to our city is impactful. If we want to take the fashion industry to a world-class level on par with our reputation for music, health care, and technology, we need focused initiatives and execution accountability within a central organization – a Fashion Council. ***We are the only city in the Top 5 on Richard Florida's Top Metro areas for fashion without a Fashion Council or Incubator*****.** Abby's article provided the anecdotal feedback, but a group of industry leaders recognized data was needed to attract public/private partnerships that would support and sustain any formal initiatives. The results from an industry survey data affirm the needs Abby identified in her article.

Cohesive Advocacy and Idea Sharing

Our fashion community, much like our music community, is a very tight-knit group and very supportive of one another. There is some degree of competition, which is good; competition encourages everyone to "up their game." But they're also quick to share knowledge, resources, and collaborate. They embody the concept "a rising tide lifts all boats."

Much of this is accomplished informally, without the focus that a central body could provide. Over 75% of our survey respondents indicated that "Networking Opportunities" is the greatest need for the future of their business. The Fashion Council would formalize a cooperative process that advocates for Nashville fashion on an international scale (i.e. buyer showrooms in New York and Los Angeles), provides trade available resources like material sourcing or small-scale production, and facilitates experienced mentorship.

Nashville Fashion Week, now in its 4th year, has helped to raise the profile of the local and regional fashion industry dramatically. The five-day event presents the collections of local, regional, and national designers. NFW also includes a day of Industry Panels designed to educate local industry professionals. International fashion industry icons like Fern Mallis and Johanna Stout are attending this year's NFW to impart their wisdom and experience. The proceeds from NFW benefit the Nashville Fashion Forward Fund, which presents a monetary award to an annual recipient with ties to Middle Tennessee. This is an "all volunteer" event, which presents a resource challenge. Despite the challenges, this group has raised almost $100,000 for the NFFF. With the resources of a cohesive Fashion Council, NFW has the potential to grow into a world-class advocacy event for Nashville fashion.

Education & Incubation for Fashion Companies

When you cross that line of wanting to make a living from your art, you have to understand and apply business principles, while maintaining your creative vision; a challenge for many creative makers. Over 50% of our survey respondents indicated they had not received any business training while earning their degrees. Ironically, they also responded that the majority of their time is spent on business activities – management, production, sourcing, business development, etc. Further, over 51% indicated that additional business training was a key need for the future of their business.

The Periscope Program, a six-week "boot camp" developed in partnership by the Arts & Business Council, the Nashville Entrepreneur Center, Metro Arts and the Nashville Chamber is designed to fill this gap, not just for the fashion industry, but also for creative makers of all kinds. While this is a helpful foundation, the fashion industry needs mentors, feedback, and other resources to understand how to scale their designs, the best solutions for manufacturing, and the impact of differing retail/sales models. There are nuances to the fashion industry, just as there are to health care or music, that are important to understand if you are to be successful.

O'More College of Design is a four-year, not-for-profit institution offering Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in Fashion Design, Fashion Merchandising, Graphic Design, Interactive Design. O'More strives to prepare students to cultivate a life-long pattern of critical thinking, and to become responsible citizens in the ever-evolving world of design. While there are five additional accredited programs offering fashion or fashion related degrees, O'More College is the only institution dedicated to design.

"Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the ski, in the street, fashion has to do with the way we live, what is happening."
COCO CHANEL

Over 81% of our survey respondents favored a local incubator initiative defined as "a program designed to support the successful development of entrepreneurial companies through an array of support resources and services." An additional 18% felt an incubator could "possibly" benefit our local fashion industry. When asked about necessary attributes of an incubator, they responded:

- 90% Networking on a national/global level
- 78% Networking on a local level
- 73% Assistance with investors or funding sources
- 71% Training and development of business skills
- 56% Shared production facilities
- 53% Access to workspace
- 30% Shared back-end assistance

Of course, the "gold standard" of fashion incubator programs is the CFDA's {Incubator} program managed by Johanna Stout. Their mission is to help grow and sustain the business of the 10 participating brands over the course of the two-year program. The CFDA {Incubator} strives to provide a creative professional environment to foster promising fashion talent, and help selected designers grow and sustain their business. By offering low-cost design and studio space, business mentoring, educational seminars, and networking opportunities, the program provides a way for participants to reach their full potential and become an integral part of the New York Fashion community. Past participants include internationally recognized brands like Billy Reid, Prabal Gurung, and Public School NYC.

From Women's Wear Daily, January 22, 2014, "Macy's, in collaboration with the cities of Philadelphia, San Francisco and Chicago; academic institutions including The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania; industry organizations, and apparel firms, provides a select group of designers with work space and guidance for a year. They're mentored; take business courses, and meet industry experts who can help in various facets of the business, from marketing and manufacturing to establishing business plans. The Macy's fashion incubators program started at Macy's State Street flagship in Chicago in 2008, grew to Macy's Philadelphia and Macy's San Francisco a few years ago, and will be expanded to other major cities, according to company officials." Although Macy's has yet to buy merchandise from any of their incubator designers, that doesn't seem to be their goal. According to Macy's CEO Terry Lundgren, the goal is to help them "find their way." "They have the ideas and the talent but not necessarily the ability to make things happen," Lundgren added. "We provide them with the exposure and the tools. After a year, they've got to move on

> ***"Music and fashion have had a kind of incestuous relationship since the Fifties. It started with people like Elvis Presley and pop icons like James Dean. Then it exploded in the MTV days. Now, with the internet, it's instantaneous."***
>
> **JOHN VARVATOS**

With over 65% of survey respondents indicating that access to funding opportunities is a key need for the future of their business, we need to also educate fashion business entrepreneurs on the availability of capital resources and investors on the structure of the fashion business. The various forms of external funding are tricky for any entrepreneur. Education on building an investable company, when one is ready for outside investment, what resources are available, etc. will not only aid the fashion industry, but can also attract more investors to this space.

Conclusions

In the late 1950's its peers in Los Angeles and New York did not take the Nashville music industry so seriously, and so it is for the fashion industry today. Visionaries like Chet Atkins, The Bradleys, Wesley Rose, Frances Preston, and others came together to create their own music industry force in Nashville by starting publishing companies, building world-class studios, and supporting a creative community of talent like no other in the world. They differentiated Nashville as the creative heartbeat of the music business, while focusing on building a business infrastructure to support the on-going economic vitality that supplied cohesiveness for this creative talent. They built a home for their family.

Nashville has successfully re-branded its "Music City" image to represent not just Country Music (although we're very proud of that heritage), but to also represent the deep and broad diversity of music and art originating from our creative class. It's now time to amend the "cowboy boots and hat" fashion label associated with the "Music City" brand, and showcase the immense diversity of fashion talent that emanates from Nashville and the surrounding areas. One only needs to read any of the many articles proclaiming Nashville as the new "it" metropolitan area to see this potential.

While no shortage of creative talent and successful fashion brands in our area, there is no cohesive infrastructure to support the economic development of Nashville's fashion industry. Our survey data clearly affirms the need, but more research is needed to clarify the mission, scope, operating plan, and execution details of a Fashion Council.

2014 Nashville Fashion Industry Survey Analysis

Methodology

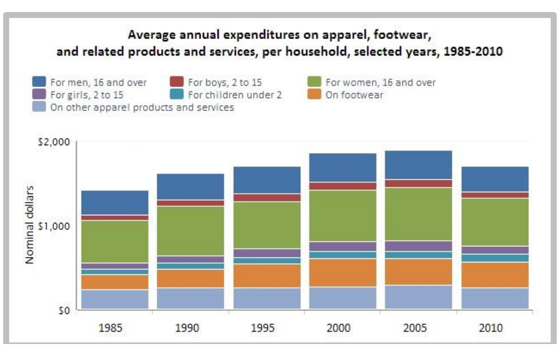
In order to compile the data for this report, relevant secondary data was collected from sources such as the U.S. Census, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Nashville Chamber of Commerce. Primary data was collected through an online survey that was created and sent out to industry members by partners including the Arts and Business Council, Nashville Fashion Week, and O'More College. A list of questions was created based on similar studies that have been performed throughout the country. These questions were then presented to a committee with extensive knowledge of the local industry and edited to reflect our unique community. Once the survey was completed, it was sent out to approximately 1000 industry professionals via electronic mail. Data from the survey comes from participants who completed the survey over a period of nearly 3 months, with most respondents completing the survey during January of 2014. After the survey was initially sent out, it was edited, so some respondents did not have access to all questions. This is reflected and accounted for in the results.

National Fashion Industry

The United States fashion industry is a $331 Billion industry that makes up 28% of the global fashion industry[13]. With the decline of the United States economy, the national fashion industry has seen similar declines since 2005. A study performed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2010 shows declining growth in multiple areas of the nationwide industry[5].

Consumers

In 2010, consumers spent approximately $1700 per household on apparel and shoes, with apparel for women over 16 being the largest category. After peaking in 2005, consumer spending has declined over the past five years, as shown in the figure below.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

After declining in the 2000's, consumer prices have remained fairly steady, showing slight increases around 2010. With so many retailers selling apparel, footwear, and accessories, buyer power can be seen as fairly large. However, buyers looking for specific or customized items are often willing to pay a premium, so in certain sectors of the high-end, luxury fashion market, consumer power may not be as high.

Design

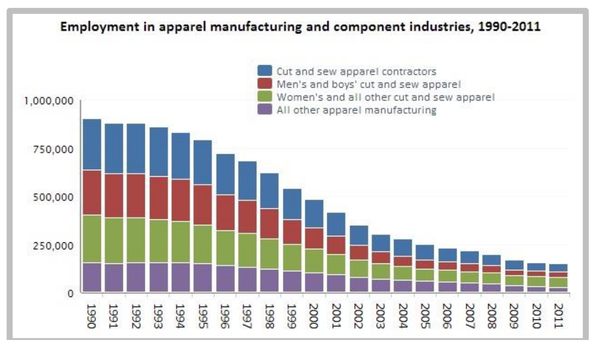
As of 2010, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 16, 010 fashion designers employed in the United States with a mean wage of $73,930, which is higher than most other occupations. As expected, 75% of US fashion designers are concentrated in California or New York. The mean wage for fashion designers nationwide ranges from approximately $44,100 in Virginia to $80,650 in New York and Maine. Design employment is predicted to decline by 3% in the future[10].

Suppliers

Overall, suppliers in general have seen declines in employment in the past 20 years, and this decline is projected to continue for at least the next 10 years[5]. Suppliers of the fashion industry appear to have little power with so much outsourcing occurring and constant demand from retailers and consumers.

Manufacturing

As seen in the figure below, employment in manufacturing has seen significant declines in the past 2 decades and is projected to continue to decline over the next 10 years.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Over the past decade, the average size of manufacturing firms has declined with manufacturing firms experiencing an average of 323 mass layoffs per year between 1996 and 2011. In addition, many companies have begun to outsource manufacturing overseas, in order to cut costs and increase efficiency[11]. Number of hours worked has also decreased, while productive output has increased for many apparel and textile manufacturers. Labor costs have remained fairly consistent throughout the past several decades since technology and efficiency improves enough to offset increased wages. Of the manufacturing firms left, the majority is still concentrated on the east side of the country. However, both Los Angeles and New York City still have a large number of firms. A few firms have decided to bring jobs back to the United States, with around 1000 jobs being created as of 2013[12].

Wholesale and Retail Trade

Employment in the wholesale trade has remained fairly steady nationwide, with the exception being a decline in men's and boys' clothing. Employment in retail stores declined in many areas between 1990 and 2011, such as luggage, men's and women's apparel, and footwear. However, employment in children's clothing, beauty, and family apparel stores showed an overall increase. Family clothing and apparel stores were hit hard by the recession though, with a 17.2% loss of jobs since 2007.

Competition

Competition is high in the much of the apparel industry. For small-scale designers and companies, there are fairly low barriers to entry, while there are also many substitutes available to buyers with relatively low or nonexistent switching costs. E-commerce, such as Amazon.com presents heavy competition to retailers, while the relatively low cost of capital increases threat of entry for fashion designers, small boutiques, and small fashion-related companies, such as photographers, bloggers, stylists, and pattern makers.

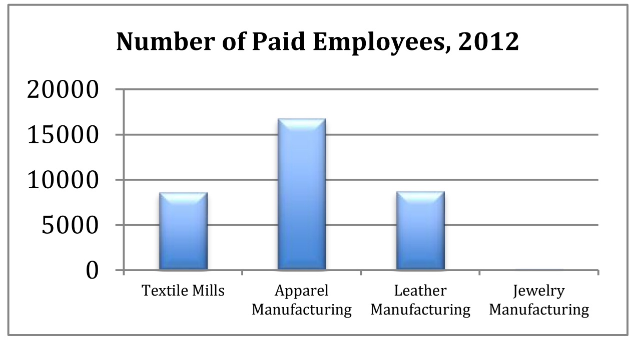
Tennessee Fashion Industry

Design & Merchandising

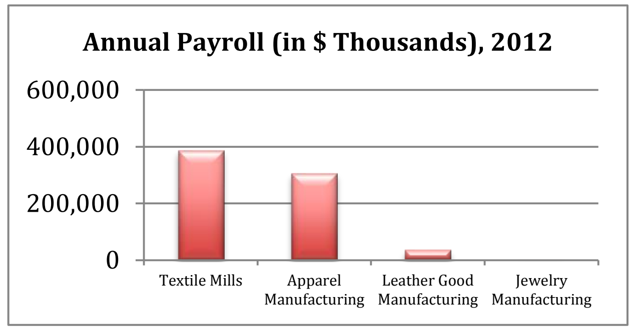
As of 2013, Tennessee currently had 130 fashion design jobs, concentrated in the Middle Tennessee area. The median wage was $22.12 per hour with earnings ranging from $16.86 per hour in the 10th percentile to $29.99 per hour in the 90th percentile. 43% of designers reported having a Bachelor's degree, while 49% had an Associate's Degree or less. Employment for fashion designers is projected to grow by 2.9% in the throughout the next 10 years, which is in contrast to the nationwide employment outlook, a decline of 3.1%[3]. According to educationews.org, there are currently 35,740 employees in fashion merchandising in Nashville, with average salary of $52,120.

Manufacturing

The state of Tennessee had a total of 622 manufacturing firms related to the fashion industry in 2012. This includes 171 textile mills, 361 apparel manufacturing firms, and 90 leather good and jewelry manufacturing establishments. The establishments had over 34,000 paid employees with apparel manufacturing as the largest employer. Overall, firms reported spending over $728 million in annual payroll in 2012[6].



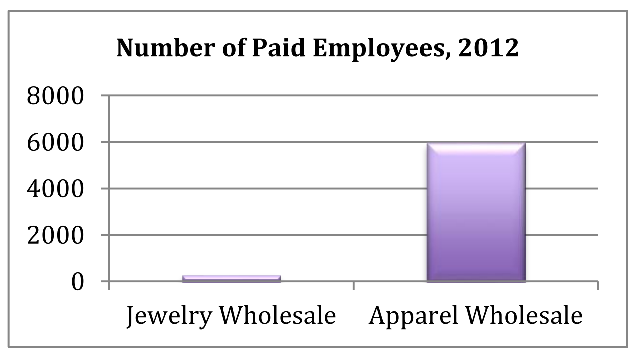
Source: U.S. Census



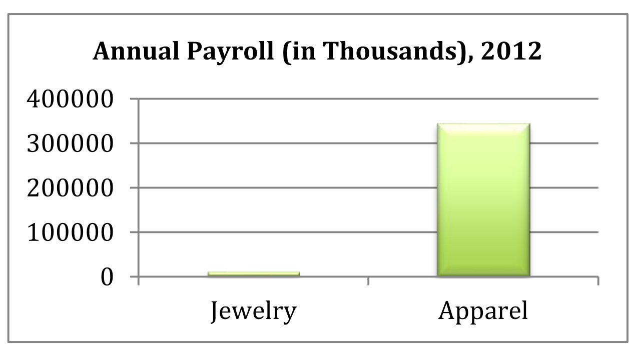
Source: U.S. Census

Wholesale

There were 279 wholesale establishments in Tennessee in 2012, 220 of which were apparel wholesalers with the remaining 59 identifying as jewelry wholesalers. Overall, wholesalers had over 6200 employees with an annual payroll of over $355 Million[6].



Source: U.S. Census



Source: U.S. Census

Retail

There were over 7800 clothing store establishments in Tennessee employing over 89,000 individuals in 2012. Retail clothing stores were by far the largest fashion-related employer with over $1.3 Billion dollars spent on payroll in 2012[6]. Apparel and clothing retail establishments generated over $1.4 Billion in revenue in January-June of 2013[7].

Education

Middle Tennessee has six accredited programs offering fashion or fashion-related degrees[9]. These institutions range from offering Associate's to Bachelor's Degrees in Fashion Design and Merchandising, with O'More College of Design being the only institution dedicated to design. One opportunity for growth is continuing to work with local colleges to implement business training into their design curriculum, ensuring that graduates not only have creativity and design skills, but also the ability to successfully manage their careers (educationnews.org cite). The local community seems to have a positive relationship with some of these colleges, reporting that they often hire interns through them.

Strengths and Opportunities

In 2012, the state of Tennessee ranked highly nationally in employment in various sectors of the fashion industry.

- 5th in Apparel Manufacturing
- 9th in Textile Mills
- 15th in Leather Manufacturing
- 15th in Clothing Retail Stores

Local designers and professionals may not be aware of the numerous resources available to them throughout the state of Tennessee. Richard Florida also named Nashville the 4th Best Large Metro for Fashion Designers. In *The Atlantic Cities.* In addition, several large retailers have distribution centers in Tennessee including Macy's, Gap, Wal-Mart, and Nike.

Challenges and Weaknesses

Tennessee lacks any large headquarters for major apparel retailers. In addition, the most common resources and challenges reported by industry professionals were availability of business training, networking, skilled employees, and funding. Without an established infrastructure, these resources are difficult to find, although they seem to exist.

Primary Research

Participants

Overall, the survey had a total of 97 participants, or a 9.7% response rate. Not every participant answered every question, so results show only the answers of those participants that answered a particular question. Most questions had a response rate of 70+ participants, so overall trends should reflect the opinions of the majority of participants[9].

Demographic Information

Several questions were asked to create an aggregate demographic profile of the survey respondents. As shown in Figure 1, 84.4% of the participants surveyed were female, while 15.6% of participants were male.

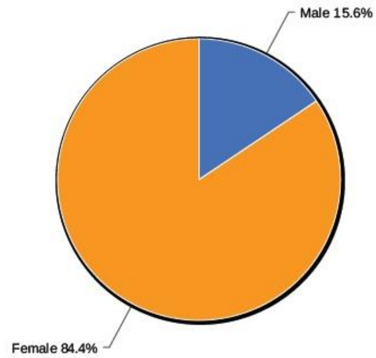


Figure 1: Gender of Survey Participants

As shown in Figure 2, the majority of participants were over the age of 25, with only 10.8% identifying as 25 or younger. The largest percentage of respondents was aged 26-49.

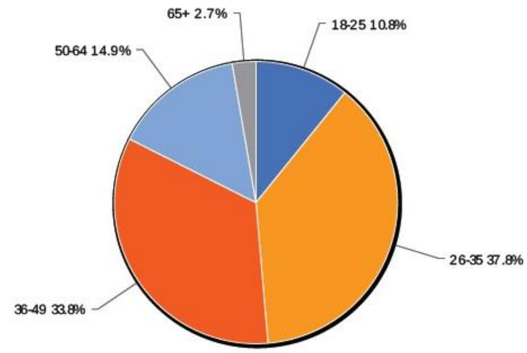


Figure 2: Age of Survey Participants

As seen in Figure 3, the majority of participants self-identified as Caucasian. No participants identified as Hispanic or Asian/Pacific Islander.

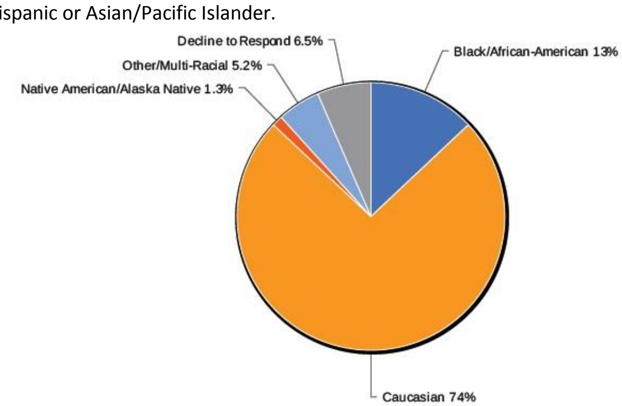


Figure 3: Ethnicity/Race of Participants

Many participants chose to not self-identify their revenue or employment profiles. Of those that did, 51 participants reported having 0-24 employees, while only 4 reported having 25 or more. When looking at revenue demographics, only 11 participants reported specific revenues, which ranged from below $1500 to multi-million dollar amounts. More participants did choose to report their income from the fashion industry when given a range of options, which will be discussed in a later section.

Survey Results

Aside from demographic information, the survey asked 16 questions with space for additional comments. The following results sections detail the quantitative results of the survey questions.

Business Activities

As seen in Figure 4, over half of the participants surveyed earned income outside of fashion-related activities. This is important, as these individuals may not be captured in government census data, as they may report other occupations. Figure 5 looks further into fashion-industry related income and shows that 81.3% of participants earn $60,000 or less from fashion-related activities. This figure represents a large opportunity for further growth of small businesses in Tennessee.

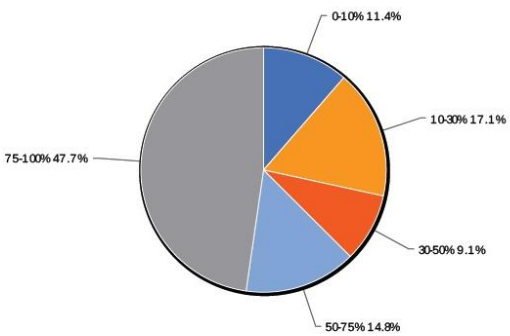


Figure 4: Percentage of Annual Income Related to the Fashion Industry

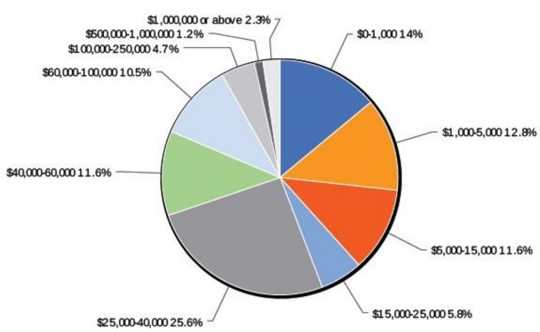


Figure 5: Annual Income from Fashion-Related Activities

Participants were then asked about the day-to-day breakdown of their fashion-related activities and given a wide variety of areas to choose from. Analysis was performed on number of respondents that selected an activity, as well as average percentage of time that participants spent on an activity. The activities with more than 25 respondents were management, apparel design, manufacturing, marketing, support activities, such as photography and styling, event planning, and technology. The activities with an average daily time spent of over 20% were management, manufacturing, buying and inventory, store retail, customer service, consulting, and support activities.

As many of our participants have or need staff within their companies, they were asked to identify the top 3 staffing challenges. As shown in Figure 6, 52.4% chose finding skilled employees, while 41.7% are unable to hire employees because of lack of funding. In addition, participants were asked if they planned to maintain, expand, outsource, or downsize several positions – management, design, manufacturing, sourcing/supply chain, buying/merchandising, marketing/sales, and retail. The majority of participants hoped to expand or maintain all of the positions within their company. Notable expansion plans include 48.2% planned to expand marketing, while 28.8% plan to expand retail. Most participants did not plan to outsource or downsize positions, although 7.5% plan to outsource manufacturing, while 5.1% plan to outsource their supply chain and sourcing activities.

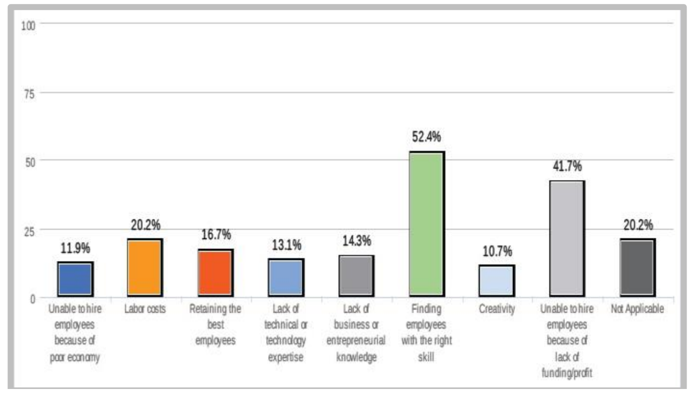


Figure 6: Top 3 Staffing Challenges

Training and Education

Participants were asked several questions regarding education and training in the fashion industry. First, participants reported on the educational attainment required by themselves or their companies for several positions – management, design, manufacturing, sourcing/supply chain, logistics/distribution, buying/merchandising, marketing/sales, and retail. Responses varied across categories. For most categories, the highest percentage of participants required a Bachelor Degree for each position. Notable exceptions to this included design, in which 27.5% required a Fashion School or Certificate Program education in contrast to 24.6% who required a Bachelor Degree, and retail in which 28.4% required only a high school education. When asked about their own education and training, 50.6% did not receive any business training in their education programs, while 31.3% had received business training, as seen in Figure 7.

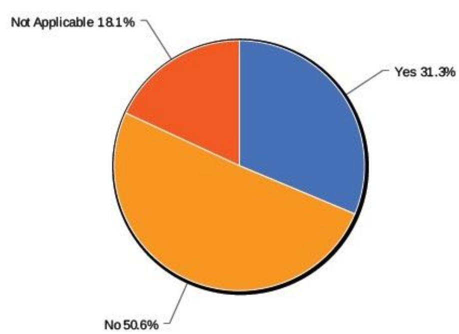


Figure 7: Participants who Received Business Skills Training during their Education

Participants were then surveyed regarding various training programs for themselves or their company – On the job training, in-house workshops, workshops through outside providers, online programs, college programs, and trade organizations and seminars. Approximately one-third to one-half of participants reported that they did not have any training available to them. The activities that most participants planned to take advantage of were online programs at 40.8%, trade organizations and seminars at 35.6%, and workshops through outside providers at 31.5%. Participants had taken advantage of many of the activities in the past with on the job training, workshops, and trade organizations and seminars as the most popular activities. We surveyed participants regarding the educational and employment resources throughout the greater Nashville area and found that 40.5% employ or recruit Nashville fashion students and 37.5% offer student internships. However, in every category surveyed, over half of the respondents either do not have access to resources or are not currently using them but plan to. Notable responses include 40.3% do not have job placement programs available to them and 31.2% are unable to recruit out-of-area students.

Growth and Future

Our final section of the survey related to the future of Nashville's fashion industry. Participants were given a wide variety of categories and asked to select what they considered to be key needs, with no limit on number of selections. The categories which were chosen by over half of the respondents include additional business training, funding opportunities, regional manufacturing. As Figure 8 shows, networking opportunities was the key need selected by the highest number of participants at 75.6%.

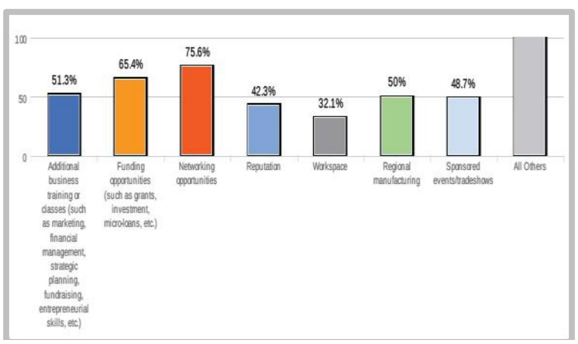


Figure 8: Key Needs for Nashville's Fashion Industry

The final questions of the survey related to a potential incubator. Several examples of organizations funding incubators are CFDA, Macy's, and the Trampery in the UK. For the purposes of this survey, an incubator was defined as "a program designed to support the successful development of entrepreneurial companies through an array of business support resources and services." 81% of participants favored a local incubator in the Nashville area, while 17.9% felt that it could possibly benefit the Nashville Fashion industry, as seen in Figure 9.

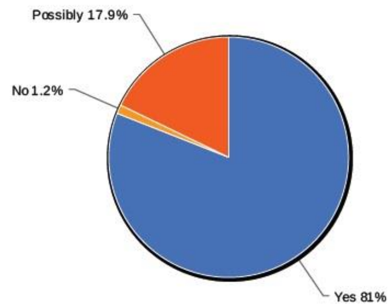


Figure 9: Participants Attitudes toward a Local Incubator

In addition, participants were asked what attributes they would like to see in a local incubator, and while nearly all of the categories had over 50% positive response rates, the top categories as shown in Figure 10 were networking in the local community, networking in the national community, training and development of business skills, and assistance with finding investors and funding.

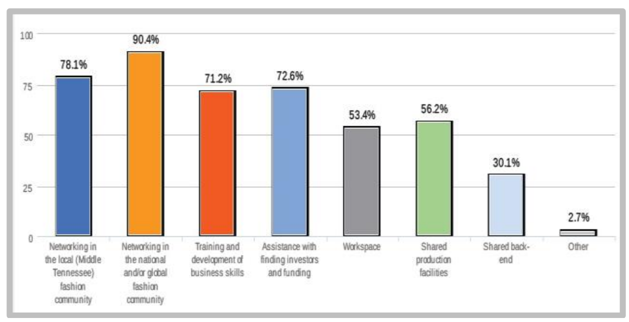


Figure 10: Attributes that Participants would want to see in a Local Incubator

Thank You and Acknowledgements

The driving force behind this report has been a group of forward-thinking individuals throughout the Nashville fashion and arts community. These individuals have taken note of the creative potential of the city and hope to solve many of the challenges facing the local industry. We would like to thank all of the individuals who have provided assistance throughout this process, particularly our survey participants, whose feedback has been paramount to creating this report. We would also like to thank the following individuals for their help in the creation of this report.

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Cover photo courtesy of Amanda Valentine

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Further Information Regarding Incubators
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Macy's:http://www.chicagofashionincubator.org/,http://www.fashionincubatorsf.org/, http://www.philadelphiafashionincubator.com/
The Trampery: http://www.thetrampery.com/