

The MTN Durban Fashion Week: What?

Is the MTN Durban Fashion week really about being a platform for emerging designers or is it just entertainment for fashionistas?

Working as a brand marketer, I have been privileged to come in contact with a good few Durban-based fashion designers over the period 2006 - 2007.

These guys run all over the show showcasing their designs. They are used and abused in very lowkey events that offer no real value or sustenance beyond the actual event. That is forgivable.

However, when you have a fashion event of monumental proportions that is hosted by the wife of a top movie producer and financed by a multi-billion rand telecoms giant.. one should at least see some of the money or the credibility trickle down to the participating designers. MTN Durban Fashion Week has been running for a good few years now, and a reasonable number of designers that have been part of this event are nowhere near getting off the ground.

Remember I said that I have had the privilege to get up close with a good few, so I know that these guys really bust their gut trying to outdo each other for Durban Fashion Week. They borrow money to buy fabric and hire machines, employ people they cannot pay and run to and fro trying to get creative work done for nothing (which is where my company assisted). Fashion week comes and goes, and the designers have absolutely nothing to show for it.

I am not in fashion, but being a creative as well; this saddens me greatly. And it begs the question: "Why are we then doing Fashion Week?". Wouldn't it be more beneficial if designers pooled together, take the space of 3 - 4 stalls at the Essenwood Market and sell their wares there on a Saturday?

Or the alternative.. to mimic Paul Simon and start their own version of YDE?

I don't have the answers because I'm not in fashion...but being on the outside looking in gives me a clearer perspective and makes me question what they're doing and where they're going doing that.

And with the hoards of Durban-reared designers now living in other cities - Gavin Rajah and Themba Mngomezulu being prime examples - wouldn't it be more beneficial if someone hosted a fashion event that actually contributed toward nurturing and putting the spotlight on new talent, with the outcome being an increase in media profile and business bottom line??

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