UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

EXPLORING HOW HOPE-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING INFLUENCES ENTREPRENEURIAL PERFORMANCE IN A PRECARIOUS GHANAIAN FASHION INDUSTRY: THE ROLE OF PERSONAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS

BY

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NOVEMBER 2024

DECLARATION

I declare that the content of this thesis is the result of my independent research and has not been used for academic credit elsewhere. All sources of information have been acknowledged, and I take full accountability for any mistakes or limitations.

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CERTIFICATION

We hereby certify that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University.

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DEDICATION

To my Student Companion, whose unconditional love and warmth I have only known in the darkest hour and precarious times in my academic journey. Oh God, to You be all the glory!

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In the year of the Lord, I called upon Him, and He answered me.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION I
CERTIFICATION II
DEDICATION IIII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IV
TABLE OF CONTENT IX
LIST OF TABLES XI
LIST OF FIGURES XII
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS... XIII
ABSTRACT XIV
CHAPTER ONE 1-48
INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Research Background 1
1.1.1 Cultural and creative industries 10
1.1.1 Rethinking Precarityin the Context of Entrepreneurship.................................. 12
1.1.2 Dynamics of the fashion industry 15
1.1.3. Globalisation and the fashion industry in developing countries 15
1.1.4 State of the fashion industry in Africa 16
1.1.5 State of the Ghanaian fashion industry 20
1.1.6 Creative entrepreneurship in the Ghanaian fashion industry 23
1.1.7 Precarity in the Ghanaian fashion industry 23
1.1.8 Decision-Making and Performance in Ghana's Fashion Industry Amid Precarity 24
1.1.9 Precarity and Hope in the Ghanaian Fashion Industry....................................... 32
1.2 Problem Statement 43
1.3 Research Purpose 43
1.4 Research Questions 44
1.5 Research Objectives 45
1.6 Significance of the Study 47
1.7 Chapter Disposition 47
CHAPTER TWO.. 49

INTRODUCTION......49

2.1 Theoretical Framework 50

2.1.1 Theories on precarity and decision-making 50

2.1.2 Neo-institutional theory 70

2.1.2 Theory of Practice......81

2.1.3 Relevance of the Theory of Practice to the current thesis 83

2.1.4 Synthesization of the Theories......87

2.1.5 Theory of Hope......94

2.2 Review of Empirical Studies......94

2.2.1 The role of precarity and hope in entrepreneurs' decision-making......944

2.2.1.1 The role of precarity on hope 113

2.2.1.2 The role of precarity on decsision-making......123

2.2.1.3 The role of precarity on entrepreneurial performance......127

2.2.2 The impact of entrepreneurs' decision-making on entrepreneurial performance 1279

2.2.3 The influence of perceived uncertainity on the relationship between decision-making and performance......132

2.2.4 The influence of taste on the relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and entrepreneurs performance 136

2.2.5 The influence of strife on the relationship between decision-making and performance......139

2.2.6 The influence of intuition on the relationship between decision-making and performance......143

2.2.7 The influence of personal experience on the relationship between decision-making and performance......145

2.2.8 The influence of social networks on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and peroformance......148

2.2.9 The influence of cultural values on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance 151

2.2.10 The influence of cultural intermediaries on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance 151

2.2.11 The influence of resilience on the relationship between decision-making and performance....155

2.3 Conceptual Framework 158

3.0 CHAPTER THREE....159

INTRODUCTION....159

3.1 Research Philosophy....164

3.2 Research Approach 166

3.3 Research Design 168

3.4 Study Population 172

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Technique 1715

3.6 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria 1747

3.7 Sources of Data 179

3.8.1 Scale Development 183

3.8.2 Interview Approach 1825

3.8.4 Types of Interview....188

3.8.3 Interview Guide 195

3.8.4 Expert Piloting 196

3.8.5. Data Processing 202

3.8.6 Data Collection Methods.. 202

3.8.7 Methods of Data Analysis....214

3.8.8 Ethical Issues and Considerations....216

CHAPTER FOUR 217

INTRODUCTION....217

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION 217

4.1. Analysis of Fashion Entrepreneurs' Perceptions in Ghana's Fashion Landscape 217

4.1.1. Interviewees' perceptions of hardships/difficulties in fashion business 223

4.1.2. Interviewees' perceptions of uncertainty in fashion business 228

4.1.3 Interviewees' perceptions of fashion business lacking social support and benefits....233

4.2.Analysis of Entrepreneurs' Perceptions of Setting-up a Fashion Business 233

4.2.1 Interviewees' perceptions of industrial challenges 252

4.2.2 Interviewees' perceptions of Fashion Entrepreneurs' Decision-Making Processes 278

4.2.3 Interviewees' perception of hope in entrepreneurs setting-up fashion business 289
4.3. Analysis of Entrepreneurs' Performance Measures in the fashion industry 291
4.3.1 Navigating precarity in the fashion industry 291
4.3.2 Perceived drivers of success in the fashion industry 322
4.4 Postscript of Analytic Findings and Discussions 341
CHAPTER FIVE 342
QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS 342
5.2 Analysis of the Robustness of the study variables...343
5.2 Analysis of Respondents' Demographic Characteristics 350
5.2.1 Analysis of respondents' gender 353
5.2.2 Analysis of respondents' age 354
5.2.3 Analysis of respondents' educational level 355
5.2.4 Analysis of respondents' years of experience in creative business 356
5.3 Factor Analysis 356
5.4 Principal Component Analysis 362
5.4.1 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' perceived uncertainty 364
5.4.2 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' decision-making 365
5.4.3 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' taste 367
5.4.4 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' intuition 368
5.4.5 Principal component analysis for personal experience 369
5.4.6 Principal component analysis for resilience 370
5.4.7 Principal component analysis for cultural intermediaries 372
5.4.9 Principal component analysis for cultural values 373
5.4.9 Principal component analysis for social network 374
5.4.10 Principal component analysis for strife and competition 37276
5.5 Confirmatory Factor Analysis 379
5.5.1 Assessment of Fitness Model 380
5.5.2 Common Method Bias...381
5.6 Structural Model Analysis...381
5.7. Tests of Hypotheses 397
5.8 Discussion of Key Findings 417
5.9 Postscript Analysis 422

5.10 General Discussion/Triangulation 426

5.11 Chapter Summary 428

CHAPTER SIX 429

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 434

6.1 Summary of Findings 434

6.1.1 Summary of findings from the qualitative analysis 437

6.1.2 Summary of findings from the quantitative analysis 437

6.2 Conclusion 439

6.3 Recommendations 440

6.4 Implications of the Study 446

6.4.1 Theoretical implications 447

6.4.2 Implications for Practice 449

Limitations....452

REFERENCES....495

APPENDIX....512

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Summary of qualitative findings 327

Table 4.2 Summary of qualitative findings 328

Table 5.1 Analysis of the statistical output from the descriptive statistics 344

Table 5.2 Distribution of respondents' gender 351

Table 5.3 Distribution of respondents' age 352

Table 5.4 Distribution of respondents' educational level 353

Table 5.5 Distribution of respondents' years of experience in creative business 355

Table 5.6 Principal component analysis and factor loadings of perceived uncertainty 361

Table 5.7 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' decision-making 363

Table 5.8 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' taste 365

Table 5.9 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' intuition 366

Table 5.10 Principal component analysis for personal experience 368

Table 5.11 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' resilience 369

Table 5.12 Principal component analysis for cultural intermediaries 370

Table 5.13 Principal component analysis for cultural values 371

Table 5.14 Principal component analysis for social network 372

Table 5.15 Principal component analysis for strife/competition 373

Table 5.16 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' performance 375

Table 5.1.7 Confirmatory factor analysis 379

Table 5.18 Assessment of measurement model 380

Table 5.19 Analysis of direct path 383

Table 5.19 Standardised regression weights of the measurement model 388

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework 158

Figure 5.1 Measurement model showing factor loadings 382

Figure 5.2 Finalised Conceptual Model 427

Figure 5.3 Initial Model 513

Figure 5.4 Finalized Model 514

Figure 5.5 Path Diagram 515

LISTS OF PUBLICATIONS

The following papers were presented at various conferences during the course of my study.

1. Fashion Entrepreneurs' Experiences of Hope in a Ghanaian Precarious Creative Industry.

2. The Dysfunctional Systems of Creative Entrepreneurship in Ghana.

3. Beyond Fashion Consumption: Mapping Functional Roles of Industrial Psychologists Role in Sustainable Practices in the Fashion Industry

4. Humane Entrepreneurship in the Creative Fashion Industry: Role of Entrepreneurs' Intuition on Entrepreneurial Decision-Making and Performance.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to examine how precarious work environment influence the use of hope in decision-making and its consequentially effect on entrepreneurs' performance. Specifically, the study explores the role of hope in navigating uncertain working conditions and decision-making among Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs, drawing on Neo-institutional theory and the theory of practice. The study collected qualitative and quantitative data from fashion entrepreneurs to gain a comprehensive understanding of their decision-making processes and entrepreneurial performance. As none of the research methods are without weakness it is argued that their integration offset the weaknesses of each, thereby offering a deeper understanding of the factors underpinning decision-making and performance of Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs. The findings highlight nine key factors significantly influencing decision-making and entrepreneurial performance namely: perceived uncertainty, intuition, taste, experience, resilience, cultural intermediaries, cultural values, social networks, and strife. The results revealed that perceived uncertainty, taste, experience, cultural intermediaries, competition, and cultural values did not significantly influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. However, decision-making itself directly and significantly impacted performance, with resilience emerging as a key mediating factor in this relationship. These include deliberate strategies and subtle practices that emerge from industry dynamics, such as hope, trend-following, leveraging relational infrastructure, and adherence to institutional pressures. Based on the findings, the study recommends that policymakers recognise and leverage context-specific resources—particularly hope and resilience—as strategic assets that enable entrepreneurs to persevere, adapt, and thrive amidst limited institutional support, informality, and precarity. These internal capabilities should be integrated into entrepreneurship support programmes, training initiatives, and policy frameworks to strengthen entrepreneurial capacity in resource-constrained environments.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter opens with an introduction to the research background, followed by an in-depth discussion of the problem statement and the purpose of the study. It then outlines the research objectives and questions, emphasises the study's significance, and concludes with a summary of the chapter disposition.

1.1 Research Background

Researchers have studied cultural and creative industries for decades in different disciplines, including sociology, geography, media, political science, economics, and management (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2015). Many scholars have reflected on and researched different aspects of the cultural and creative industries, and this has yielded some interesting findings (Langevang & Gough, 2012; De Beukelaer, 2017; Langevang, 2017; Steedman, 2017; Alacovska et al., 2021; Belfiore, 2022; Darkwah et al., 2022; Steedman et al., 2023). These works have produced varied insights into the distinctive dynamics within the cultural and creative industry. For many of these scholars, workers and entrepreneurs in the artistic and creative sector navigate a landscape increasingly characterized by temporality, uncertainty, insecurity, and precarious employment (McRobbie, 2016; Thieme, 2018; Alacovska et al., 2021).

A consensus among scholars in the creative arts sector is that there is a high degree of precarity in this industry, and this affects the decision-making of stakeholders (Farr-Wharton et al., 2015; Sandoval, 2016; Clarke et al., 2019) and entrepreneurial performance (Zayadin et al., 2023). Most policy-oriented discourses on creativity have adopted a guiding philosophy of the creative industry as intrinsically self-actualising and meritocratic (Arvidsson et al., 2010; Gurova et al., 2018; Can, 2021; Julier, 2021).

In the entrepreneurial literature, entrepreneurs who seize opportunities and thrive are those characterized by risk-taking, innovation, resourcefulness, and, in some cases, resilience (Kerr et al., 2017; Kerr et al., 2019). Researchers agree that the level of precarity in the creative arts industry requires entrepreneurs to demonstrate fortitude amid tumultuous conditions in anticipation of future luck and opportunities (Alacovska, 2018; Endrissat et al., 2018; Steedman et al., 2022). Further exploration of the entrepreneurial literature reveals that there is a misplaced perception which feeds the illusion that creative entrepreneurs have a comfortable lifestyle, reflected in success, which is often marketed as a "from rags to riches story" (McRobbie, 1998, 2003; Bengsch et al., 2019). In the cultural and creative sector, the reality often involves individual entrepreneurs navigating a relentless series of challenging and unpredictable workplace conditions stemming from the industry's inherent precarity (Alacovska, 2018; Lee, 2018).

The evolving labour landscape in creative industries where autonomy and entrepreneurialism are celebrated but coexist with growing job insecurity, portfolio careers, and short-term, project-based contracts is often seen as a reflection of broader shifts in employment relations (Haynes et al., 2018). As these changes unfold, the position of creative workers is becoming more evident. Historically, many in the creative fields have prioritised creativity, artistic expression, and innovation, often perceiving these values as incompatible with entrepreneurship's commercial and profit-driven aspects. Many creatives, often shy away from the label of "entrepreneur" due to the stigma associated with entrepreneurship (Lindvall, 2011). However, the landscape is slowly changing. An increasing number of creatives are beginning to recognise that blending creativity with entrepreneurship does not mean sacrificing artistic values.

Research frequently highlights that many creative entrepreneurs, especially in the global North, claim to place personal expression, innovation, or social impact above monetary gain (Langevang et al., 2012; Essig, 2015). This view implies a reluctance to fully embrace the entrepreneurial identity, as many creatives worry it could undermine the authenticity or integrity of their work. They tend to view entrepreneurship as synonymous with commercialism, implying a prioritisation of profit over artistic expression (Banks et al., 2016; Haynes et al., 2018). This perception creates significant tension in their careers. The notion of "reluctant entrepreneurs" in creative industries often describes individuals who pursue their craft with artistic or cultural motives, rather than a primary focus on profit (Hyanes et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, this study introduces a contrasting perspective with the idea of "resolute entrepreneurs," individuals who are not only comfortable with but also actively strategic about the pursuit of profit. Creative entrepreneurs in the global North and South may be seen as "resolute" in this way, yet their approaches to monetary success often diverge due to cultural, economic, and structural differences. For instance, creative entrepreneurs in the global North may view profit as a means to sustain creative independence, fund innovation, and expand their brand reach, often balancing commercial success with artistic recognition.

Meanwhile, in the global South, fashion entrepreneurs often see profit as essential for survival and growth in competitive markets. With limited funding sources and less formal industry support, many creative entrepreneurs must rely on profit-driven strategies to gain financial independence, increase brand visibility, and support their communities economically. Here, monetary success may not just signify personal achievement but a pathway to stability, socio-economic influence, and cultural preservation.

In the global South, where creative industries are increasingly seen as a "goldmine" for economic growth and cultural influence, this tension between creativity and entrepreneurship takes on unique dimensions. Creative practitioners in regions such as Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia are navigating a rapidly evolving landscape where their work has immense potential not only for personal gain but also for national and regional development (Scott, 2012). In these regions, the creative sector is becoming a valuable driver of employment, cultural identity, and economic resilience (Rogerson, 2006; UNESCO, 2013).

1.1.1 Cultural and creative industries

Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) have become vital to many economies (OECD, 2018). The creative economy encompasses knowledge-based activities that give rise to these industries, spanning areas like advertising, architecture, artisanal works, fashion design, film-making, photography, performing arts, music, publishing, research and development, software, video games, electronic publishing, television, and radio (UNCTAD, 2018).

Recognised as an "increasingly significant source of wealth and employment" (Hesmondhalgh, 2008), cultural and creative industries generated revenues of USD 2.25 trillion in 2013 alone and employed 29 million people globally (Cultural Times, 2015; Domenech et al., 2021). The sector has contributed approximately 7% to global GDP and has experienced an annual growth rate of 10% (UNDP, 2013; UNESCO, 2013). In 2014, Africa's dynamic cultural and creative sector generated an impressive $4.2 billion annually, highlighting its significant economic impact. Various sub-sectors, including film, music, and visual arts, played essential roles in this achievement, showcasing the region's rich talent and cultural vibrancy (EY, 2015).

In 2016, the African Development Bank (AfDB) estimated that the value of Africa's cultural and creative industries (CCIs) could reach USD 15.5 billion over the next five years (AfDB, 2016). UNESCO's 2021 report underscores the substantial yet underdeveloped potential of Africa's film and audio-visual sectors, highlighting the issues of under funding and limited infrastructure that restrict the sector's growth. These sectors employ approximately five million people, yet they contribute about $5 billion to the continent's gross domestic product (GDP). In Ghana, for example, UNESCO estimates that cultural and creative industries (CCIs) contribute around 1.53% to the national GDP, primarily from formal and private sector activities. This figure emphasizes the importance of targeted support and investment to elevate CCIs across African nations and fully realise their economic potential. Beyond the economic impact, CCIs diversify economies, promote well-being, expand indigenous creative industries (OECD, 2018), and provide more employment opportunities for women, particularly in developing nations (Ernst et al., 2015). This sector has also attracted significant policy-oriented research and projects funded by governments and donor organisations, aiming to deepen understanding of the creative economy (Pratt et al., 2009; Vlassis, 2021).

Policy discussions on the cultural and creative industries reveal that whilst the labour force is growing steadily, their working conditions have become more unstable, unpredictable and insecure (Lee, 2018; McRobbie, 2018; Hacker, 2019; Steedman et al., 2022). Researchers have also revealed that despite CCIs increasing contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and is widely acknowledged as an essential entrepreneurial activity for innovation, job and wealth creation (Hesmondhalgh etal., 2010; Hesmondhalgh, 2015). Despite the growing number of creative actors, the existing empirical findings must reflect the fundamental individual predicaments within the sector (Alacovksa, 2018; Cook et al., 2019; Comunian et al., 2020).

Precarity has emerged as an enduring aspect of entrepreneurship, especially in the global South, where socioeconomic conditions often create unstable, unpredictable working environments (Scully, 2016; Deshingkar, 2019). This widespread precarity can be largely attributed to the effects of capitalism, globalisation, and neoliberalism. Capitalism, by nature, emphasizes profit and efficiency, which often leads to labour conditions marked by insecurity and a lack of protection (Harvey, 2005). This is evident in many entrepreneurial environments where the burden of financial risk falls heavily on the individual, especially in unregulated sectors or those with minimal governmental oversight.

Globalisation further intensifies these conditions by opening markets, increasing competition, and encouraging labour flexibility. This dynamic pressures entrepreneurs in developing countries to compete not only locally but globally, often forcing them into informal economies where protection and income stability are scarce (Appadurai, 1996; Sassen, 2000). In the creative industries, for instance, local entrepreneurs face competition from global media and cultural products from the North, amplifying the precarity as they must adapt to global standards without adequate support.

Neoliberalism compounds this by promoting deregulation and self-responsibility, where state intervention is minimal and social safety nets are limited. This "hands-off" approach forces individuals, especially entrepreneurs, to navigate high-risk markets independently (Giddens, 1998). As a result, precarity becomes a normalised experience, especially in the global South, where entrepreneurial activities are mostly pursued out of necessity rather than choice, creating a disconnect between global economic frameworks and the daily realities of those involved (Barchiesi, 2011; Standing, 2011). These structural frameworks create environments in which the lived experiences of those in precarious work situations are shaped by larger economic and political forces, contributing to ongoing debates in the literature on the disconnect between theoretical perspectives and on-the-ground realities of precarity (Standing, 2014; Murahwa, 2016).

Precarity in the global South has long predated recent globalisation, neoliberal policies, and the economic downturns of the 20th and 21st centuries. Even before the onset of neoliberalism, state-led social assistance programs in many developing countries tended to heighten social and economic instability (Barchiesi, 2011; Scully, 2015). The arrival of neoliberalism, however, intensified these challenges, promoting flexible labour markets, unpaid or temporary work, job insecurity, and limited social protection (Kalleberg, 2009; Herod et al. 2016). Moreover, the precariousness of work and life in the global South has been exacerbated by multiple historical recessions—from those in the 1970s and 1980s to the financial crises of 2008 (Aryeteey, 2017) and the recent economic fallout from the pandemic (Comunian et al., 2020). Together, these structural changes have continuously impacted labour stability, making precarious employment a persistent reality in these regions.

Harris and Scully (2015) assert that precarity existed long before globalisation in the global South. Over the years, there has been a tendency to employ a simplistic assumption of universal convergence (Spring, 2009; Scully, 2016). Nonetheless, with the upsurge of labour studies from the global South, it is becoming more evident that the nature, meanings ascribed, and implications of precarious employment are different across the global South and global North (Scully, 2016). Hence, the tendency to universalise the cause-and-effect of precarious labour brings its simplistic assumptions of global convergence (Alacovska, 2019; Scully et al.,, 2019). Generally, though all employments in the global South and global North experience some form of precariousness, it is evident that the global South is an illustrative case of precariousness (Gill et al., 2008; Neilson et al., 2008). This phenomenon has defined labour regulation in the South since independence (Scully, 2015; Scully et al., 2022). Similarly, the examination of precarity in the cultural and creative industries in the global South debunks the Eurocentric parochialism of inferring universalistic claims of precarity from the global North to the global South (Scully, 2016; De Beukelaer, 2017; Alacovska, 2019).

Despite the popularity of precarity in the broader cultural and creative industries (Steedman et al., 2022), most of the labour in the global South CCI is experiencing irregular, unstable, unprotected and underpaid jobs (Scully, 2016). However, some considerations have been paid to specific labour industries in the global South (Langevang, 2017). Although all sectors in the cultural and creative industries undergo flexibility, exploitation and insecurity (Brydges, 2016; McRobbie,1998, 2011, 2013, 2016) characterizes the fashion industry as an example of precarious work. Many fashion workers have no formal contracts and little access to the social benefits afforded to permanent workers, leaving the majority and their dependents trapped in a cycle of poverty (IndustriAll, 2013; McRobbie, 2016).

Globally, most fashion entrepreneurs have not experienced stable and secure employment (Comunian et al., 2020), especially in the global South (Langevang, 2017). In this region, where precarity is widespread and deeply impacts everyday life, many individuals are driven to seek work in the informal sector (Gough et al., 2016). To thrive as a fashion entrepreneur in the global South, one must take on multiple roles, from designing and stitching to promoting, advertising, marketing, and distribution (Steedman et al., 2022). This is because most fashion entrepreneurs run their businesses without partners, leaving all responsibilities in the hands of the sole owner (Brydges et al., 2019b). In other parts of the world, where fashion is a major industry, independent professionals rely on collaborations across various sectors, with roles such as designers, stylists, marketers, and gatekeepers working together to meet the growing consumer demand (Aakko et al., 2018; Danso et al., 2018).

As one of the largest sub-sectors within the cultural and creative industries, the fashion industry significantly influences consumer behaviour by determining trends in what people wear (Danso et al., 2018). The term "fashion industry" encompasses more than just the production of clothing; it refers to a business where fabrics are crafted into garments that reflect current styles and individuals' beliefs, values, and cultural expressions (Amankwah et al., 2014). Fashion designers play a critical role in this process by infusing their work with fresh ideas and creativity. They often blend innovation with elements of imitation, drawing inspiration from the work of other designers while adding unique touches to create something new and culturally relevant (Corbellini et al., 2009; Aakko et al., 2018). This continuous exchange of ideas contributes to the dynamic nature of the fashion industry, where trends evolve through a combination of originality and adaptation

1.1.1.1 Rethinking precarity in the context of entrepreneurship

While the concept of precarity has often been used to describe the uncertain and unstable conditions facing workers in cultural and creative industries, it is important to distinguish between the experiences of employees and those of entrepreneurs operating within these contexts. Entrepreneurs, particularly in informal or resource-constrained environments, may indeed encounter significant challenges such as income instability, limited access to capital, or unpredictable demand but these conditions differ fundamentally from the structural vulnerabilities typically faced by employees, such as lack of contracts, job security, or statutory protections (Standing, 2011; Lorey, 2015). Employees in precarious roles often contend with exploitative contracts, limited agency, and constrained bargaining power (Standing, 2011; Kalleberg, 2009). In contrast, entrepreneurs, particularly in informal or creative sectors, face structural precarity such as uncertain income, minimal institutional support, and market volatility but often retain a higher degree of autonomy and opportunity for strategic decision-making (Eikhof et al., 2013; Conor, 2014). Entrepreneurs often enter into precarious industries voluntarily, exercising a degree of autonomy and strategic choice in doing so (Gough et al., 2014). Even when economic necessity plays a role, these individuals actively navigate their environments through adaptive behaviours and calculated risk-taking. Describing them merely as victims of a precarious system or as being trapped in cycles of poverty risks overlooking their agency, entrepreneurial capabilities, and resilience (Williams et al., 2010; Thieme, 2013). These debates provide a conceptual foundation for this study, which explores how entrepreneurs in precarious environments mobilise hope and other psychological resources to navigate uncertainty and pursue performance outcomes. While much of the entrepreneurship literature emphasises individual traits and decision-making under risk, this study builds on more recent perspectives that highlight the sociocultural and contextual dimensions of entrepreneurial agency.

A significant body of entrepreneurship literature has examined how individuals identify and act upon opportunities, often under conditions of uncertainty. Opportunity recognition is central to entrepreneurial activity and is shaped by prior knowledge, alertness, and contextual awareness (Shane et al., 2000; Ardichvili et al., 2003). Closely related is the concept of risk-taking, innovation, and proactiveness (Schumpter et al., 2003) which emphasises the entrepreneur's willingness to make decisions in the face of unpredictable outcomes, distinguishing them from non-entrepreneurs or salaried workers (Knight, 1921; McMullen et al., 2006). However, recent scholarship has moved beyond viewing entrepreneurs as rational actors and instead highlights their embeddedness in social, cultural, and institutional contexts. This shift has brought attention to entrepreneurial agency—not merely as autonomy or choice, but as the capacity to act creatively and strategically within structural constraints (Emirbayer et al., 1998; Welter et al., 2019). These efforts are not passive responses but deliberate actions taken to manage and overcome environmental constraints.

In contexts such as the Ghanaian fashion industry, these dynamics are particularly pronounced. Entrepreneurs operate within environments marked by uncertain market dynamics, institutional fragmentation, and infrastructural limitations (Abimbola et al., 2011; Essers et al., 2013). Yet, rather than being passively constrained by these challenges, they actively demonstrate innovation, form networks of mutual support, and adopt culturally embedded strategies to sustain and grow their ventures (Langevang et al., 2015; Hansen et al., 2021). Hence the study positions hope as both a psychological and relational resource, shaped by and responsive to the structural realities of precarious entrepreneurial contexts. Therefore, this study adopts a more nuanced view of precarity—one that recognises the volatile conditions within which entrepreneurs operate, while also acknowledging the ways they actively engage with, and sometimes reconfigure, these conditions to their advantage. This approach avoids conflating entrepreneurial precarity with that of dependent workers and allows for a more accurate understanding of the entrepreneurial experience in the global South's creative sectors (Lindell, 2010; Lobato et al., 2015).

1.1.2 Dynamics of the fashion industry

The fashion industry involves designing, manufacturing, producing, marketing, and distributing fashion products. It encompasses all aspects of fashion, including accessories (earrings, anklets, belts, watches), bags, clothing, shoes, and the work of flower makers, embroiderers, seamstresses/tailors, stylists, hair stylists, makeup artists, model agents, photographers, and some non-fashion businesses. It includes various niche industries beyond retail, online shops, and the design houses and brands people often associate with fashion (Gu, 2014). Several actors dominate the fashion industry, each carrying out specific roles and depending on one another, either directly or indirectly, to thrive (McRobbie, 2016, 2020). Unlike other cultural and creative industries, fashion must keep pace with rapid changes because fashion items have short product life cycles, and consumer demands often remain unpredictable (Brydges, 2016; McRobbie, 2016; Comunian et al., 2020).

It is one whose defining characteristics include unstable and uncertain consumer demands, tremendous product variety, a wide range of skills, an endless array of options, a limited window for capitalising on new products, and lengthy, rigid supply chains characterise the challenges faced in such industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2012; Bilton et al., 2014; Saintilan et al., 2017). The fashion sector keeps evolving and, like many industries, chiefly those with consumers at the end of the distribution channel, is affected by change, which happens constantly (Franssen et al., 2013; Aspers, 2016). Usually, fashion brands produce multiple collections each year, all of which have individual pieces. Each season (autumn, summer, spring, and winter) has its customer contents, tastes, and preferences, which the business owner will have to adapt to meet the consumers' pressing needs and tastes (Godart et al., 2009; Brydges, 2017).

Despite its diversity, fashion industry players work hard to keep their businesses afloat. The rise of information technology, a critical element of globalisation, has transformed every aspect of the industry, not just retail but also how fashion is created, marketed, and consumed. Before the internet revolution, the fashion industry's market structure revolved around traditional practices like in-person buying and selling, periodic fashion shows, runway events, and the distribution of fashion magazines (McRobbie, 2016).

Fashion entrepreneurs are found throughout Ghana, with a significant concentration in urban and peri-urban areas. Many of these entrepreneurs operate in informal spaces, such as kiosks, containers, or the verandas and porches of their homes (Langevang, 2017). However, discussions about entrepreneurship often focus on a more affluent, predominantly male group of entrepreneurs based in urban centers (Langevang, 2017). More so, there has been a tendency to associate entrepreneurship with affluence, elitism, and 'exceptionally talented individuals' (Schumpeter, 2003; Florida, 2006; Langevang, 2017). However, over the years, the entrepreneurial landscape in the fashion industry has ranged in features, and its scope has widened in domain and space (Spring, 2009). For example, it has a low barrier to entry for new entrepreneurs, and most designers perceive the industry as fertile for everyone to succeed (Brydges et al., 2019a). Contrary to the popular notion that one has to be a Dolce and Gabbana, Louis Vuitton, Balenciaga and Addidas to 'sell' in the fashion landscape. Notwithstanding, entrepreneurship in the fashion industry operates without established protocols, standards, or structures, creating an environment marked by competition, ambiguity, and uncertainty (Jansson, 2011; McRobbie, 2016; Brydges, 2017).

This challenges amateur entrepreneurs looking to grow their local brands and independent creative businesses. In the fashion industry, entrepreneurs must blend the creative design process with sound business practices (Aakko et al., 2018). However, while design is often spontaneous and experimental, business development follows a more structured and methodical approach (Aakko et al., 2018). These contrasting skill sets and mindsets can pose significant challenges for less experienced entrepreneurs (Mills, 2011). The fashion industry has become symbolic of the neoliberal system. Although the production process is mainly intrinsic, contemporary fashion is fashioned by globalisation (Sarpong et al., 2012). Globalisation has impacted all parts of the fashion industry, not merely retailing but the 'how of fashion' and the practice of fashion (Sarpong et al., 2012). Beyond its benefits, globalisation allows the ordinary shopper to access fashion products at reasonable prices.

1.1.3. Globalisation and the fashion industry in developing countries

Globalisation, technological advancements, and capitalism have reshaped the world of work, with the fashion industry feeling these effects profoundly (Cavusgil et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2012; Anim et al., 2018). Independent fashion designers in developing and transitioning economies face growing challenges as trade liberalisation, and the influx of cheaper, mass-produced goods flood their markets, stunting the growth of local brands, particularly in the global South (Falade, 2019; Krisiukeniene et al., 2020). Despite these obstacles, many fashion entrepreneurs, marketers, and designers are finding opportunities to scale their businesses globally by exporting their products (Sarpong et al., 2012).

However, fast fashion trends and evolving consumer demands create significant hurdles for young entrepreneurs and small business owners. These trends often prioritise lower prices, faster turnaround times, and increased seasonality, placing immense pressure on local producers (Chidiebere et al., 2014; Alam et al., 2021). The rise of outsourcing has further complicated sustainable and fair employment practices, as many suppliers rely on temporary labour, casual work, and subcontracting to meet ever-changing demands (Milewski et al., 2024). This shift directly impacts the entire supply and value chain, altering how fashion businesses operate and thrive in a competitive, global market (IndustriAll, 2013).

1.1.4 State of the fashion industry in Africa

Africa's share of the global fashion market remains uneven and marginalised (UNCTAD, 2008). However, Jennings (2011) notes that the evolution of Africa's fashion sector presents a new challenge for designers. The industry's dynamism is evident in the rise of fashion weeks, the growth of fashion magazines and festivals, the publication of fashion journals, and the establishment of training institutions (Rogerson, 2006; Langevang, 2017). African fashion is also gaining increasing recognition in academic circles (Gott et a l., 2010; Hansen et al., 2013; Rovine, 2015) and policy discussions (African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA), 2009). Because of firsthand data from seven African countries, the World Intellectual Property organisation (WIPO, 2015) emphasised that the fashion industry could significantly boost the gross domestic product if given more attention.

The African fashion industry is mainly located in major urban centers such as Johannesburg, Cape Town, Lagos, Accra (Langevang, 2017), and Ethiopia. Johannesburg, in particular, stands out as Africa's "fashion capital," serving as a hub for various industries that significantly influence the continent's fashion trends and production (Oberhofer, 2012). This city is home to designers, manufacturers, and retailers who shape local and international perceptions of African fashion. South Africa's cultural and creative industries are among the most diverse in the world, covering a wide range of sectors like film, music, and fashion. These industries have tremendous potential to boost economic growth and development by fostering innovation, creating jobs, and promoting exports (Shafi et al., 2020). Over the past 13 years, Johannesburg has established itself as Africa's leading fashion capital, hosting prestigious events such as the annual Joburg Fashion Week and showcasing established and emerging African designers (Rogerson, 2006).

The end of apartheid in South Africa not only signaled the end of racial segregation but also sparked a revival in the country's clothing and textile sectors (Rogerson, 2006). With the new political freedom, the clothing industry symbolised empowerment and self-expression. Government initiatives played a crucial role in this transformation by investing in local talent, supporting small businesses, and encouraging the export of African-made fashion (Rogerson, 2006). This shift allowed South African fashion to flourish, making Johannesburg a central player in the global fashion scene.

Fashion designers in South Africa have grown, developed, and become leaders in the sector rather than followers of Westernised fashion trends (Chang, 2005; Adinolfi et al., 2018). Fashion weeks and the premier trade show organised by designers have highlighted the country's abundant talent. Most importantly, this has resulted in the emergence of fashion entrepreneurs, whose preoccupation is to produce large quantities of creative products for specialised markets, incorporating indigenous and contemporary designs (Chang, 2005; De Beukelaer, 2016; Bobie, 2022). Notable South African brands include Stoned Cherrie, Black Coffee, Craig Native, Loxion Kulca, and Sun Goddess (Rogerson, 2006). Similarly, government policies have been implemented to support and develop ambitious, talented, and business-minded individuals with a passion for developing their skills in the area of fashion (Rogerson, 2006). The fashion industry in South Africa has laws that protect the industry from competing with Western countries through standards and government policies, including tariffs, quotas, and export incentives (Truett et al., 2008). This shift has created new opportunities for South African fashion designers, and other fashion professionals across Africa (Morris & Barnes, 2014).

Industry experts have raised concerns about the decline of the fashion industry in other African countries despite ongoing efforts to revitalise the sector. Some scholars have argued that a lack of technology, inadequate fabric supply, insufficient advanced skills, poor technological systems, and an unsophisticated value chain account for the decline in the industry (Morris et al., 2014). There is evidence that the fashion industry is growing. However, there are still many challenges for African designers, which include Western dominance of the fashion industry, second-hand clothing, importation of fabrics and equipment, lack of international presence, supply chain issues, lack of distribution networks that connect and inspire creativity, poor governmental support and investors in the way of developing the sector (Aakko et al., 2018; Spring, 2018), accentuating the inequalities and discontent of a globalised market. Actors of the fashion industry must determine how to leverage opportunities inherent in the global market space for its development.

The industry has great potential. The opportunities in the African market are vast in size and value. With 900 million potential African customers, why would the global North not want to relocate to the African fashion market? (van Dijck, 2013). More fashion hubs are evolving within a decade in Mauritius, Ethiopia, and Ghana (Langevang, 2017). Ghana has always been fashion-forward, with steady production, sustainable practices and consumer base growth (Bobie, 2024). Its style industry is receiving global attention and acknowledgement for the delivery of traditional designs and for promoting fashion content at national and international events. The history of fashion in Ghana dates back to the precolonial era and has played a significant role in today's fashion world.

1.1.5 State of the Ghanaian fashion industry

Ghana's fashion industry stands out for its vibrancy, facilitating the exchange, creation, and production of diverse cultural and creative content (Ham, 2019). Many companies within this space produce high-quality designs and brands that enjoy strong patronage locally, across Africa, and internationally (Bruce-Amartey et al., 2014). The industry is a significant source of employment and contributes to the nation's economic growth, adding to its gross domestic product (MOTI, 2010; Amankwah et al., 2014). However, in recent years, Ghana's cultural and creative industries, particularly the fashion sub-sector, have experienced a decline, primarily due to globalisation and the increasing inability of the state to provide support particularly finance for the industry (Darkwah et al., 2024).

Trade liberalisation agreements have made it nearly impossible for local fashion businesses to compete with the influx of cheaper imported products from Western economies (Sarpong et al., 2013). Independent studies, including research on the entrepreneurial dimensions of cultural and creative industries, highlight several challenges the fashion industry faces (see Sarpong et al., 2013; Amankwah et al., 2014; Sarpong et al., 2024). These include limited access to credit, supply chain management issues, a lack of automated machinery for large-scale production, digitisation hurdles, globalisation pressures, low patronage of local products, and the influx of substitute goods. The industry also needs better teaching and learning facilities, which hinder progress (Badia et al., 2018; Shafi et al., 2020).

Fashion is a phenomenon introduced previously in Ghana but has existed as a less industrialised form than Westernised fashion industries. Industrial development is considered one of the most effective strategies for driving sustained and higher growth rates within the industry (Quartey et al., 2011). Fashion businesses require high innovativeness and entrepreneurship (Ünay et al., 2012) to turn the industry's misfortunes to fortunes. Literature on management studies has shown that fashion businesses need to display a high level of entrepreneurial skills in order to provide fashion businesses with a competitive advantage (Ünay et al., 2012).

1.1.6 Creative entrepreneurship in the Ghanaian fashion industry

The concept of 'cultural' or 'creative' entrepreneurship is gaining increasing recognition as a vital force in transforming culture and creativity into marketable products and services (UNCHAD, 2010). Central to this concept are entrepreneurs who play a pivotal role in harnessing Africa's potential, particularly within the fashion industry. While the transformative power of entrepreneurship in turning cultural and creative industry (CCI) products into viable goods and services is well-documented (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2005; Gill et al., 2009; Hesmondhalgh, 2015), research specifically focusing on the role of entrepreneurs in Africa's fashion sector, and particularly in Ghana, remains sparse. In a highly competitive fashion industry, where numerous actors vie for the same consumer base, entrepreneurship is essential in shaping market dynamics and driving growth. With the upsurge of an economy centred on symbols, aesthetics, and creativity, the exchange of cultural products in the marketplace is evident (Zukin, 1995). While sociologists have noted the prevalence of this aesthetic (Aspers, 2001; Entwistle, 2002), economists, on the other hand, are keen on identifying the market value and economic gains (Steyaert et al., 2004) of the cultural and creative products. Characterising creatives as independent contractors in the cultural and creative industries emphasise the value of studying their unique blend of artistic and entrepreneurial activities (Haynes et al., 2018).

Within modern capitalism, creativity and entrepreneurship are often seen as complementary elements of a shared identity. Reframing entrepreneurship as a supportive aspect of creativity rather than as something that undermines it can potentially empower creatives to succeed both artistically and financially, more especially in the global South. In discussing their day-to-day work, it became evident that fashion entrepreneurs in this study are regularly engaged in a range of activities that embody entrepreneurial skills. From product development, design, and innovation to brand building, marketing, and managing sales and distribution channels, they handle essential business functions that go beyond creativity alone. These activities highlight that a broad skill set spanning financial management, marketing expertise, and customer relations is indispensable for success in the fashion industry.

This dual role is especially apparent in the case of independent fashion entrepreneurs; they manage both the creative direction of their brands and the entrepreneurial responsibilities of building business models and generating revenue streams (Darker et al., 2020). Creative workers are frequently depicted as individuals possessing artistic and business acumen

(McRobbie, 1998). These workers often operate outside traditional institutional frameworks, driven to assert their creative output within broader markets and society (Ellmeier, 2003). As a result, many creatives in these fields, with limited financial or structural support, adapt and sustain themselves within a labour market that is often uncertain and precarious (Ellmeier, 2003; Ross, 2008; Scott, 2012). However, this framework is especially relevant to creative entrepreneurship in Ghana's fashion industry.

Beyond organisational skills and resilience, the interviews revealed that creativity is central to these entrepreneurs' business practices. In an environment where securing bank loans is challenging due to cumbersome bureaucratic processes, entrepreneurs devise alternative and innovative methods to secure funding for their business ventures. These might include pooling resources through partnerships, leveraging personal and professional networks, or exploring other informal outlets such as susu, and community networks to finance their ventures. This adaptive creativity highlights their resourcefulness and ability to navigate financial constraints, which is essential for sustaining and growing their businesses in competitive markets.

In Ghana’s fashion industry, creative entrepreneurs showcase cultural and artistic talent and integrate business strategies to establish viable enterprises (Abor et al., 2011). These entrepreneurs navigate fluctuating markets and limited resources, combining creativity with entrepreneurial resilience to drive their brands forward and contribute to Ghana's economy. In these parts of the world, fashion entrepreneurs are increasingly combining their creative expertise with strategic entrepreneurship, allowing them to build enduring businesses that celebrate local heritage and compete on a global scale. Yet, the path is not without hurdles.

They must exercise a high level of judgment, problem-solving, and decision-making to manage the complexities of their business environments (Liberman-Yaconi et al., 2010).

This unique integration of creativity with entrepreneurial rigor enable them to adapt, innovate, and persist despite limited resources and shifting markets, reinforcing their cultural and economic impact. As Lounsbury and Glynn (2019) emphasize, entrepreneurs do not operate solely in response to present needs; instead, their decisions are often guided by an anticipation of future market, cultural, and economic shifts. This future-oriented approach is particularly relevant in Ghana's fashion industry, where entrepreneurs must balance immediate challenges with long-term goals, innovating in ways that preserve local identity while positioning their brands to compete internationally.

1.1.7 Precarity in the Ghanaian fashion industry

The fashion industry presents unique challenges for entrepreneurs, who must navigate a highly competitive and unpredictable environment. Factors such as oversupply, demand uncertainty, and time pressure complicate decision-making. The industry's trend-driven nature amplifies demand uncertainty (Bielby et al., 1994; Godart et al., 2009) and intensifies time pressure (McRobbie, 1998, 2016; Hesmondhalgh et al., 2010). Entrepreneurs in fashion face the added complexity of communicating the value of cultural products—both symbolic and practical without knowing what will resonate with consumers at any given moment (Caves, 2000). Furthermore, the seasonal nature of fashion, limited access to state support, reliance on unpaid labour, unstable client base, abrupt worker exits, and even the risk of eviction all contribute to the precarious nature of the fashion landscape in the global South particularly in Ghana. This environment of uncertainty and instability significantly influences the decisions fashion entrepreneurs must make.

The volatile nature of the fashion industry demands that entrepreneurs make strategic decisions under conditions of uncertainty. To navigate these challenges, they draw on a blend of personal factors including personal taste, intuition, experience, resilience, and perceived uncertainty as well as sociocultural influences such as information sharing, competition, social support, cultural values, and the role of cultural intermediaries. These elements collectively shape decision-making, influencing business trajectories in both direct and indirect ways. As Shepherd and Patzelt (2018), Kahneman (2011), and Baron (2008) argue, entrepreneurial performance whether success or failure hinges on the ability to make sound decisions, particularly in high-risk environments (Weerasekara et al., 2022). In such a precarious context, fashion entrepreneurs must continuously refine their approaches, balancing instinct with external insights to sustain their businesses.

1.1.8 Decision-Making and Performance in Ghana's Fashion Industry Amid Precarity

Decision-making plays a central role in entrepreneurial activities, as the success or failure of a business hinges on the choices and decisions made by the entrepreneur (Liberman-Yacconi et al., 2010). Small businesses are common in entrepreneurship, particularly in the cultural and creative industries such as the fashion industry, and they make up about 90% of major economies (Partnership, 2006; Pratt et al., 2009). The value of entrepreneurship to local, national and international economies is widely recognised as important for business innovation, job creation, and industry dynamics (Shepherd et al., 2005).

In today's competitive and uncertain business landscape, entrepreneurs face significant challenges in assessing the economic value of fashion products (Chavan, 2018), often relying on their interpretations. Additionally, research indicates that managers in creative industries tend to favour informal and intuitive approaches over formal and rational decision-making methods (Davidsson, 2004; Teirlinck et al., 2013; Schreiber, 2014).

Entrepreneurs operating in precarious work environments adopt distinct approaches and strategies in decision-making (Busenitz et al., 1997; Schreiber et al., 2018). Entrepreneurs often draw on external and internal factors to identify opportunities in the fashion industry, where institutional and social complexities create uncertainty. Recent insights into decision-making have shifted away from traditional top-down models characterised by an externally focused and quantifiable process (Schwenk, 1947; De Jong et al., 2004; Liberman-Yacconi et al., 2011) to a greater emphasis on emotional intelligence and trial-and-error methodologies (Juliusson et al., 2005; Beach et al., 2017). Other influences on decision-making include personal experience (Juliusson et al., 2005; Blank et al., 2008; West et al., 2008), intuition (Stanovich et al., 2008; Bang et al., 2014; Artinger et al., 2015), cultural values (Estrada Cruz et al., 2018), cultural intermediaries (Negi et al., 2020; Hadley, 2021), resilience (Resario et al., 2022), and taste (Godart et al., 2009).

These factors play a crucial role in shaping how entrepreneurs navigate their daily decision-making processes. This study adds to the discourse on decision-making in the fashion industry by showing that the factors influencing success and failure, as well as the unique characteristics of entrepreneurial decisions, differ from those explored in existing literature (e.g., DiMaggio et al., 1983; Bourdieu, 1991). While social contexts and organisational fields undoubtedly exert influence, social actors are not merely passive recipients of these forces. Instead, they actively shape their own paths, making deliberate choices to take control of their businesses and circumstances (Hodson, 2001).

Extending this line of thought, research has sought to understand why some entrepreneurs excel while others face obstacles within the same working conditions (Bell, 2018; Damoah, 2023; Khaw et al., 2023). A crucial factor in this discussion is the nature of precarious work, which presents both opportunities and challenges. Some studies suggest that precarious work enhances flexibility, reduces production costs, and maximises profit, potentially benefiting entrepreneurs (ILO, 2011; Fisher et al., 2017). However, from the perspective of human resource managers, industrial relations experts, and sociologists, these same conditions often come at a cost, negatively impacting the workforce and ultimately leading to decreased productivity an outcome that can, in turn, affect business sustainability (Quinlan et al., 2012; Fisher et al., 2017).

The factors that contribute to the success of owner-managers in difficult business environments are complex and widely debated. Research by Weingarten et al., (2021) and Khurana et al., (2021) highlights the challenges in identifying the specific strategies and traits that contribute to success under such conditions. Furthermore, there is a continuing debate over the most appropriate methods for measuring entrepreneurial performance. Various frameworks and metrics have been suggested, each with its strengths and weaknesses, which makes it difficult to reach a universally accepted standard (Iakovleva et al., 2011). This reinforces the complexities involved in evaluating performance, especially in precarious contexts and informal economies.

Entrepreneurial performance can be evaluated using both subjective and objective measures. Subjective assessments often focus on indicators such as firm size, venture growth, and sales growth (Chandler et al., 1994; Richard et al., 2005; Wiklund et al., 2005; Menguc & Auh, 2008). In contrast, organisational ecologists adopt a more economically driven perspective, evaluating performance through objective indicators. These include financial metrics such as profit, return on assets, and return on investment; market-related measures like sales and market share; and shareholder-focused indicators such as total shareholder return and economic value added (Lumpkin et al., 1996; Söderblom et al., 2015). The achievements and challenges of business owners have been widely discussed in entrepreneurship literature (Rauch et al., 2000; Gorgievski et al., 2010; Saebi et al., 2019). However, assessing entrepreneurial performance remains difficult due to the complexity and subjectivity of relevant metrics (Storey, 2016; Kalleberg et al., 2017), especially as scholarly interest in this topic grows within cultural and labour studies.

Creative entrepreneurs navigate a landscape where success is not solely defined by financial performance but also by intangible achievements that shape reputation and opportunity (Mylonas et al., 2018). Beyond sales and revenue, indicators such as industry recognition, brand strength, awards, and the ability to attract strategic partnerships play a vital role (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991; Schreiber, 2014, 2018). These factors contribute to symbolic capital, which affects consumer trust and influences how peers and stakeholders engage with the entrepreneur’s work. This reputation-based value system gives rise to a social contagion effect, where networks and visibility can significantly enhance performance outcomes (Schreiber, 2018). In response to these dynamics, creative entrepreneurs often rely on hope and a deep sense of purpose to sustain their ventures, drawing motivation from their vision and social connections. Such determination enables them to persist, innovate, and find meaning in their work, even amidst instability and limited resources (Alacovska et al., 2021).

Gee (2008) observed that strategic management research has often overlooked the role of hope in shaping organisational outcomes, particularly in relation to decision-making and performance. This omission is noteworthy, as hope is not merely an emotional response but a strategic resource that can significantly influence how entrepreneurs confront challenges, make decisions, and pursue opportunities for growth. In the dynamic and often unpredictable fashion industry, hope functions as both a motivator and a strategic compass, a tactic and a craft, that enables entrepreneurs to navigate uncertainty, remain resilient, and sustain their ventures over time.

One of the most important ways hope manifests in strategic management is through relationship-building. Fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana, for example, deliberately build, nurture, and maintain relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders, from suppliers and customers to mentors and collaborators. These relationships are not passive or one-time interactions; they are strategic in nature, continually cultivated to align with the entrepreneur’s long-term business goals. Entrepreneurs also recognise the importance of terminating or adjusting relationships when they no longer serve the business’s evolving needs. By strategically managing both close and distant relationships, fashion entrepreneurs ensure that their business network remains strong, flexible, and responsive to changes in the market. Hope fuels a cycle of decision-making, and ultimately performance where relations are continually leveraged to navigate an ever-changing business landscape. This makes hope not just a motivating factor but an effective strategic management tool, helping fashion entrepreneurs chart a course toward sustained success in an uncertain environment.

1.1.9. Precarity and hope in the Ghanaian fashion industry

Entrepreneurs often hope for better working conditions, anticipating that government action to improve labour standards will benefit them (Darkwah, 2013). From the foundation of positive psychology, hope emerged as a construct in the 1990s as a concept of positive psychology and psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2017). The construct is a complex and fundamental psychological capital that has been approached from various fields in the social sciences (Hage, 2003), youth (Langevang, 2008; Darkwah, 2013) and works in the cultural and creative industries (Cook, 2019) and in more recent times in medicine (Mattingly, 2010; Carlsen et al., 2012).

Hope is a powerful psychological tool that enables individuals to confront life's challenges, such as adversity and financial hardship, by empowering them to take action despite difficulties (Alacovska, 2019). It fuels perseverance, encouraging individuals to "keep going" despite the obstacles they face (Alacovska, 2019). Moreover, hope can be seen as a set of morally acceptable coping strategies that individuals adopt to navigate precarious work conditions (Alacovska, 2018a). Some scholars argue that hope drives action-oriented strategies, motivating entrepreneurs to make pragmatic, calculated decisions in the present

(Alacovska, 2018; Steedman et al., 2022). In addition, hope is inherently future-oriented: while it provides strategies to cope with current struggles and find meaning in the present, its primary function is to guide individuals toward achieving their long-term goals (Kuhen et al., 2013). In this way, hope can be viewed as a form of 'hustling,' where individuals proactively navigate the harsh realities of their industry in pursuit of success.

Kuhen et al., (2013) argue that individuals with limited agency often turn to hope as a coping mechanism when faced with challenging circumstances, recognising that their control over the present is constrained. In contrast, Alacovska (2018) contends that entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors, particularly in the global South, actively strive toward a better future despite enduring material deprivation. This highlights the dual nature of hope, demonstrating that it can be both a passive and an active force, depending on the context. Meanwhile, Darkwah's (2013) analysis of youth trainees in Ghana's oil and gas industry offers another perspective on hope, illustrating how it sustains individuals through adversity. These youth remain optimistic about future opportunities, despite the challenges they face in the present. While acknowledging the hardships, Darkwah frames hope as a powerful motivator that keeps them focused on potential future rewards. Together, these perspectives suggest that hope whether driven by necessity or ambition plays a critical role in helping individuals and entrepreneurs navigate difficult circumstances, acting as a bridge between the present and a more promising future.

In her earlier work on "uncertain paths to respectable adulthood in Accra, Ghana," Langevang (2008) portrays hope as a mechanism focused on futurity, emphasising how Ghanaian youth rely on hope to envision a future better than that of previous generations.

This view aligns with the findings of Darkwah (2013), whose study supports the notion that hope plays a critical role in sustaining individuals through hardship. Building on these insights, Kuhen et al., (2013) argue that hope is a powerful strategy geared towards the future. Amid ongoing debates on whether hope should be seen primarily as futurity or agency, this study does not seek to extend these conceptual discussions. Instead, it takes a different approach by exploring how entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry use hope as both a strategy and psychological resource to navigate precarity. Here, hope becomes a pragmatic tool, where individuals accept precarious conditions but define their success on their own terms.

In the fashion industry, for instance, entrepreneurs often engage in an active form of hope, striving toward a 'better future' (Cook et al., 2019). This sense of hope equips entrepreneurs with the resilience needed to persist despite the uncertainties within the cultural and creative sector (Alacovska et al., 2021). Even when challenging working conditions prevent them from forming concrete plans, these entrepreneurs still express hope as both agency and futurity. Hope is an innate feeling within us, yet it is also the belief that assistance exists beyond ourselves. It suggests that external circumstances and the presence of supportive individuals or resources can enhance and reinforce one's sense of hope. The emphasis lies on mutual assistance, recognising and anticipating support, giving help and accepting assistance within the context of leveraging 'relational infrastructure' in their business lives. Thus the study explored how hope functions as a strategy or personal resource in navigating precarious working conditions in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

Entrepreneurship has long been recognised as a critical economic growth and job creation driver. Historically, research in this field has focused primarily on financial and structural factors influencing entrepreneurial outcomes, often emphasising access to capital, infrastructure, and market opportunities (Schumpeter, 1934; Shane et al., 2000). However, such macro-level analyses have tended to overlook the micro-level psychological, cultural, and contextual elements that shape entrepreneurial action, especially in the Global South.

There has been growing scholarly interest in understanding how entrepreneurship functions within precarious and informal settings, particularly in Africa's cultural and creative industries (Langevang et al., 2015; Hansen et al., 2021). Within this emerging body of work, there has been a gradual shift from a narrow emphasis on economic outcomes toward a broader exploration of how entrepreneurs navigate uncertainty, draw on community support, and craft strategies rooted in local knowledge and everyday experiences.

Nevertheless, significant gaps remain in understanding how individual dispositions such as hope, resilience, and intuition intersect with sociocultural dynamics to shape entrepreneurial performance in precarious contexts. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the decision-making processes of fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana. It draws on psychological theories (e.g., Snyder's hope theory) and sociological frameworks (e.g. theory of practice and Neo-Institutional theory) to explore how entrepreneurs perceive and respond to precarity. By situating entrepreneurial performance within this dual lens, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how success is enacted through resource acquisition and culturally embedded practices, emotional labour, and collective agency.

1.2 Problem Statement

Traditionally, research in the field of organisation and human resource management has predominantly focused on topics like job satisfaction, employee motivation, engagement, and leadership (Bailey et al., 2017; Buil et al., 2019; Jawaad et al., 2019; Dartey-Baah et al. 2020; Donkor et al., 2021). These studies have deepened the understanding of how human resource managers can develop strategies for attracting, recruiting, and retaining top talents to meet organisational objectives (Cardon et al., 2004; Ahmad, 2014; Tanwar et al., 2016; Armstrong, 2020). However, much of the research has treated employees within organisations as the primary focus of analysis (Harter et al., 2002) while largely overlooking other key players, such as entrepreneurs, who also face significant human resource and management challenges (Amberg et al., 2016; Harney et al., 2022; Purgal-Popiela et al., 2024). This study takes a different approach by examining work-related issues from the perspective of fashion entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative industries.

In recent years, public policy discussions have often presented an idealised portrayal of the cultural and creative industries and entrepreneurship, emphasising notions of self-expression and flexibility (Hesmondhalgh et al.,, 2005; Banks et al., 2009; Banks et al., 2009). Neo-liberal policies have supported these narratives by framing new forms of labour exploitation as opportunities for self-exploration and flexible work arrangements (Lash et al., 1994; Menger, 2003; Tomasi, 2012). On the one hand, increased labour flexibility has contributed to economic growth by enabling workers to negotiate more adaptable work schedules, promoting work-life balance, and reducing employer costs. However, this shift has also led to a rise in atypical and precarious forms of work, including contingent, non-standard forms of work, and temporary employment (Kreshpaj et al., 2020). The growing prevalence of precarious work, its extension into various aspects of life and labour, and the emphasis on "flexibility" in employment discourse driven by economic globalisation have sparked increased interest in precarious working conditions (Kalleberg, 2009; McRobbie, 2017; Gill et al., 2019).

Existing literature on precarity is predominantly grounded in Western contexts, where the concept has been shaped by experiences of labour market deregulation, weakened social protections, and individualised forms of insecurity (Harris et al., 2016). These frameworks often highlight issues such as job instability, contract work, and freelance vulnerability in formal creative economies. However, such perspectives do not fully account for the specific realities faced by creative workers in the global South (De Beukelaer, 2017; Banerjee, 2022). In regions like sub-Saharan Africa, precarity is not simply the outcome of neoliberal labour reforms, but is historically embedded in informal economic arrangements, structural inequalities, and culturally rooted labour practices. However, these discussions often reflect Western models and experiences that do not fully account for the unique challenges faced by creative workers in the global South, particularly in Africa.

De Beukelaer (2017) argues for the need to conceptualise and theorise creative industries within the African context, cautioning against the imposition of Western models and frameworks that may overlook critical local realities. He suggests that "the conceptual understanding of the CCI across Africa should build on empirical engagement with what exists, rather than with conceptual engagement with industry models and classifications that have emerged elsewhere" (De Beukelaer, 2017). This highlights the necessity for scholars to reframe the discourse on precarity, acknowledging the specific socio-economic, cultural, and political conditions of African creative industries (Scully, 2015; Kilu et al., 2025).

Understanding precarity in this context is essential for developing relevant strategies and policies that can effectively address the distinct challenges faced by creative entrepreneurs in Africa, who often navigate a precarious landscape shaped by both global pressures and local realities. This presents a significant gap in the literature: the under-theorisation of how precarity is experienced, navigated, and made sense of within informal and resource-constrained creative economies in the global South. Specifically, little attention has been paid to the ways in which local norms, social obligations, and communal expectations interact with economic insecurity to shape the lived experiences of creative entrepreneurs. This study addresses this gap by providing an empirically grounded and context-sensitive account of precarity in Ghana's fashion industry, where institutional instability, informal labour relations, and socio-cultural logics converge to shape entrepreneurial decision-making and performance.

The globalisation of markets, along with rapid advancements in technology, the practice of outsourcing, and the pervasive influence of capitalism, has brought about profound and sweeping changes in the world of work. These shifts have been especially pronounced in the creative industries, where innovation and adaptability are key (Cavusgil et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2012). However, the benefits of these changes have yet to be universally experienced; poor human resource management practices and a conspicuous absence of rigorous labour regulations and protective policies often overshadow them. This is particularly critical for workers in the informal sector, who face greater vulnerabilities and uncertainties in their employment situation (Sharma, 2016). Addressing these systemic issues is essential for ensuring fair treatment and creating a sustainable framework that supports the rights and welfare of these workers in such contexts. Additionally, there is a growing critique of psychological research's limitations in management studies, sparking a wave of articles and conference discussions (e.g. Luthans et al., 2002; Snyder, 2002). These discussions emphasize the need to address hope's role in management contexts, pointing toward significant directions for future research. By identifying and examining these gaps, future studies can better integrate hope into strategic frameworks, enriching our understanding of its impact on sustained entrepreneurial success.

Expanding precarious work, particularly into the creative industries, has motivated a large body of research on its implications but with minimal study on its impact on decision-making and performance (Weeresaka et al., 2021; Zayadin et al., 2022). Ambitious agendas and research have emerged around issues of perceived job insecurity, precarious geographies and livelihoods (Harris et al., 2018; Brydges et al., 2019; Petriglieri et al., 2019; Peticca-Harris et al., 2020) and recently on health (Bolibar et al., 2021). The present study contributes to the discourse on the impact of precarity on creative entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial labour in Ghana. Understanding the subjectivities of precarious work and living conditions of fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana will contribute to and advance the literature on precarity, cultural and creative labour and cultural entrepreneurship in the global South. Additionally, there is a growing critique of psychological research's limitations in management studies, sparking a wave of articles and conference discussions (e.g., Luthans et al., 2002; Snyder, 2002). These discussions emphasize the need to address hope's role in management contexts, pointing toward significant directions for future research. By identifying and examining these gaps, future studies can better integrate hope into strategic frameworks, enriching our understanding of its impact on sustained decision-making and entrepreneurial success.

Despite its recognised significance within cultural and creative industries, the concept of hope as a strategic approach still needs to be explored in cultural entrepreneurship and management literature. Although hope is acknowledged as a vital influence, little is understood about its role in driving sustained entrepreneurial effort over time. This gap leaves a limited understanding of the micro-level strategic practices, especially within the informal creative sector, that enable entrepreneurs to thrive under challenging conditions. In contexts of chronic precarity, creative entrepreneurs rely on hope not only as an inspiration but as a practical strategy. As they anticipate market growth and improved economic conditions, hope manifests in mutual aid and helping others, embodying resilience rather than resignation. Through this perspective, hope becomes an active tool for navigating the current landscape of precarious labour, enabling entrepreneurs to persist and build networks geared toward a more stable future.

Hope is thus profoundly woven into the social fabric of cultural entrepreneurship, driving a form of strategic culture that underpins the creative industry. Far from being a passive motivator, hope is central to the vitality of creative labour. It galvanizes action, enhancing survival and innovation in a sector where traditional support and institutional structures fall short. Consequently, understanding hope as an actionable tool represents a gap in the field. Therefore, this thesis seeks to identify how hope is practised through reliance on mutual aid and helping out, which is an affirmative stance of getting by and getting on rather than despair and resignation.

Recognising hope as an actionable and strategic force shifts our understanding of cultural entrepreneurship, highlighting it as the lifeblood of the creative economy. Leveraging informal and formal social relations is a way creative workers cope with precarity across diverse contexts. The overarching strategy is the use of social relations to execute production. This aligns with earlier scholarships about social relations as a strategic response to precarity in cultural industries (Zelizer, 2012; Lobato et al., 2015; Alacovska et al., 2018). These practices underpin relational labour as an adaptive strategy in the cultural and creative industries and illustrate how creative entrepreneurs organise themselves creatively by using social relations as a form of industry sustenance.

Research on labour in the cultural and creative industries has traditionally focused on sectors such as music, film, and theatre (Steedman, 2017; Schreiber et al., 2018; Resario et al., 2021, 2022). Much of the work surrounding precarious labour has also centred on these industries (Shipley, 2014), while labour in the fashion sector has received comparatively less scholarly attention. Studies examining precarity within fashion entrepreneurship have primarily dealt with uncertainties related to the industry (Bielby et al., 1994; Godart et al., 2009; Aspers et al., 2013). This study, however, investigates the perceptions and meanings of precarity among Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs, aiming to understand why they persist despite challenging work conditions (Murahwa, 2016). By doing so, the research seeks to expand the scope of existing studies on entrepreneurial decision-making and performance, focusing on the distinct performance indicators and strategic drivers that shape outcomes in the cultural and creative industries (Liberman-Yaconni et al., 2011; Schreiber, 2014; Wasniewski, 2021) which differ from those in larger businesses.

The economic significance of small businesses in both developing and developed economies and within formal and informal sectors is undeniable (Wiklund et al., 2005). Small enterprises dominate many business landscapes, particularly in the cultural and creative industries (Partnership, 2006; Pratt et al., 2009). Approximately 90% of all businesses worldwide are small and medium-sized enterprises, essential contributors to employment and industry dynamics across all economic types (Partnership, 2006; Pratt et al., 2009). However, there remains a significant gap in understanding small business owners' strategic measures and decision support systems in the cultural and creative sectors (Beaver et al., 2005; Schreiber et al., 2018). Many of these businesses need help to scale-up but often fail within three years due to sector-specific challenges and internal conflicts (SBA, 2006). Given the critical role of small businesses, investigating the decision-making processes within these firms could significantly enhance the scholarship on cultural entrepreneurship, decision-making and performance particularly in the creative industries, using the fashion sector as a case study (Liberman-Yaconni et al., 2011). Additionally, there is a notable lack of data on the decision-making practices of entrepreneurs in the fashion industry (Schreiber et al., 2018).

Fashion entrepreneurs frequently navigate uncertainties related to demand and face stiff competition from other suppliers, which complicates their ability to convey the actual value of their products (Godart et al., 2009). Therefore, examining the decision-making processes of fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana is essential, mainly because previous research has primarily concentrated on decision-making within service firms, technology companies, manufacturing industries, and other sectors (Schreiber et al., 2014, 2018).

Added to this are several personal factors (intuition, personal experience, taste, resilience) and sociocultural factors (cultural values, cultural intermediaries, social networks) that influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. These factors influence the choice, selection and decisions of entrepreneurs in the fashion industry, as a constant feature of the fashion industry is overproduction, oversupply of fashion products, high cost of production, and consumer demand is fundamentally unknown (Brydges, 2016; McRobbie, 2016). Entrepreneurs who thrive in the fashion landscape will require strategies distinct from other businesses, usually examined in innovation (Liberman-Yaconni et al., 2011) and film (Steedman, 2017). For example, a focus on fashion needs more scholarly understanding.

The fashion industry relies heavily on decision-making for entrepreneurial performance. While entrepreneurship research has expanded in recent years, more explicit attention is needed on how entrepreneurs succeed and make decisions in precarious contexts particularly within underexplored sectors such as the fashion industry in the global South. Given the limited scholarly engagement with this area, the present study draws on Neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio et al., 1991; Scott, 2008) and Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) to offer a context-sensitive analysis of decision-making and performance among fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana. These theoretical frameworks are particularly suited to capturing the influence of personal experiences, sociocultural structures, and institutional dynamics in environments marked by uncertainty and informality (Comaroff et al., 2012).

Traditional strategic management literature has largely been shaped by hyper-rational models of decision-making, which assume that actors are fully informed, consistently logical, and primarily motivated by utility maximisation (Eisenhardt et al., 1992). While these models offer analytical clarity, they often overlook the embedded, improvised, and socially contingent nature of real-world decision-making—especially in informal economies (Bruton et al., 2013). This reliance on rationalist assumptions has resulted in a theoretical gap that fails to account for how entrepreneurs in resource-constrained and institutionally fluid contexts actually navigate risk and uncertainty.

Neo-institutional theory addresses this gap by explaining how institutional logics, legitimacy pressures, and taken-for-granted norms influence entrepreneurial behaviour beyond mere efficiency or profit (Greenwood et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2012). In parallel, the theory of practice foregrounds the role of tacit knowledge, cultural dispositions, and routine actions, highlighting how individuals draw on experiential learning and socialised practices to make strategic choices (Bourdieu, 1990; Emirbayer et al., 2008). Together, these perspectives shift attention from abstract, idealised rational actors to socially embedded agents whose decisions are shaped by context, habitus, and institutional realities. This integrated approach provides a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurship under precarious conditions and challenges the dominance of Western-centric models in strategic decision-making research (De Beukelaer, 2017; Banerjee, 2022).

Despite the growing body of research on entrepreneurship within the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), much of the existing scholarship remains heavily qualitative in orientation. Systematic reviews reveal that case studies, interviews, and ethnographic approaches dominate the methodological landscape (Ivanov, 2020; Loots, 2023). These studies often explore the motivations and challenges faced by creative entrepreneurs—particularly in Western contexts—with limited engagement in rigorous quantitative or mixed-methods research. Consequently, this methodological bias has contributed to a constrained and, at times, fragmented understanding of how creative entrepreneurship unfolds across diverse socio-economic and institutional settings.

Although mixed-methods approaches hold significant potential for generating more comprehensive and contextually grounded insights, their use in CCI research remains minimal (Ivanov, 2020). Recent scholarship has called for "extended mixed-methods" frameworks that combine quantitative, qualitative, and practice-based methodologies to better capture the complexity of creative labour (Loots, 2023). However, such frameworks remain largely underutilised. At best, some studies labelled as mixed-methods have relied exclusively on different forms of qualitative techniques—such as interviews and focus group discussions—without integrating quantitative elements that could enhance analytical depth and generalisability (Darkwah et al., 2024; Gough et al., 2024).

Moreover, studies focusing on CCIs in the global South, including Ghana, are markedly underrepresented. Most empirical work continues to be concentrated in the global North, limiting the applicability of findings across different cultural, institutional, and economic contexts (Ivanov, 2020; Loots, 2023). This geographical and methodological skew has resulted in a lack of contextualised understanding of the dynamics of entrepreneurship in informal and precarious settings common to developing economies.

This study responds to these gaps by adopting a mixed-methods approach to examine how entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry navigate precarious work environments. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative data, the research offers a more robust, context-sensitive analysis of the relationship between decision-making and performance. In doing so, it expands the methodological scope of CCI research and contributes much-needed empirical insights from the global South to a literature still largely dominated by Western models and assumptions.

1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how precarious working conditions influence decision-making and how hope shapes, orients, and reshapes decision-making and performance in Ghana's fashion industry. The study also examines how entrepreneurial decision-making affects performance, considering factors such as perceived uncertainty, strife/competition, taste, intuition, social networks, cultural values, personal experiences, cultural intermediaries, and resilience. The study also examined the significance of hope in managing challenging work environments and influencing decision-making among Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs.

1.4 Research Questions

In this research the following questions were examined:

i. How do precarious working conditions influence entrepreneurs' decision-making in the Ghanaian fashion industry?

ii. How does hope orient and shape entrepreneurs' decision-making in the Ghanaian fashion industry?

iii. How does decision-making impact entrepreneurs' performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry?

iv. How do personal factors influence the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry?

v. How do socio-cultural factors influence the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

i. To explore the influence of precarious working conditions on entrepreneurs' decision-making in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

ii. To explore how hope orients and shapes entrepreneurs' decision-making in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

iii. To examine the impact of entrepreneurs' decision-making on entrepreneurs' performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

iv. To examine the role of personal factors on the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

v. To examine the role of sociocultural factors on the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The scholarship in management studies and discourse on cultural and creative production has emphasized the importance of studying decision-making under precarious work conditions, especially in regions like Ghana. However, these discussions have yet to be extensively reflected in the academic literature in the global South (Alacovska et al., 2021; Meliou et al. et al., 2021). Therefore, examining the concept of decision-making in a precarious work environment contributed to the knowledge in strategic management, human relations, entrepreneurship, and cultural and creative production. Additionally, studying decision-making under precarious work environments yielded a scientific basis for developing strategies for effective human resource management in businesses, particularly in fashion businesses in Ghana and other cultural and creative industries. It is worth mentioning that effective entrepreneurial decision-making was found to significantly enhance the performance and success of small businesses in Ghana.

Only a few studies, such as those conducted by DeWinnar et al. (2020) and Schreiber et al. (2018), have examined how uncertainty impacts decision-making among micro and small business owners. The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the decision-making processes of micro firms, which can inform strategic management practices in these businesses. Small businesses in the creative industries have received little attention in the literature compared to large firms. Therefore, decision-making theories based on larger enterprises may not adequately explain decision-making in small businesses operating under precarious conditions.

It is important to grasp these dynamics in order to identify the fundamental elements that drive success or present challenges in the Ghanaian fashion industry. The study also emphasized the importance of mentorship and training programs in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes. These programs can empower fashion entrepreneurs by providing targeted guidance, skills development, and industry knowledge to enable creative entrepreneurs make more informed decisions, enhance their resilience, and improve their overall performance. The study's findings are significant in developing and refining support systems and networks that include effective mentorship and training initiatives. They also inform policy decisions that can foster the growth and sustainability of the fashion sector in Ghana. Ultimately, the study contributes to building a more robust framework for enhancing entrepreneurship in the fashion industry, helping entrepreneurs survive and thrive in a competitive and uncertain environment.

Similarly, utilising the Neo-institutional theory and Bourdieu's theory of practice in the context of the fashion industry enhanced our understanding of these theories by elucidating the essence of each theory. Additionally, integrating both theories in the same study illustrated how the personal and sociocultural factors of the theories influenced business decisions and the methods employed to navigate the industry's challenges. Likewise, combining various aspects of the theories contributed to formulating strategies to improve entrepreneurial performance and decisions of Ghanaian-owned businesses in the fashion industry.

Besides the practical and theoretical significance of this thesis, the managerial contributions of this thesis must be emphasized. It is recognised that the fashion industry is an illustrative case of precarity in the cultural and creative industries (Brydges, 2016; McRobbie, 2016; Steedman et al., 2022). Therefore, examining decision-making, entrepreneurial performance, and the role of hope in the fashion industry will offer a reliable reference for policymakers to consider the impact of precarity on the labour force and recognize the need to create a conducive environment for workers, particularly in the global South.

1.7 Chapter Disposition

The study comprised six main chapters. Chapter One introduced the study and included a problem statement outlining the issues and research gaps investigated in this thesis. This chapter also clearly stated the study's objectives and the accompanying research questions that informed the methodological position of the work. Additionally, this first chapter presented the purpose of the study, the significance of the research, and the chapter disposition. Chapter Two discusses a detailed literature review on decision-making in the fashion industry. It starts by exploring relevant theories related to the study, followed by a thorough review of empirical research in the field. This review highlights areas where existing literature is lacking, which serves as a basis for discussing the reasoning behind the thesis. In addition, Chapter Two introduces a conceptual framework that outlines and connects all the study variables, formulates hypotheses, and defines critical concepts for clarity. Chapter Three addresses the methodological aspects of the research. It details the research design and data collection methods, including the procedures for gathering empirical data, the study area, and the ethical clearance processes followed. Chapter Four discusses the analysis of the qualitative data, including the presentation of results and a detailed discussion of the field data. Chapter Five presents quantitative data analysis, presenting findings of fieldwork and techniques utilised. Chapter Six, the final chapter of the thesis, details the summary, conclusion, implications, recommendations, limitations and direction for future work.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins by laying out the theoretical foundations of the study. The thesis addresses fundamental limitations in the selected theoretical frameworks, aiming to resolve these issues by systematically exploring the theoretical elements and synchronising their strengths and weaknesses. It then reviews relevant empirical studies, focusing on the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance and the factors influencing this relationship. Following this review, the chapter provides a critical analysis and summary of the literature that underpins the research. The chapter concludes by presenting the conceptual framework, justification for the study, the formulation of hypotheses, and the operational definitions of key terms employed in the research.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study relies on insights from two theoretical perspectives commonly utilised in cultural studies to explain the decision-making processes and performance within precarious working conditions: Neo-institutional theory and the theory of practice. The foundational bases of the theoretical review are DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) Neo-institutional theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice. These frameworks form the basis for examining strategic behaviors and responses of Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs to precarity within their operating environment.

2.1.1 Theories on precarity and decision-making

2.1.2 *Neo-institutional theory*

Several organisational and management scholarship examinations highlight a noteworthy expansion in management research and organisational studies since the mid-1970s (Bertero et al., 1994). Although the structural-functionalist orthodoxy continues to sway, the mid-1980s marked the emergence of new philosophical approaches and theoretical perspectives (Mangi, 2009). These approaches aimed to reassess and revitalise structural functionalism within a more extensive theoretical framework (Caladas et al., 2005; Vieira et al., 2006). This perspective emerged as an essential ideological force for scholars seeking to challenge the dominance of functionalism in management studies and redefine the core paradigm and practices within the field, such as rational decision-making theory (Simpson, 1972), bounded rationality theory (Simon, 1948), and the incremental model (Lindbolm, 1959) in understanding organisational behaviour. Consequently, the decline in popularity of these ideologies over time is not necessarily due to their inherent truth or falsehood. However, it stems from the suppression of the value systems that underpin them by competing ideologies (Hofstede, 1980).

Many management and organisational theories offer comparative explanations of how entrepreneurs come up with ideas, evaluate opportunities, and handle uncertainties within their organisational fields (Dacin et al., 2010; Shepherd et al., 2015; Teece, 2016; Welter et al., 2018; Mensah et al., 2020). Some theories emphasise the resource capabilities of firms, dominance, and conflict over scarce resources and opportunities (Alvarez et al., 2007; Teece, 2016; Gulati et al., 2017). Others examine functional processes of change through implicit and explicit mimicry, particularly of institutional policies and structures across organisations worldwide (Koh et al., 2015; Goodman et al., 2017). These theories vary in their focus on culture and context, covering both the macro and micro levels of theoretical analysis.

In the field of management and organisational studies, critical and modern theories have gained prominence in explaining global organisational practices (Meyer, 2008; Suddaby, 2010). Neo-institutionalism has emerged as a valuable perspective for analysing cultural production, particularly in legitimisation, expansion, change, and strategic decision-making. This theory is notable for its broad explanatory power and interdisciplinary reach (Vargas-Hernandez, 2014). The term 'Neo-institutionalism' suggests the existence of 'old' institutionalism, which is more focused on politics and power, although there are significant similarities between the two (Selznick, 1996).

Towards the end of the 1970s, some management theories, such as institutional and other organisational theories, challenged existing rational or hyper-rational theories for being associological by introducing social constructionism into management research (Pedersen et al., 2006). Institutionalism made a valuable contribution to the agency versus structure debate by suggesting that patterns of actions in organisations are shaped by institutions rather than other instrumental calculations (Meyer et al., 1977; DiMaggio et al., 1991). Consequently, institutional theory became a standard engine with which researchers explain the activities of individuals and groups in organisations (Cai et al., 2015). The theory emphasises the actors' actions' dependency on institutions and human actions' relevance to organisational change (Greenwood et al., 2008).

The theory emphasizes how institutions define, govern, and constrain the behaviour of social actors, making social life predictable and meaningful (North, 1990; DiMaggio et al., 1991; Scott, 2001; Mangi, 2009). However, scholars abandoned 20th-century institutionalism due to its limitations. This study, therefore, shifts away from the few institutional concepts that have been repeatedly and indiscriminately applied. Kostova, Roth, and Dacin (2008) argue that the theory places too much emphasis on socialization and suggests modifying it to reflect the complexities of organisational fields. Institutionalists have been encouraged to introduce more robustness and sophistication into the literature, leading to the rise of "new" or Neo-institutionalism, a reformation of institutional theory.

Neo-institutionalism

The Neo-institutional theory is an extended version of the institutional theory. However, scholars such as Mangi (2009) assert that this version of the theory has a distinct sociological flavour. In a highly influential and now classic essay, DiMaggio and Powell (1991) contend that the theory in its present form is not simply the 'old' sociology renewed, albeit it diverges systematically from early sociological approaches to organisational studies (Mangi, 2009). DiMaggio et al., (1991) distinguish institutional theory from Neo-institutional theory in organisational sociology by picking out the work of Philiph Selznick as the prototype for the old theory (institutional theory). This perspective is based on the observation that formal and informal institutions shape the behaviours of their social actors. The theory contends that organisations respond to social and symbolic pressures rather than economic pressures (Meyer et al., 1977).

Neo-institutional theory, while building on the foundations of institutional theory, integrates insights from various social science disciplines, such as economics and political science, to better understand organisational behaviour and practices. This updated approach explores how organisations adapt to shifts within their environments, focusing on how interactions between social actors shape competitive decisions and influence organisational behaviour. The theory's scope has broadened to include the transformation of institutions and the diversity of actors involved (Lounsbury et al., 2013). Though its primary roots lie in sociology and management, Neo-institutional theory also draws from cognitive and social psychology, anthropology, political science, and economics (Lounsbury et al., 2013). By foregrounding the cultural and cognitive dimensions of institutions, Neo-institutional theory offers a valuable lens for understanding how informal norms and societal expectations influence entrepreneurial behaviour (Scott, 2008).

Core Assumptions of the Theory

Institutionalism, rooted in sociological traditions, identifies similarities and convergence within organisations (Carvalho et al., 2003; Scott, 2001). Institutional theorists use sociological approaches to trace how certain practices spread across organisations, often by examining organisational culture and the meanings, beliefs, and values that emerge within these settings (Pedersen et al., 2006). According to institutional theorists, these meanings, beliefs, and values are socially constructed across numerous organisations through the creation of shared practices and the collective attribution of rationality or legitimacy to those practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio et al., 1983, 1991; Scott, 1995). A critical insight from Neo-institutionalism is the concept of task environments or organisational fields, where organisations observe and influence each other's behaviours (DiMaggio et al., 1983; Scott et al., 1983). Social actors strategically position themselves within these fields to access resources and capitalize on opportunities. The Neo-institutionalism model suggests that the survival of an organisation hinges on its ability to adapt to its external environment. In essence, organisations must effectively respond to external pressures to thrive (Kenyon et al., 2016). Proponents of this perspective argue that integrating institutional elements can enhance the organisation's perceived legitimacy, which in turn increases its likelihood of long-term success (Vargas-Hernandez, 2016).

Neo-institutionalists observed that organisations actively copy the practices of one another, resulting in a substantial similarity. Neo-institutionalism asserts that organisations copy practices and justificatory rhetorics that they observe in their space to symbolise and effect the prime legitimate goals of society justice and rationality (Pedersen et al., 2006). Organisational practices and behaviours are sometimes deliberately and conspicuously copied from the environment. In practice, managers draw on successful examples to construct their local cultures (Pedersen et al., 2006), shaping individual actors' behaviours (Scott, 1995). In other words, the Neo-institutionalism approach to organisational uniqueness emphasises that at any point, organisations claim similar sorts of uniqueness (Pedersen et al., 2006). As cited by Pedersen et al. (2006), "After all, the bottom line of Peters and Waterman's (1982) best seller on corporate cultures in their book, 'In search of Excellence suggests that all great organisations share key characteristics'." For instance, new enterprises choose a unique identity from an existing market participants.

The Neo-institutional context recursively shapes and is being shaped by a shared understanding of acceptable conduct to which organisations conform, leading to sector homogenization (Guth, 2016). In order for organisations to survive, Scott (1995), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), and Meyer and Rowan (1997) reported that these organisations must conform to the rules and belief systems prevailing in their environment. As actors learn from each other, organisational isomorphism (sameness and similar identities in structure and shape) ensures survival. Over time, all businesses within the same task environment adopt the exact strategies to reduce strife, ambiguity, uncertainty, and precarity (Greve et al., 2015). More so, institutionalists assert that organisational practices diffuse across members of a particular organisational field over time when considered rational (Pedersen et al.,, 2006; Meyer, 2010).

Neo-institutional theorists explain the relative permanence of institutions; according to the theory, institutionalisation processes cause a variety of structures to last over time. Similarly, with time, institutions become increasingly taken for granted, resulting in the relative permanence of some institutions (Zucker, 1977; Abrahamson et al., 2015). Due to uncertainty, entrepreneurs strive to acquire practices that endure overtime (Abrahamson, 1996). Neo-institutional theory has been concerned with how various entrepreneurs cope with tumultuous work conditions and turn to lean on each other (Greve et al., 2015). Institutions create regulations and social and cultural influences that improve survival and legitimacy rather than solely focusing on means to increase efficiency and productivity (Roy, 1997). Organisations directly or indirectly respond to three isomorphic pressures to achieve work acceptance (DiMaggio et al., 1983). In most modern organisations, policy measures, positions and procedures are enforced due to the general belief of 'society' (Meyer et al., 1977).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified three components of the theory, which elaborates on organisational culture and structure, imitation and how institutions are reproduced with time. These three dimensions include coercive isomorphism, normative isomorphism and mimetic isomorphism. The coercive dimension indicates that an organisation's behaviour result from the actions of agencies such as state regulatory bodies, both formal and informal, that exert pressure on organisations in their task environment. These regulative dimensions provide guidelines for new enterprises and may require new entrants to oblige with laws and establish regulations in regions or fields without laws or regulations. The formal and informal rules influence organisational behaviour and strategies.

The normative aspect of the institutional theory represents models of organisational and individual behaviour based on the obligatory dimensions of social, professional and organisational interaction (Bruton et al., 2010). Normative systems determine and guide organisational behaviours by defining an institution's correct code of conduct (Scott, 2007). The normative component of the theory is composed of norms and values that people must adapt (Bruton et al., 2010). The normative component exerts influence because a social obligation to comply is rooted in the social necessity of what an organisation should do (March et al., 1989).

Lastly, mimetic isomorphism explains organisations' tendency to follow successful firms during economic and political change and high uncertainty (Scott, 2007). DiMaggi et al., (1991) explain that managers mostly reinvent the wheel to reduce pressure because most organisations operate in penurious and ambiguous conditions. They copy, reproduce and imitate standards set by organisations perceived to be more successful and legitimate

(DiMaggio et al., 1991). This theory questions the conventional assumption that entrepreneurs can rationally locate opportunities. Instead, it posits that key sources of organisational behaviours, such as decision-making, are institutional features of social groups to which entrepreneurs belong (Greve, 2015). There is the transfer of routines (managerial and functional decisions) from parent organisations to new firms (Greve, 2015).

Why Neo-Institutional Theory? A Contextual Justification

The adoption of Neo-institutional theory in this study is grounded in its strong relevance for understanding how institutional forces influence entrepreneurship in precarious and informal contexts. Unlike traditional economic theories that assume rational decision-making in structured environments, Neo-institutional theory highlights how entrepreneurial behaviours are shaped by normative expectations, informal rules, and the pursuit of legitimacy within socially embedded environments. This perspective is particularly suited to the Ghanaian fashion industry, where formal regulatory frameworks are often weak or inconsistently applied, and where entrepreneurs operate within a complex landscape of cultural norms, kinship obligations, religious values, and community expectations. In such settings, entrepreneurs are compelled to navigate multiple institutional logics—balancing market competitiveness with social belonging, and innovation with conformity to traditional practices.

Neo-institutional theory enables an exploration of how mimetic behaviours, such as replicating the models of successful peers, and normative pressures, such as meeting societal standards of respectability and apprenticeship capacity, influence decision-making. Neo-institutionalism explains why entrepreneurs may pursue symbolic actions (e.g. training large numbers of apprentices or participating in public events) to gain legitimacy, even if such actions do not directly enhance economic performance.

Furthermore, the theory provides a useful lens for uncovering how informal institutions fill the gaps left by underdeveloped formal systems, offering critical insights into how entrepreneurs construct meaning, gain acceptance, and ensure survival under uncertain conditions. This aligns with the study's broader aim of understanding how hope-driven decision-making, resilience, and informal strategic actions shape entrepreneurial performance in the face of precarity. By situating the analysis within Neo-institutional theory, the research contributes to a more context-sensitive understanding of entrepreneurial behaviour, offering both conceptual depth and practical relevance. It also provides a foundation for policy discussions on how to support entrepreneurial ecosystems in ways that respect and leverage existing institutional norms and informal practices.

The Significance of Neo-Institutional Theory in Understanding Entrepreneurship

Neo-institutional theory, particularly in organisational studies and entrepreneurship research, underscores the critical role of the institutional environment in shaping entrepreneurial success or failure (Bruton et al., 2003). However, while the theory offers valuable insights into how organisational structures and practices become embedded or change (de Jonge, 2015), its application has often been limited to stable and predictable business environments.

The assumption that entrepreneurs can quickly identify opportunities (Greve, 2015) ignores the complexities and uncertainties in precarious work environments, where institutional weaknesses or instability severely constrain business startups (Kuijpers et al., 2021). This oversight is particularly striking in the context of the cultural and creative industries, prototypical examples of precarious work. These sectors are characterized by high levels of uncertainty, irregular income, and a lack of formal protective conditions that challenge the assumption that entrepreneurs operate with full agency.

Despite the growing body of research on institutional theory in entrepreneurship, much of this work remains rooted in the global North, where institutional frameworks tend to be more robust and supportive. In contrast, the experiences of entrepreneurs in the global South, who often contend with weak or fragmented institutions, still need to be explored. This thesis argues that the current Neo-institutionalism framework needs to address the nuanced realities of decision-making in precarious environments. Entrepreneurs in such contexts are not merely passive recipients of institutional constraints; they actively develop strategies to navigate these challenges. Thus, this research challenges conventional wisdom on entrepreneurial decision-making by applying Neo-institutionalism to the cultural and creative industries.

It explores how entrepreneurs in precarious environments exercise agency, not by locating opportunities within stable structures, but by constantly adapting to, negotiating with, and sometimes resisting the weak or unstable institutional conditions in which they operate. This argument thus shifts the focus from institutions as determinants of success or failure to entrepreneurs as active agents who co-construct their environments through their decisions and strategies. It calls for re-examining institutional theory's applicability in precarious work settings. It emphasises the need for a more contextually sensitive approach, particularly in regions of the global South historically marginalized in entrepreneurship research.

The institutionalism instruments are applied to the field of cultural production to analyse the uncertainty, strife and ambiguity of the industry that are unavoidable. Researchers of cultural and creative industries describe decision-making's complexity and fragility (Bielby et al., 1994; Godart et al., 2009; Franssen et al., 2013). There is an ample consensus that the Neo-institutional theory offers a powerful approach to the study of precarious labour in the fashion industry; however, it is surprising that little time has been spent in the discussions on the most appropriate approach. A growing number of academics are applying Neo-institutional theory to the study of creative workers, as it provides a rich theoretical foundation to examine a wide range of critical topics and allows the theory in multiple levels of essential analysis for the study of creatives.

Some of the fundamental applications of the institutional theory within the literature of cultural production include studies that have examined how creative workers adopt somewhat similar strategies in their decision-making when faced with increasing uncertainty, competition, and excess supply (Franssen et al., 2013). Other authors have also explored how creative producers, such as network programmers of a highly institutionalized context, rely on reputation, imitation and genre as rhetorical strategies to rationalize and legitimize their actions (Bielby et al., 1994).

Neo-Institutional Theory and Entrepreneurial Behaviour

Neo-institutional theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how entrepreneurs' behaviours are shaped not only by market forces or individual traits, but also by deeply embedded institutional logics, norms, and cultural expectations (Scott, 2008). Within the Ghanaian fashion industry, particularly in the informal sector, entrepreneurial decision-making and performance are influenced by a complex interplay of social, cultural, and personal factors that reflect the institutional environment in which these entrepreneurs operate.

Neo-institutional theory helps explain intuition as an internalised response to institutional norms and repeated socialisation. Entrepreneurs act "intuitively" because certain ways of responding have become institutionalised and legitimised over time through practice in their cultural and industry context. These internalised behaviours are taken for granted over time, becoming part of the habitual repertoire that guides entrepreneurial action without requiring conscious deliberation (Scott, 2008). As these patterns of thought and response are continuously reinforced by social norms, peer behaviours, and institutional expectations, they acquire a sense of legitimacy and normalcy. Consequently, entrepreneurs may perceive their intuitive decisions not as subjective impulses but as appropriate and expected responses shaped by the institutional environment in which they operate.

Taste is influenced by established aesthetic norms and cultural expectations. What is deemed stylish or appropriate is not a matter of individual preference but rather a social construct reinforced by institutions such as training schools, media, and community standards. Cultural intermediaries, normative agents who play a key role in determining trends and influencing creative designs, shape this process. Factors such as intuition and taste, for example, are not merely personal dispositions but are shaped by historically and culturally embedded understandings of what constitutes style, quality, and innovation. Through continuous socialisation particularly via apprenticeships and peer interactions entrepreneurs internalise what is considered appropriate or desirable, allowing them to respond “intuitively” to changing consumer demands or emerging trends. These responses are guided by institutionalised norms that define success and legitimacy within the fashion field.

The role of cultural intermediaries further reinforces normative isomorphism. These actors, including trainers, influencers, and local fashion icons, function as institutional agents who shape and legitimise taste, reinforce aesthetic standards, and influence consumption patterns. Their presence strengthens the diffusion of specific logic within the industry, thereby shaping both consumer preferences and entrepreneurial responses.

Neo-institutional theory considers networks as carriers of institutional logics. Social networks are not just support systems; they also reproduce norms, values, and expectations within a field, thereby shaping what actions are considered legitimate or viable. Social networks also function as institutional carriers, transmitting shared understandings and norms that guide behaviour. These networks are not only instrumental in providing access to resources and information but also serve as channels through which institutional expectations such as acceptable forms of branding, pricing, or apprenticeship recruitment are disseminated and reinforced.

Neo-institutional theory explicitly recognises cultural values as key elements of the institutional environment. These values shape what is seen as appropriate behaviour, influencing decision-making, work ethic, and definitions of success. While this may seem individual, neo-institutional theory sees experience as socially embedded. What one learns or internalises through experience is shaped by institutional structures (e.g., norms learned during apprenticeship or family business involvement).

Perceived uncertainty is often heightened in institutional environments that are fragmented, weak, or rapidly changing common in informal sectors. Entrepreneurs develop ways to navigate this uncertainty, often guided by institutional cues and informal norms. Competition is shaped by institutional logics of performance and success. What counts as “outperforming others” (e.g., having more apprentices, higher visibility) is socially defined. Neo-institutional theory helps unpack how these definitions are constructed and sustained.

Moreover, psychological resources such as resilience and hope are best understood within this institutional lens. These are not simply individual capacities but are embedded in broader cultural narratives and social norms that encourage perseverance despite uncertainty or limited formal support. Hope, for instance, is sustained by collective beliefs in the possibility of upward mobility through entrepreneurial success, while resilience is nurtured through repeated exposure to the institutional demands of informal work, including delayed payments, unstable demand, and competition.

Applying Neo-Institutional Theory to a Precarious Work Context

As precarity has become a central theme in organisational studies, management research, and cultural production, Neo-institutional theory has been at the heart of debates among scholars studying its impact on the decision-making and performance of creative workers. However, despite the attention it has received, research in business strategy and creative labor often struggles to fully interpret how Neo-institutional theory explains organisational behavior in precarious situations. A key misunderstanding revolves around which strand of institutionalism supports the idea that decision-making becomes uniform under conditions of precarity. This study aims to clarify these misconceptions by examining how entrepreneurs in the fashion industry make decisions, perform, and respond to the challenges, uncertainties, and insecurities of the industry. Creative industries in emerging markets face low levels of institutionalisation and high levels of precarity, which limit entrepreneurs' ability to make decisions and assess opportunities (Tracey et al., 2011). Institutions significantly impact shaping organisational behaviour, heavily influencing decision-making and actions taken.

Decisions primarily emanate from standardised patterns of behaviour, norms and conventions found across and within institutions (Powell et al., 1991). Entrepreneurs find themselves both restricted and supported by the institutions within their environment (Bruton et al., 2010). These institutional forces can act as barriers and stepping stones, shaping entrepreneurs' paths in their decision-making and business development. Institutional isomorphism, for example, earmarks organisational behaviour, as observed among creative entrepreneurs who derive meaning from a broader context rather than building custom-made solutions in precarious markets (Godart et al., 2009). Usually, entrepreneurs think they are making individual decisions when, in actual sense, their choices, selections and decisions are influenced by their social connections and the decisions of others (Lieberson, 2000; Cialdini et al., 2004; Torres et al., 2020). Fashion entrepreneurs are never solely responsible for their decisions; they routinely rely on information received from their networks and others (Godart et al., 2009).

Neo-institutionalists argue that in times of radical uncertainty, social actors tend to imitate the practices of others within their field as a strategy to reduce risk and uncertainty. However, they do not mimic just anyone (van Baaren et al., 2009). Instead, they are more likely to imitate those they perceive as sharing similarities such as individuals with the same beliefs, gender, or ethnic and cultural identity (Molnar-Szakacs et al., 2007). In the fashion industry, for instance, entrepreneurs navigate the precarious nature of the industry by following the practices of successful brands. Many designers track both local and global trends to stay relevant and meet evolving consumer demands. Decision-making in the fashion industry is 'reciprocal,' meaning each entrepreneur's choices are shaped by the decisions of others, who are similarly influenced (Godart et al., 2009). Therefore, it is misleading to assume that fashion entrepreneurs operate independently when making decisions in precarious environments they are continually influenced by the actions of their peers or professional colleagues.

Although entrepreneurs depend on their unique sense and inclinations to construct their brand identity, styles, and designs (Glynn et al., 2002), it is impossible to downplay the similarities in fashion organisations. However, other researchers suggest that by focusing on isomorphism, Neo-institutionalism exaggerates actual commonalities in the organisational field (Mangi, 2009; Sieweke, 2014). Brands in the fashion industry often adopt proven strategies, leading to increased similarity across the sector.

Faced with pressures, entrepreneurs in a highly institutionalized context conform to the norms, standards and procedures of their field to rationalize and legitimize their actions (Godart et al., 2009). In navigating the industry's difficulties, fashion entrepreneurs must provide legitimate accounts for their decisions by following established industry patterns. Following fashion trends, for instance, is a framing device that serves as a reference for emerging and established brands' credibility. Even before an entrepreneur releases a collection, the 'potential' clothing line must be linked to a collection that is widely perceived as familiar and will resonate with consumers. In the cultural industries, the success of a new product is a 'fluke' or cannot be known prior (Bielby et al., 1994). As such, the reputation of a brand determines its success. This suggests that in a highly volatile industry, reputation and credibility legitimize the success or failure of the enterprise (Powell, 1991).

Similarly, linking a new collection to a well-known celebrity establishes an association with a familiar and successful commodity. For instance, fashion entrepreneurs rely on cultural intermediaries to ascertain the demand patterns of consumers and determine market possibilities. If a collection achieves success, other brands are likely to view it as a benchmark, leading them to imitate, transmute, modify or draw inspiration from the designer's concepts to develop their own collections for that season.

Fashion entrepreneurs navigate the market precarity of the industry by relying on their formal or informal networks to receive ideas and converge on similar ideas (Godart et al., 2009). Fashion entrepreneurs also value passing on tips to other fashion entrepreneurs in their social networks, easing an uncertain decision-making process. Entrepreneurs benefit from shared information in their professional meetings to manage the instability of the industry (Salganik et al., 2006). The constraints of the fashion industry tend to shape owner-managers quest to be abreast with the hottest style, trend, distribution, and marketing channels (Godart et al., 2009). Fashion, however short-lived, thrives on the social cumulative advantage of the quality and quantity of the entrepreneurs' network.

Criticisms of the Neo-institutional Theory

Although this theoretical framework has significantly contributed to the development of various disciplines, it has notable shortcomings. One key issue is the lack of a clear distinction between normative and coercive isomorphism, as seen in contemporary theoretical discussions. The blurred line between these two forms of isomorphic pressures allows for easy extrapolation to contexts with well-defined fields. However, such structures become less relevant in environments where owner-managers, like those in the cultural and creative industries, play both managerial and operational roles, making it difficult to apply the theory as effectively.

A key limitation of Neo-institutional theory is its emphasis on stability and conformity to institutional norms, rather than explaining organisational change and the role of individual agency (Seo & Creed, 2002). Beckert (1999) highlights this issue, noting that early versions of the theory struggled to address interest-driven behavior and institutional change. In response, scholars began to emphasize the importance of agency and motivational factors that drive organisational similarity (Tolbert, 1977; Beckert, 1999).

However, Neo-institutional theory's emphasis on conformity and stability can stifle the cultivation of hope among entrepreneurs and social actors. By portraying institutions as monolithic forces that compel actors to adopt similar practices, the theory undermines the potential for individuals to harness hope as a motivating factor in their decision-making. This lack of attention to hope limits the theory's applicability, particularly in dynamic and creative fields where uncertainty, and instability are defining features of the industry.

While institutional universality suggests that social actors can mimic their competitors for short-term advantages, neglecting hope restricts understanding how the agency can drive meaningful change. Imagining and working towards alternative futures is critical for fostering organisational resilience and adaptability. Thus, the limitations of Neo-institutional theory become evident when it fails to account for hope, which is essential for enabling individuals to navigate and reshape their institutional landscapes.

Neo-institutional theorists have largely overlooked the role of agency, power, interests, and change, instead focusing on mimesis, conformity, homogeneity, and the diffusion of institutions within organisational fields (DiMaggio et al., 1983, 1991). As a result, the theory needs to work on explaining how change occurs within organisations due to its narrow emphasis on institutional stability. Despite its significant contributions to organisational studies, critics and management researchers continue to question how the theory accounts for divergence, resistance, and coercion in cultural fields. The assumption of institutional universality implies that social actors can adopt the practices of their competitors, potentially gaining a competitive edge in uncertain environments. While this approach may provide short-term benefits by allowing actors to keep pace with competitors, it ultimately stifles competition and undermines long-term competitive advantage (Delery et al., 1996; Farndale et al., 2007).

When applying Neo-institutionalism, it is essential to consider how personal characteristics and individual inclinations influence organisational behavior, particularly decision-making. Neo-institutionalists tend to overemphasize external factors, which leaves significant gaps in understanding. The theory focuses heavily on organisational analysis while neglecting individual-level dynamics (Mangi, 2009). Consequently, the question of how entrepreneurs are empowered to engage in divergent organisational operations and functions remains unanswered.

Bourdieu (1996) challenged the reasoning behind isomorphism. The notion that homogenizing pressures exert similar influences across an organisational field has led to differing opinions among researchers, raising concerns about the sources of institutional pressures, the similarity of decisions, and ethical considerations (Mangi, 2009). Therefore, studies that employ institutional theory as a framework must take into account both internal and external factors to adequately explain decision-making within an organisational field.

In summary, institutional theory highlights the relevance of structure, routines and norms and how these factors influence organisational behaviours. Besides its regulative pillars, institutionalists explain how behaviours are acquired and why changes occur. The theory fits well within the activities of fashion entrepreneurs, who rely strongly on routines and draw inspiration directly and indirectly from society and their social niche in volatile environments. However, entrepreneurs aim to be creative, innovative, resourceful, and inimitable while establishing a unique selling proposition. This is why institutionalists emphasize multiplicity or multiple logic in an institutional field.

2.1.2 Theory of Practice

Since its introduction over 30 years ago, practice theory has become one of the most frequently cited and influential theories in explaining and predicting complex and subtle social structures and relationships that contribute to differences in the practices of social actors (Bourdieu et al., 1992; Apps et al., 2019). Interest in the work of the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu has remained the same since he died in 2002. His scholarly works continue to attract attention and inform scholarly works, education, and practice across many disciplines. Bourdieu's theory of practice critically reflects one of the oldest problems in Western intellectual tradition: the relationship between individuals and society (Mangi, 2002). The theory of practice is also perceived as a reaction not only to Althusserian Marxism but also to the French structuralism of Levi-Strauss by extending the notion of economic interest to admittedly non-economic realms such as culture and by adopting the notion of 'strategy' (Mangi, 2009). While Bourdieu was perceived as distancing himself from strict forms of structuralism, he also assumed a distinct yet political position in a highly competitive French intellectual scene (Mangi, 2009).

Bourdieu's intent with strategy was not to suggest a particular type of conduct outside the constraints of normative sets. Instead, he sought to emphasize that even in normative situations, actions involve uncertainty and produce results that may not necessarily be clear or predictable for the actors involved to some extent (Mangi, 2009). Further, he argued that strategies are still available under the most ritualized forms of conduct. For Bourdieu, whether or not actors conform to norms or follow prescribed rituals depends on their interests. Efforts by his critics and followers to summarise the rich complexity of his work have proved futile (Robbins, 1991; Wacquant, 1992; Swartz, 1997; Jenkins, 2002; Calhoun, 2003). Rather than indicators of specific empirical phenomena or building blocks of systematic theory, his theory's salient beliefs have been understood as heuristic devices for communicating a general approach to studying the social world (Calhoun et al., 1993).

Components of the Theory of Practice

Bourdieu's theory of practice addressed the many dimensions of sociological classifications, including agency/structure, micro/macro, empirical/theoretical, material/symbolic, public/private, subjective/objective, and freedom/necessity (Bourdieu, 1990; Power, 1999). Indeed, Bourdieu perceives his approach as transcending this classic dualism by stressing the dual character of social life and insisting that social reality exists inside and outside individuals, both in our minds and in things (Wacquant, 1998).

Bourdieusian tenets range from highly conceptual, quasi-philosophical explorations to survey research. The practice theory has been used in some disciplines and its concepts have been applied in different research areas including the cultural and creative industries (Bielby et al., 1994; Franssen et al., 2013; Schriber, 2014, 2018), entrepreneurship (Steer, 2001; Judge et al., 2007; Bruton et al., 2010; Tatli et al., 2014), education (Nash, 1990; Gunter, 2002), food and nutrition (Power, 1999), technology (Lingard et al., 2015; Apps et al., 2019), nursing (Souzza et al., 2016), and within political research (Schugurensky, 2000; Kauppi, 2003). The applications of the theory in these domains provide valuable insights into the theory's suitability in research.

Bourdieusians view society as a site of endless and relentless competition, leading to individual differences and uniqueness; this tension is essential for social life (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu's societal concerns include understanding the practical logic of everyday life and social actions, exploring relations of power and dominance, and developing a reflexive approach to studying society (Bourdieu, 1990; Power, 1999). Within the theory of practice, competition both for resources and for identity emerges as the central problem of a social field. Rather than adaptation and uncertainty, conflict serves as the primary structuring mechanism in cultural fields. Bourdieusian fields often revolve around the polarity of culture and economy, as well as art and commerce (Franssen et al., 2013). Informed by habitus, culture, and capital, aesthetic decisions are expected to occur spontaneously, guided by the "magic of the field" (Bourdieu, 1993), which helps to erase uncertainties. However, the various definitions offered by Bourdieu converge on the common assumption that action is a product of deeply ingrained dispositions.

Salient Beliefs of Theory of Practice

By introducing the concepts of habitus, capital, and field, Bourdieu elucidated how individuals interact within their operational environments (Schreiber, 2014). Through these interactions, whether consciously or unconsciously, individuals in the same field develop similar organisational practices over time, a phenomenon known as isomorphism among institutionalists (DiMaggio et al., 1983). While similarities among actors arise from the structured nature of their organisational field, each actor also constructs a unique identity. According to Bourdieu, recognition and distinction referred to as polymorphism are central to social existence. Many actors seek social recognition for their individuality and achievements, rather than merely accumulating wealth and status by mimicking others. It is inherent in individuals to make distinct decisions (Bourdieu, 1977). Thus, a comprehensive analyses of elements that influence decision-making will contribute to the knowledge on the concepts (habitus, capital and field) that informs the actor's decisions. The following sections will elaborate more on the various components of the theory of practice.

Components of the Theory of Practice

The concept of actors as "practical strategists" is connected to social structures through Bourdieu's habitus, field, and capital framework, which seeks to reconcile the classical individual/society dichotomy.

Habitus

Bourdieu's various definitions of habitus converge on the idea that deeply ingrained dispositions shape actions. As a result, habitus emerges from early socialization experiences in which external structures are internalized as dispositions, guiding the criteria for what is considered possible or unlikely, familiar or strange, within a particular group in a stratified social context. Moreover, Bourdieu noted that habitus is not limited to individuals; those within the same field are likelier to exhibit similar dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990). Actors socialized within a field tend to adopt comparable qualities (Schreiber, 1994). Bourdieu described this phenomenon as the development of a standard schema, worldview, and perceptions shaped through communal experiences. The concept of habitus emphasizes that our behaviours are products of past experiences reinforced through social interactions with other actors and societal institutions (Schreiber, 2014). In practice, while individuals actively make decisions and construct their realities, Bourdieu explained that their experiences and inherent tendencies often constrain this active engagement.

Field

Bourdieu's various definitions of habitus converge on the idea that deeply ingrained dispositions shape actions. As a result, habitus emerges from early socialization experiences in which external structures are internalized as dispositions, guiding the criteria for what is considered possible or unlikely, familiar or strange, within a particular group in a stratified social context. Moreover, Bourdieu noted that habitus is not limited to individuals; those within the same field are likely to exhibit similar dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990). Actors socialized within a field tend to adopt comparable qualities (Schreiber, 1994). Bourdieu described this phenomenon as the development of a standard schema, worldview, and perceptions shaped through communal experiences. The concept of habitus emphasizes that our behaviours are products of past experiences reinforced through social interactions with other actors and societal institutions (Schreiber, 2014). In practice, while individuals actively make decisions and construct their realities, Bourdieu explained that their experiences and inherent tendencies often constrain this active engagement.

Bourdieu argued that every field operates with its own set of rules, and entering a field means tacitly accepting those rules. This acceptance legitimizes certain forms of competition while excluding others. For a field to function, it must have agents with the appropriate habitus who are committed to engaging in it. Newcomers must "pay an admission fee," which involves recognizing the value of the field and learning how to operate within it. To hold dominant positions, individuals need to master the rules of the game. Those shaped by their field often have a better advantage in navigating its challenges than those unfamiliar with its norms. Additionally, fields cannot exist without capital, as Bourdieu emphasized (Swartz, 1997).

Capital

Bourdieu extends the concept of capital beyond economics, viewing it as any form of power, whether material, cultural, social, or symbolic. Capital operates as a social relation within an exchange system, where individuals use various forms of capital to maintain, alter, or enhance their position in the social hierarchy. It acts as the "social energy" that empowers agents in the struggles within their competitive fields and serves as the "fuel" driving social change. Capital makes social dynamics more than mere games of chance, offering continuous opportunities for transformation (Bourdieu, 1989). His theory of capital suggests that individuals' different types of capital determine their position in a field and influence social behaviour patterns. Moreover, the acquisition and accumulation of these capitals are shaped by one's socialization experiences.

Bourdieu identifies three main types of capital: social, cultural, and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1986). Economic capital, for instance, refers to the material wealth individuals derive from assets, including intellectual property. Cultural capital encompasses knowledge, skills, tastes, and cultural preferences, which may be embodied or expressed through material resources or institutional qualifications. Social capital, on the other hand, refers to an individual's contacts, affiliations, and networks, both formal and informal, and their ability to benefit from these connections (Bourdieu & Richardson, 1986). It includes social ties, links, and group memberships acquired through various support relationships. Unlike other forms of capital, social capital is developed through individual effort and is considered a long- or short-term investment (Mangi, 2009; Schriber, 2014). For example, when someone joins a club, association, or organisation, they gain access to benefits such as symbolic recognition or potential economic capital through their participation in the field. As such, the actor understands the advantages of belonging to such associations (Bourdieu, 1986).

Symbolic capital refers to the prestige, reputation, recognition, and influence one acquires within a particular field, enabling them to navigate its challenges effectively. By enhancing an individual's social standing, symbolic capital becomes a source of power, allowing them to attract other forms of capital, secure favorable contracts, and negotiate better deals with suppliers and collaborators. Unlike many other forms of capital identified by Bourdieu, symbolic capital is subjective. It shapes a shared sense of value and prestige that, in turn, facilitates access to other forms of power.

In the cultural and creative industries, particularly the fashion sector, symbolic capital can be customer compliments, awards, social media following, and government contracts. For industry workers, these elements represent some of the highest levels of symbolic capital. Such accolades are often converted into other forms of power, creating a sense-making structure (Weick, 1995; Hadida, 2015) that influences both current financial performance and future earnings. This symbolic capital may also impact consumer buying behaviour (Keuschingg, 2015).

In a competitive and exchange-driven system, various forms of capital hold distinct values across different fields (Apps et al., 2019). As Apps and colleagues emphasize, capital is dynamic; it evolves within and across fields, with the potential to accumulate over time and transform into diverse forms. This fluidity means that capital is neither static nor uniformly accumulated, allowing for frequent exchanges between its various types. In Ghana's fashion industry, which is marked by a precarious work environment, the decision-making and coping strategies of entrepreneurs can be profoundly understood through the theory of practice. This theory emphasizes the significance of habitus, field, and capital. The intricate interplay among these elements has the potential to significantly impact organisational practices, particularly in influencing entrepreneurial decision-making processes.

Justification for Using Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Bourdieu's theory of practice provides an essential interpretive lens for examining how individual and collective actions in the Ghanaian fashion industry are shaped by deeply rooted social structures and embodied dispositions. Central to this theory are the interrelated concepts of habitus, field, and capital, which together help explain how entrepreneurs internalise social norms and respond to their environment in ways that appear intuitive but are socially conditioned.

In this study, Bourdieu's framework enables a closer examination of how entrepreneurs' behaviours are informed by historical experiences, cultural values, and access to various forms of capital economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. For instance, decisions about training others, showcasing work in public spaces, or forming strategic relationships are not just strategic business moves, but also practices grounded in habitus shaped by prior exposure, apprenticeship traditions, and the desire to attain respect and recognition within the field.

The field of fashion entrepreneurship in Ghana is marked by competition, social stratification, and unequal access to resources. Within this context, Bourdieu's lens makes it possible to explore how entrepreneurs position themselves, gain influence, and maintain legitimacy, especially when navigating precarious working conditions and limited institutional support. The theory also reveals how hope and resilience emerge not only as psychological traits but also as practical coping strategies grounded in a shared cultural logic.

By applying Bourdieu's theory of practice, the study offers a more nuanced understanding of agency one that is socially situated rather than purely individualistic. This supports the study's broader objective of uncovering how embedded practices and socio-cultural dynamics shape entrepreneurial decision-making and performance in informal, uncertain environments.

Understanding Entrepreneurial Practice through Bourdieu's Lens

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of practice, the decision-making and success of entrepreneurs in the fashion industry can be understood as the outcome of their interaction with the field, shaped by the accumulation and deployment of various forms of capital and the dispositions of their habitus. Intuition, often described as a 'gut feeling,' reflects an embodied habitus internalised over time through sustained engagement with the fashion field enabling entrepreneurs to make swift, context-sensitive decisions. Intuition, in this context, is an outcome of embodied habitus, structured by past experiences and continually reinforced by routine engagement in the field. Entrepreneurs accumulate tacit knowledge over time, enabling them to make quick, context sensitive decisions that appear instinctive but are grounded in embodied experience.

Similarly, taste reflects the internalised preferences and aesthetic sensibilities shaped by one's habitus and cultural capital. In the fashion industry an entrepreneur's taste influences product design and banding, and also signals social distinction and identity. Taste, as a manifestation of cultural capital, reflects the classed and gendered dispositions entrepreneurs bring into the field, shaping both their offerings and their audience appeal. Taste is not merely a matter of personal preference but a product of cultural capital and social upbringing, which informs aesthetic judgement and strategic product positioning.

Cultural intermediaries such as influencers, stylists, and community gatekeepers play a critical role in the fashion field by legitimising particular styles and practices, thus mediating access to symbolic capital. Cultural intermediaries function within the field as agents who confer symbolic capital, shaping hierarchies of legitimacy and visibility among fashion entrepreneurs.

Social networks represent a key form of social capital and resources embedded in durable social relationships that entrepreneurs draw upon for support, information, market access, and reputation building. In contexts where formal institutional support is limited, these networks provide vital informational, emotional, and material resources, enabling entrepreneurs to navigate uncertainty and sustain their ventures. Social capital, in the form of interpersonal networks and community ties, is critical to navigating the field, especially in settings where formal support structures are limited.

Resilience and hope, while often viewed as psychological traits, can also be understood through habitus as enduring dispositions developed in response to long-term exposure to precarious working conditions. Resilience emerges as a habitualised response to structural constraints and uncertainties, embedded in the lived realities of navigating a precarious field. Hope shapes forward-looking strategies and sustains entrepreneurial engagement despite uncertainty, while resilience reflects the capacity to adapt and persist. Hope, while intangible, is embodied in the dispositions of entrepreneurs who learn to anticipate possibility even within constrained structural conditions

Cultural values function as part of the field's doxa the taken-for-granted norms that guide behaviour and serve to align entrepreneurial practices with socially sanctioned expectations, particularly in collectivist contexts. Cultural values act as structuring structures, shaping entrepreneurial conduct by aligning decision-making with what is deemed socially and morally appropriate. Personal experience further shapes habitus, enabling entrepreneurs to refine their strategies and develop a practical sense or "feel for the game" that is crucial in navigating a competitive and unpredictable environment. Through repeated exposure to specific conditions, personal experience becomes sedimented into habitus, shaping entrepreneurial perception and response.

Perceived uncertainty is not simply a structural condition but is interpreted and managed through the lens of habitus; entrepreneurs evaluate risks and opportunities based on their embodied histories and access to capital. Perceived uncertainty foregrounds the disjuncture between structured constraints and individual agency, highlighting how habitus mediates adaptive decision-making.

Finally, competition within the field highlights the relational nature of entrepreneurial positioning. Success depends not only on individual capabilities but on how well one's accumulated capital whether economic, social, cultural, or symbolic matches the logic of the field. Together, these factors underscore how entrepreneurial practices are not merely rational responses to market conditions but are socially and culturally embedded, shaped by the interplay between structure and agency. The field is inherently competitive, and an entrepreneur's ability to position themselves effectively is a function of their capital configuration and strategic sense.

2.1.3 Relevance of the Theory of Practice the current thesis

The work of Bourdieu is widely cited in studies of cultural production (Holt, 1997; Prieur et al., 2008; Dowd et al., 2009) and informs works on artists' career building (Anheier et al., 1995; Pinheiro & Dowd, 2009; Craig et al., 2010). However, the present study adopts a different approach in applying Bourdieusian concepts. Here, the researcher examines how fashion producers act in entrepreneurial ways in a constrained context to mobilize, generate, and convert resources in navigating the compounded precarity of the industry. Therefore, this research focuses on the ongoing and adept use of field, habitus, and capital in examining fashion entrepreneurs' decision-making in a precarious work context. In this way, fashion entrepreneurs' habitus is generative of their responses to precarity in their social fields. Their habitus influence their tastes, preferences, and decision-making processes and shape their responses to competition in their field.

A thorough analysis of an entrepreneur's industry, considering operational norms and regulations, can reveal their strategic approach to business practices and identify pathways for acquiring the capital needed to capitalise on opportunities. Within the entrepreneur's specific industry, opportunities exist to build connections with industry players, access relevant resources and information, effectively compete, generate, mobilize, and convert capital required to navigate their fields.

Fashion entrepreneurs accumulate and deploy different forms of capital to establish their presence in the industry. This study begins with limited economic capital and explores how Bourdieu's alternative forms of capital, symbolic, social, and cultural, provide valuable resources. These forms of capital can be generated, mobilized, and exchanged to help entrepreneurs navigate industry challenges.

As Bourdieu (1997) asserts, "the real logic of the functioning of capital is the conversion from one type to another." In the fashion industry, entrepreneurs must convert different forms capital into economic gains for the survival of their businesses. For example, entrepreneurs in this industry rely on the support of family, friends, and colleagues when starting their ventures. The process involves leveraging these alternative resources within their social fields to gain both financial success and symbolic gains.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power is especially relevant in the fashion industry, where trends and styles carry more than just functional value they hold deep symbolic meaning. The ability to shape and influence tastes, trends, and cultural symbols is a powerful tool often wielded by influential designers, fashion houses, and media figures. For emerging brands entering this highly competitive field, success requires more than just creative talent or managerial skills. These brands must produce collections that stretch beyond their immediate capabilities and resources to capture the attention of key players, such as cultural intermediaries. One common strategy is aligning with these intermediaries or gaining visibility through celebrity endorsements. Such associations not only show case the brand's abilities but also signal its seriousness and commitment to the industry. This kind of strategic positioning is essential for emerging designers to stand out and build credibility in the eyes of those who can shape their future success.

Independent fashion professionals might exchange garments with cultural intermediaries in exchange for promoting the brand on their platforms. Barter trade in the fashion industry allows emerging brands to access resources, services, or products they need without the immediate exchange of money. Hence, connecting with these super connectors remains a defining feature of the field. Fashion entrepreneurs engage in self-construction in a highly competitive arena, deftly manipulating the symbolic forces of recognition such as hits, hype, and a substantial social media following across various platforms. This deliberate approach aims to cultivate an audience, stimulate consumption, and generate marketable values.

Criticisms of Theory of Practice

However, recent critiques like Yang's (2014) have targeted Bourdieu's theory of practice. Yang argues that Bourdieu focuses excessively on structuralist reproduction and claims that his constructs are too obscure and weak to be effectively applied in broader contexts. The most criticized element in Bourdieu's theory is the assumption that all actors are locked in a "classification struggle," striving to dominate the field (Becker et al., 2006). Swartz (1997) points out that Bourdieu's framework lacks sufficient theoretical depth, which makes it challenging for researchers to apply and test empirically.

Bourdieu's theory often generalizes social actors, suggesting that their success or ability to gain capital is primarily determined by their position within social structures and their capital types (economic, cultural, symbolic, and social). However, this perspective can be overly simplistic and only sometimes accounts for individual agency and creativity's dynamic and multifaceted nature. Take Ghana's fashion industry as an example. The success stories of designers like Fatsu Couture, Johz Trends, Poqua poqu, Sante Trends, Jane Emmette, MarkClems, and other designers illustrate how individual agency, creativity, and strategic use of resources can defy structural limitations. This transformation highlights that success in the fashion industry is not solely about one's initial social position or the capital one inherits. Instead, it involves leveraging unique skills, creativity, and strategic networking. Therefore, Bourdieu's over generalisation needs to capture how individuals navigate and reshape their social environments to achieve success and gain capital, as evidenced by the dynamic evolution of Ghana's fashion industry.

Additionally, Bourdieu's theory tends to downplay the agency of social actors in shaping their paths to success. In Ghana's fashion sector, many entrepreneurs exhibit resilience and innovation, adapting their strategies to overcome challenges and seize opportunities. They often create alternative avenues for capital accumulation, such as engaging with local influencers, utilizing social media for marketing, and participating in fashion shows that highlight their work. As noted by Turner (2007), Bourdieu's concept of habitus has faced criticism and scepticism. One major issue is that habitus should be more noticed and utilized, especially when analyzing the dynamics of fields, without considering the actors' dispositions. This happens because Bourdieu's ideas are profoundly interconnected and do not function well in isolation. Consequently, attempts to use only parts of his theory often fail to effectively capture the complexity of the social fields.

Critics argue that the absence of a clear conceptual tool to connect the social structures within Bourdieu's framework has made it challenging to fully account for everyday practices and the evolving dynamics of social fields. Additionally, the theory needs to address embedded agency adequately in how individuals become socially situated within a field and navigate the balancing of different identities and competing interests that arise within it.

2.1.4 Synthesisation of Theories

While these theoretical perspectives originated on two different continents, they share many important assumptions, especially their epistemological aversion to determinism and their focus on a relational approach (Emirbayer et al., 2008). Both theories offer valuable insights into the understanding of social structures, institutions, and individual behavior in different contexts. Like many production of culture studies, the analysis of the decision-making processes of fashion entrepreneurs in a precarious work context such as Ghana’s fashion industry, the study combines insights from Neo-institutionalism and theory of practice in light of the challenges mentioned about the uncertainty, ambiguity and insecurities of the industry.

In complex environments marked by precarity, Neo-institutionalism emphasises the role of formal structures and organisations in shaping behaviour. Bourdieu's theory of practice also considers the influence of social structures, particularly habitus, a force that guides the perceptions and actions of social actors. Within this theoretical landscape, the logic of the field and the specific roles held by actors within it act as guiding constraints on their thoughts and behaviours. Neo-institutionalism posits that actors' worldviews mediate between the field and practice, influencing how individuals interpret and respond to institutional influences.

Similarly, Bourdieu's theory emphasizes power dynamics as the mediating mechanism between a social field's structure and the actors' actions within it. Here, the capacity to negotiate and navigate the intricacies of a field becomes crucial, allowing actors to accumulate the necessary resources to cope with the challenges their environment poses effectively. This negotiation process becomes a critical element in understanding how social actors strategically engage with and adapt to the dynamics of their surroundings. Neo-institutional theory frequently highlights the limiting impact of institutions. By integrating Bourdieu's concept of agency and observing how individuals strategically navigate their social fields, guided by habitus, social actors employ strategic practices to negotiate and resist the pressures imposed by institutions.

Integrating Neo-institutionalism and the theory of practice proves insightful when considering the challenges of fierce competition, demand uncertainty, and an oversupply of fashion products. These challenges disproportionately affect fashion entrepreneurs, particularly in the global South, intensifying the precarious nature of the industry. By merging these two frameworks, the researcher identified a valuable perspective: Neo-institutionalism reminds us that the organisational field encompasses more than power and status struggles. At the same time, Bourdieu's theory highlights that decision-making in uncertain contexts involves more than just seeking conformity or homogeneity. This dual perspective provides a richer understanding of the nuanced decision-making processes in the fashion industry, especially in regions where economic and institutional challenges heighten the need for creativity and adaptability.

2.1.5 Theory of Hope

Early psychologists have significantly contributed to scientific discussions on topics such as hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy from different perspectives (Colla et al., 2022). Over the years, hope has caught the attention of many philosophers, poets, artists, scientists and social scientists (Colla et al., 2022). The concept of hope has resulted in divergent opinions in the discourse of social scientists (Gergen, 1990), resulting in several definitions and theories (Lopez et al., 2003). Most of these theorists define hope as a uni-dimensional construct grounded in the perception that a person's goals are attainable (Callina et al., 2018). However, Charles Rick Snyder (1991) launched a multi-dimensional theory of hope that has tremendously impacted positive psychology.

Snyder's hope theory is a cognitive, motivational model of goal attainment. The theory posits that hope is a dynamic motivational experience that is interactively derived from a person's perceived ability or mental actions to devise strategies towards their goals, which allows individuals to identify barriers and devise tactics to overcome hurdles in the process of achieving their goals in what Snyder, (1991) calls the 'WayPower.' Furthermore, an individual's mental actions propel them to maintain a sense of agency to pursue their goals, which is defined as 'WillPower' (Snyder, 1989). Although these two factors are distinct, they complement each other (Snyder, 1989). The agency aspect of hope is as essential as its dimension of pathway. This implies that one can have a strong sense of mental agency without necessarily demonstrating successful pathways in planning toward one's goals (Carllo et al., 2022). The tenets of this theory indicate a dynamic process, such that adaptive behaviours and characteristics are both the cause and consequence of hope (Snyder, 2002).

The hope theory was developed within the context of the rise of scholarly works on motivation and cognitive revolution at the time. Snyder (2002) remarked on the relevance of Menninger's (1959) seminal article on his theory development on hope (Carllo et al., 2022). Menninger's (1959) work elucidated the long-standing 'priority' controversy between cognitive appraisal and emotions in assessing hope. Menninger's early work stream highlighted the primacy of cognitive processes, with emotions being conceptualized as a secondary affective response to cognitive appraisals and planning in anticipation of one's goals. Affect is a consequence of the experience of hope rather than a fundamental contributor to driving goal-related performance (Snyder et al., 1999). The reason is that the affective dimension of hope is more reactive, as the agency component provides the underlying basis of hope (Snyder, 1991). Snyder's three interrelated cognitive components include goals, pathways and agency thinking (Nutta et al., 2021).

A. Goal setting component of hope

Goals are the essential ingredients of Snyder's theory. Goal setting is critical when developing and measuring hope. Hope starts with the belief that the future is better than the present. A component of hope drives an individual's activities (Snyder et al., 2002; Snyder et al., 2018). Generally, goals, whether short-term or long-term, must be essential to occupy the conscious mind of the individual pursuing the goal (Snyder et al., 2018).

Similarly, mental energy and actions are crucial for individuals pursuing goals (Hellman et al., 2018). Valuable but uncertain goals are described as the anchor of Snyder's hope theory (Snyder et al., 2018). Goals made under uncertain conditions offer direction and guidance to individuals until they reach their destination. Although mostly perceived as a barrier, uncertainty helps the individual reach their final destination (Arnau et al., 2007). Likewise, when individuals with high hopes find themselves in uncertain situations without being overcome with fear, they find different goals in meeting their needs (Snyder et al., 2000).

B. Pathway Thinking Component of Hope

In order to reach one's goal, most hopeful thinkers view themselves as capable of devising strategic techniques to achieve their goals (Frank, 1973). Forming strategies known as pathway thinking, demonstrating a person's capabilities in finding practical routes to fulfilling their desired goals (Snyder et al., 2018). Pathway thinking is developing the capacity to develop specific strategies to reach the desired goals (Eaves et al., 2016). With this component of hope, individuals find words of affirmation similar to appellations (Snyder et al., 1998); this serves as motivation while the person 'hopes' to fulfill their desired goals. Similarly, pathway thinking involves generating at least one, and often, usable route to a desired goal. Some individuals devise alternative path routes when it is increasingly difficult to follow the primary route (Irving et al., 1998). Similarly, individuals with high levels of hope and hope are more likely to reach their desired goals earlier than those with low hope scores (Chang, 1998; Ong et al., 2006). Thus, the path routes become refined and precise as the goal pursuit progresses (Snyder et al., 1991).

C. Agency Thinking Component of Hope

Agency thinking is a hope theory component that tends to drive, propel, and motivate individuals to reach their desired goals. It refers to the level of intention, confidence and human ability to follow those different routes to the desired pathways. Agency thinking reflects the self-referential thought about starting to move along a path and continuing to progress on that route to reach a desired goal. Agency thinking is relevant in all goal-directed thought but takes on a special significance when individuals encounter challenges. Under such circumstances, agency thinking helps individuals to channel the requisite motivation to the best alternate pathway (Snyder, 1994b). In high-uncertainty situations, agency thinking enables individuals to apply the prerequisite strategy or select the best alternative route (Snyder, 1994c).

Desired goals that are valuable but uncertain are described as the anchors of Snyder's hope theory. Such goals offer direction and guide the individual to their final destination. When an individual creates more pathways, it leads to more agency thinking, which is the key to Snyder's hope theory. Creating more routes, in turn, leads to agency thinking and positive emotions. Snyder and colleagues (1991) were quite clear in arguing that they had drawn a clear boundary around the individual, stating their phenomenological conceptualization of hope could be considered egocentric in that it taps into how an individual perceives their ability to move towards goals, with external factors being incorporated only through the lens of the appraisee. In the progression of hopeful thinking in the goal-pursuit sequence, we hypothesize that pathways thinking increases agency thinking, which yields further pathways thinking (Snyder et al., 2017).

Indeed, more than cognitive thinking and pathway thinking alone is needed to sustain hope. No straight line connects one of the ends of pathway thinking to agency thinking, as hopeful thinking is cyclical and complementary (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder et al., 2018). However, new research development of hope theory among individuals from more collectivist cultures has expanded this to show the validity of an external and internal locus of hope. This additional dimension represents the influence of external agents- peers, family and colleagues in developing agency thinking (Bernado, 2010; Bernado et al., 2018; Du et al., 2013), providing evidence of the relevance of broader system influences in the emergence of hope.

Similarly, Snyder's two-dimensional theory can be extended to a multi-dimensional component by including a more contextual motivational component in both the individual and social contexts. Another weakness of Snyder's theory on hope is its lost dynamics between the elements that trigger the emergence of hope (Carroll et al., 2022). To date, it is not easy to understand how individuals develop hope. Nonetheless, drawing from hope theory as used in the emerging positive psychology and positive organisational behaviour movement, this thesis, for the first time, explores and explains the role of hope as a mode of work for navigating precarity in Ghana's fashion industry.

In precarious creative labour and geographies, hope is not just a temporal delusion for upward mobility or prosperity but a psychosocial temporal resource oriented to the present to help the creative worker deal with their present challenges of economic hardships and adversity in their spaces (Alacovska, 2018a; Guyer, 2017; Miyazaki, 2004). Scholarship on hope defines hope as the primary operational mechanism and method (Miyazaki, 2004, 2006) employed by workers in cultural and creative industries in adjusting and building a work-life in highly precarious labour markets (Alacovska, 2018a). In the global South, precarity is a ubiquitous phenomenon characterized by a weak 'sort' of the private sector, comprised of a liberal system and virtually inexistent social work protection (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2015). Considering that precarity is a constant in such spaces, hope emerges most efficiently and effectively as a coping mechanism (Zigon, 2009). In the work of hope, the future, with its openness and elusiveness, is mobilized as a guide to labour and economic action in the present moment (Miyazaki, 2004).

Beyond the compromising and subjugating aspects of cheerful optimism, there is an alternative perspective on hopefulness what can be described as 'an imagined good life' or 'cruel optimism.' This perspective acknowledges the daily struggles of life, where individuals persist and refuse to give up despite the challenges they face (Berlant, 2011). Hope does not naively ignore the harsh realities of workers' precarious existence (Alacovska, 2018) nor reduce creative workers to mere victims of circumstance (Alacovska, 2018). Instead, it highlights the practical agency of creative workers as they confront their hardships and envision a future, developing strategies to cope despite feelings of helplessness (Alacovska, 2018).

According to Hesmondhalgh et al., (2011), hope differs from distant fantasies of an ideal future or dreams of a better life. Hope is an ethical commitment to endure difficult working conditions (Zigon, 2009). A related study identified hope as an attitude that empowers workers to cope with their current challenges rather than simply imagining an ideal future (Alacovska et al., 2021). Furthermore, Alacovska and her colleagues (2018) noted that some participants perceived hope as vague and diffuse, associating it with patience and forbearance.

In an uncertain environment, many creative workers recognize hopeful thinking as a response to their current hopelessness and a determination to engage with the practical aspects of their daily struggles. Many in creative fields are acutely aware that stable, permanent jobs have become a thing of the past, a remnant of older neoliberal systems. Consequently, they have let go of the hope of returning to the empty promises made by politicians and trade unions regarding better jobs (Burrawoy et al., 2000). When these creative workers acknowledge precarity is likely to persist, they adopt strategies to reframe their understanding and personal experiences of economic hardship. This shift is directed toward intentional and ethical actions aimed at survival (Alacovska, 2018).

Creative workers create a niche by depending on one another for survival, what Gibson-Graham Cameron & Healy, 2013 called 'surviving well together.' This results in hope contagion, a state of reciprocity and mutuality of interpersonal relationships in everyday life that create a space in which creative workers depend on others by persevering through 'hard times' (Alacovska et al., 2018). Hope as a work mode manifests itself as an active and passive 'haven', an everyday engagement with futurity (Alacovska et al., 2021). Researchers have applied hope theory in various ways to explain how creative workers adapt and devise coping strategies to deal with economic hardships and other forms of precarity in the cultural and creative industries (see Alacovska et al., 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Alacovska et al., 2019; Steedman, 2017). In conclusion, applying Snyder's theory of Hope is urgently needed to understand how creative entrepreneurs navigate precarity in the global South.

2.2 Review of Empirical studies

2.2.1 The role of precarity and hope in entrepreneurs' decision-making

2.2.1.1 The role of precarity on hope

Precarity disproportionately affects entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative industries (Bulut, 2015). Creative enterprises have been consistently described as an ideal example of precarious labour characterised by uncertainties, labour insecurities, lack of social protection and minimal social benefits (Gill et al., 2008; Neilson et al., 2008). However, in these industries, creative entrepreneurs hope through pervasive uncertainty, loss, and insecurity in pursuit of their daily livelihoods (Raynor, 2021). This section presents empirical reviews on the link between hope and precarity. Here, precarity is conceptualised as challenges accessing loans, uncertainty, a lack of institutional support, and low pay/working without compensation.

In a study titled "Hopes multiplied amidst decline: Understanding gendered precarity in times of austerity," Raynor (2021) sought to ascertain various forms of hope that emerged from Neoliberalism, beyond austerity. In-depth interviews conducted with White women in attending family support group in North East of England during the Brexit referendum were recorded. The researchers explored the experiences of these women who prior to the Brexit worked under conditions of uncertainty. Through the data analysis, results from the study revealed that through multiplied hopes, several women in North-East England hedge their bets and held several possibilities together, to have a foothold in society.This is coupled with other forms of hope, like conflicted hope. With this hope, some women felt denied opportunities and blamed the system (institutions) for their current predicament. Some interviewees took on personal failings but also saw another reality.

Raynor also identified various forms of hope: suspended hope, negative hope, and the cruelty of hope. Uncertainty hinders the ability to plan and forecast effectively in the case of suspended hope. Negative hope represents the final form of hope. The researcher noted that some women feel ashamed of relying on social benefits. At the same time, some mothers believe they are merely living off the system. Others appreciate these benefits and thus do not seek other opportunities. As a result, many women resign themselves to their circumstances, feeling pessimistic about the future. Additionally, the study found that women working under precarious labour conditions face financial challenges and emotional instability. They find themselves trapped in an insecure present that is likely to deteriorate. Women in North-East England understood that there needed to be more opportunities for everyone. The findings indicated that the complexity of hopes contributes to the harsh reality of optimism. Rather than being focused on advancing, the women's hopes were centered around holding onto a position of relative privilege. The mothers were caught in an unstable present, marked by decline, despair and cruelty of optimism. This left them in a continuous state of "waithood," unable to progress or find peace in the present, all while grappling with the weight of unrealized expectations. While Raynor (2021) offers valuable insights into the role of hope in decision-making, the work does not fully explain how hope translates into concrete action. It pays limited attention to how hope interacts with other dispositions (e.g. resilience, intuition) or how structural inequalities may shape or constrain hopeful outlooks. Moreover, the analysis could benefit from deeper empirical engagement with diverse socio-economic and cultural settings, particularly in the global South, where hope may operate differently. To enrich Raynor's work, this study extends the concept of hope by examining how it interacts with other embodied dispositions within precarious entrepreneurial environments. Drawing on Lindquist (2008) and Miyazaki (2004), this thesis explores how hope is socially cultivated and enacted in contexts shaped by constraint and uncertainty. This perspective highlights the situated and relational nature of hope, showing how it influences strategic behaviour and performance, particularly within informal economies like Ghana's fashion industry.

In this paper, Mackenzie and McKinlay (2021) extend the study of Raynor (2021). The researchers illustrated the relevance of hope labour as a relevant resource for highly individualized cultural workers. Also, the study discussed how hope obscures the realities of cultural entrepreneurs who seek independence in their work. Their research is part of a more significant project to ascertain the range and structure of these sub-sectors: IT and design of North-East England's cultural and creative industries in 2017. In this survey research design, 30 interviewees were selected from cultural entrepreneurs actively freelancing and running micro, small, and medium-sized businesses in North East England. The study participants included entrepreneurs actively engaged in the cultural and creative industries' music, performing arts, visual arts, design, advertising, marketing and publishing sectors. All interviews lasted, on average, 45 minutes; they were audio-taped and transcribed. The Foucauldian approach was employed to analyze the data; this method aims to identify and derive themes on how participants work and relate with others and themselves. The study findings elucidate how anxiety, instability and lack of control over one's future can inspire and strengthen entrepreneurs' need to start a new venture. Also, the findings showed that entrepreneurs were challenged somewhat by anxiety and uncertainty as these emotions catapulted their entrepreneurial activities. Again, the researchers noted that prestige in these sectors was closely associated with hope labour. For instance, entrepreneurs knew free labour as a prerequisite to paid work. Precarious labour is deemed a 'rite of passage'; entrepreneurs must endure this to reach the top. Many others were lured and endured precarity for the most extended period because of a promise of better-paid work. In addition, the desire for flexibility and the promise of autonomy, flexibility and self-construction pulls cultural entrepreneurs to discount inequalities and exploitation. It is evident in the study findings that entrepreneurs who hold on to hope are accountable for the risk and cost associated with their jobs.

While Mackenzie and McKinlay (2021) offer a valuable contribution by exploring the affective dimensions of organisational life particularly hope and temporality in decision-making their methodological approach reveals notable limitations. The study provides limited detail on data collection procedures, thematic development, and the interpretive process used to identify affective states such as hope. This lack of methodological transparency undermines the replicability of the study and raises questions about the validity of its interpretations, especially given the inherently subjective and context-dependent nature of affective phenomena.To address these limitations, the present study adopts a mixed-methods approach to investigate how hope is embodied and enacted within informal entrepreneurial environments. The qualitative component enables an in-depth exploration of under-researched, context-specific experiences, capturing the nuanced ways in which hope shapes decision-making and entrepreneurial behaviour. Complementing this, the quantitative component identifies broader patterns and relationships within a larger population of fashion entrepreneurs, thereby enhancing the study's generalisability and analytical depth in examining the influence of hope-driven decision-making on performance.

In a similar study, Chen (2021) in a longitudinal study explored the coping strategies of painters in an art village in China. Drawing on a 42-month ethnographic study of creative artists, Chen (2021) explains how wall painters channel their hopes for freedom and stability into their art. The three-year longitudinal research is based on an art village in Dafen. The study commenced in July 2017 and ended in December 2020. The study adopted the digital ethnographic approach; the researcher observed their actions in an obtrusive environment of the participant's work. Through snowballing, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 87 interviewees. Fifty-three were audio recorded, and the transcribed notes and field notes were transcribed and then loaded into the NVivo 12 for data coding and analyses. The findings of the study indicate that the freedom from discipline and restriction of the pleasure of the Dafen Valley is regarded by many art painters as an indispensable part of the life of creatives. The fierce competition for survival makes the art village an autonomous space, attracting individuals into believing they can become their masters, resources and revenue. This results in "self-governing, controlling, disciplining and regulating one's own time, fashioning, forming and empowering one's identity." The findings imply that workers in Dafen chose to become painters in the hope of achieving a life of freedom, originality and stability in a volatile labour market. Also, through such freedom, they mainly reach some class, status and prestige in society. More so, it is evident in the research findings that Dafen painters desire and hope for freedom, originality, and stability in an attempt to survive economic hardship, neglecting the various forms of precarity unattended. Chen's (2021) longitudinal study offers valuable insights into the coping strategies adopted by painters in a semi-informal creative enclave in China, highlighting how these individuals navigate uncertainty and institutional change over time. The study effectively captures the tension between agency and structure in precarious work environments. However, despite the strengths of its temporal scope, the study lacks methodological transparency—offering limited detail on sampling strategies, data collection intervals, and the analytical approach used to track change over time. This constrains the robustness of its claims about evolving coping strategies.

In response, the present study contributes by adopting a mixed-methods design that combines in-depth qualitative narratives with quantitative analysis to systematically examine how hope and other embodied dispositions influence decision-making and entrepreneurial performance in Ghana's informal fashion industry. Unlike Chen's study, it explicitly outlines the methodological processes for capturing temporal and contextual dynamics, thereby enhancing both analytical rigour and generalisability. This approach provides a more grounded and transparent understanding of how informal entrepreneurs cope with precarity over time and across different socio-cultural settings.

Similarly, Alacovska (2019) investigated the link between hope and precarity in creative work. Using data gathered from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Funded Project, the researcher explored the role of hope among creative labourers. Through a snowballing sampling technique, 29 freelancers, subcontractors and self-employed creatives were drawn from various creative industries, including performing arts, music, animators, web, game and visual designers, fashion designers and theatre arts. On average, the interviews lasted 50 minutes; the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Following the phenomenological analysis techniques, the coding revealed the subjective temporal structures and lived experiences. The findings of the study demonstrated that hope was an attitude that enabled entrepreneurs to endure the hardships of the present rather than imagine an elated haven for the future.

Also, Alacovska (2019) added that most respondents had come to accept their current predicament and had given up on any chances of a 'rosy' life in the future. It was also evident from the interviews that the creatives understood precarity as a constant feature of post-Fordism economies. In addition, most respondents perceive hope as a tool and a mechanism by which they can manage the many challenges of their work. More so, informants that cultivated hope as a spiritual and religious faith laid on hope in anticipation of a better future. Furthermore, some entrepreneurs described hope as the only viable practice under precarious work conditions. Again, most entrepreneurs perceived hope as the only means to restore their brokenness. Many felt battered, exploited and harassed and invoking the power of God through hope fueled their stamina to endure their volatile work environments. Alacovska (2019) offers a compelling contribution to the understanding of creative labour by examining how hope functions as a temporal and affective orientation among media freelancers navigating precarity. The concept of "hope labour"—the pursuit of unpaid or low-paid work in anticipation of future rewards—highlights the emotional investments that workers make amidst broader market uncertainties. Through a richly textured ethnographic approach, the study sheds light on the contradictions of hope, presenting it both as a sustaining force and as a mechanism of self-exploitation in neoliberal creative economies.

However, while the study is situated within the European cultural industries, particularly focusing on media freelancers in post-socialist contexts, it does not adequately account for how hope might be shaped or expressed differently in the global South. In regions where structural constraints, informal institutions, and alternative moral economies of work prevail, hope may take on distinct forms and functions, limiting the cross-contextual applicability of Alacovska’s conclusions. Building on and extending Alacovska's work, the present study adopts a Snyder’s theory on hope, Lindquist and Miyake’s conceptualisation of hope to explore how hope interacts with other embodied dispositions, such as resilience, taste, intuition, and cultural values, within the precarious entrepreneurial field of Ghana's fashion industry. By focusing on informal economies in the global South, the study broadens the geographic and conceptual scope of existing literature, offering a more grounded, intersectional, and context-sensitive understanding of how hope informs strategic decision-making and performance. Moreover, the mixed-methods design addresses methodological gaps in Alacovska and related studies by integrating rich qualitative insights with broader, generalisable patterns across a larger population.

In another study, Pettit (2019) highlighted how global South middle-class lower-income immigrants endured precarity in call centers in Cairo. Drawing insights on their lived experiences in the city of Cairo, a 5-month duration of an ethnographic study (between May and November 2015). The interviews were conducted in Arabic, as the study participants communicated in their native language, which enabled the researcher to understand how Arabians perceive linguistic hope. The data analyses showed that immigrants adopted the precarious livelihoods of the South through a 'crueller' form of hope. The study findings indicated that males and females differ significantly in hope-making in precarious work environments. Also, the results showed that immigrant call workers in Cairo are more likely to be frustrated, anxious and fearful due to the uncertainty of the work conditions. Although this study has contributed extensively to the literature on precarity and hope, there is a need to study how precarity and hope play a role in decision-making and entrepreneurial performance in the cultural and creative industries. Pettit (2019) offers a nuanced exploration of hope as a socio-political construct, illustrating how it operates within contexts of chronic uncertainty and marginalisation. The study is theoretically rich, drawing on affect theory to position hope as both a coping mechanism and a political force that can sustain agency in adverse conditions. However, the analysis leans heavily on conceptual abstraction, with limited empirical grounding. The lack of detailed ethnographic or longitudinal data constrains the study's ability to show how hope is enacted, negotiated, or constrained in everyday life. Furthermore, its applicability to informal entrepreneurial contexts or non-Western settings remains underexplored, limiting its relevance for understanding hope in diverse socioeconomic and cultural environments.

Similarly, Simon (2022) examined the production chain of portal films among Nollywood filmmakers. The study participants were approached via email and Instagram. Using a semi-structured interview, 30 filmmakers and stakeholders were sampled for the study. Of the 30 participants, 25 were filmmakers, and five were streaming executives. The interviews were conducted between May and September 2020 via Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp and telephone. The interview data was audiotaped, transcribed and coded using NVivo. The researcher adopted the phenomenological interpretative analysis (IPA) to help the researcher identify lived experiences and ascertain their understanding of precarious work conditions. The qualitative data revealed that, comparatively, filmmakers explained in detail the precariousness underlying their production and their strategies for navigating the precarious conditions. Also, the study findings indicated that the precarity of film-making in Nigeria can be attributed to the economic conditions of the VOD market. The poor market conditions include poor licensing fees and paltry budgets allocated to streaming services. The study showed that, despite the austerity of the film industry, filmmakers adopt hopeful labour and informal social relations to navigate the industry's challenges in 'the hope' of prospects.

More so, the study findings demonstrated that the entrepreneurs of the film market hoped that as the industry developed, it would enhance its economic conditions. This suggests that in conditions of chronic precarity, hope is practised by depending on informal social support and helping others cope and get on despite their situation. This reflects hope as a therapeutic practice for market sustenance in the face of precarity. Simon (2022) noted the importance of informal social relations and hope-making in navigating the pervasive precarity of Nollywood portal film-making. Unlike Hollywood, the Nigerian film industry employs social relations and informal practices as the lifeblood of production; the purpose of social relations is not to resolve operational management issues (logistics, location, regulations and labour issues). Again, some industry players decide to expand their businesses in Nollywood in anticipation of future possibilities. Some respondents indicated that creating streaming platforms may have yet to present gains, but industry players anticipate its future benefits. Simon (2022) reported that the decision to support the film market, irrespective of the precarious work conditions, is linked with the employment benefits it provides in the production chain. This suggests that filmmakers are not content with the labour conditions; however, they adopt the therapy of hope to navigate current precarious labour dynamics as they look forward to better days ahead.

Simon (2022) provides valuable insight into the production chain of portal films within Nollywood, highlighting the adaptive strategies and informal practices filmmakers employ to navigate resource constraints, technological shifts, and audience demands. The study contributes to the growing literature on African creative industries by drawing attention to the improvisational and relational nature of film production in a dynamic, low-budget context. However, the study presents some limitations. While the descriptive account of production processes is detailed, there is limited theoretical engagement with broader frameworks such as cultural economy, labour precarity, or practice theory, which could have deepened the analysis. Additionally, the focus on production logistics tends to overshadow the affective, aspirational, and temporal dimensions of creative labour factors that are crucial in understanding how filmmakers sustain motivation and navigate uncertainty. Finally, the study's emphasis on Nollywood's particularities could benefit from comparative insights or connections to similar informal production systems in other sectors or regions, enhancing its conceptual reach and applicability. Geographic and sectoral expansion: While Simon focuses on Nigeria's film industry, this study shifts the focus to Ghana's fashion industry—another informal, creative field in the Global South. By exploring how fashion entrepreneurs cope with and strategise around precarity, the study adds comparative value and broadens the scope of inquiry within African creative economies.

Another study by Cook and Cuervo (2019) examined the connection between hope and futurity and the link between hope and agency. The general aim of the study was to explore the differing conceptions of hope. The study was based on the Life Patterns Study, a longitudinal quantitative-qualitative research design on the observation of hope. It employed a multiple-case study design of Australian young adults transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. Data were gathered from two research participants, who completed ten rounds of interviews, five in-depth interviews every two years and ten surveys annually from 2006 to 2015. The semi-structured interviews included questions about their living conditions, education and employment status, relationships, health, and general well-being. Their ages ranged between 18-27 years, ensuring a comprehensive and representative sample for the study. Through a thematic content analysis of the data, the study revealed significant findings. It was noted that the association between hope and futurity had differing modes of hope (representational and non-representational). The multiple case studies showed that agency had no relationship with either representational or non-representational forms of hope. Even though agency seems to correspond with the representational form of hope, it was observed that one's social status and other conditions underpin this form of hope. Cook et al., (2019) added that there is only one form of hope as it appears in existing scholarship. However, individuals shift from one mode of hope to another depending on their circumstances. The researchers also viewed hope as a form of psychological strategy or therapeutic practice which is personally developed. The study also found that hope is personally cultivated without institutional assistance; hence, hope is easily altered with no support, and in some cases, it is extinct. Additionally, regarding the role of agency in fueling hope, it is evident from the study findings that hope will cease to exist without social support. These findings have practical implications for understanding and supporting individuals in cultivating and maintaining hope in their lives.

Cook et al.,'s (2019) studdy offer valuable insights into the intersection of youth, entrepreneurship, and precarity, particularly in marginalised contexts. Their work highlights how young people engage with entrepreneurship not merely as an economic activity but as a means of identity construction and future-making. However, the study pays insufficient attention to the embodied, habitual, and relational practices through which entrepreneurial strategies are enacted, limiting its capacity to capture how everyday decision-making unfolds in constrained environments. Addressing this gap, the present study examines how fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana navigate precarious work conditions by leveraging both proximal and distal relations. This approach foregrounds the situated, practice-based dimensions of entrepreneurship and the strategic use of social networks and dispositions within informal economies.

In a similar study, Hughes (2013) investigated the unique and singular practices of craftswomen, particularly in hopeful economies. The study, which utilised data collected between 2008 and 2010 from research conducted in the United Kingdom, highlighted the distinctiveness of these craftswomen's work. The study data was gathered at a variety of cultural and entrepreneurial events held annually, with fifteen jewellery design makers of BJQ included in the study through snowballing. This method was chosen due to the strong network of jewellers. Unstructured interviews were then conducted among designers at various stages of their careers. The study's findings revealed that entrepreneurs in the jewellery industry invest in numerous opportunities, driven by the hope of future success. Designer-makers, in their pursuit of job sustainability, strive to continue doing what they love and to achieve singularity in their craft.

Hughes (2013) analyses entrepreneurship as a socially embedded practice, moving beyond individualistic and economistic frameworks. The study illuminates how cultural narratives and institutional contexts shape entrepreneurial identities and strategic choices. However, it gives limited attention to the affective and embodied dimensions of decision-making, with insufficient engagement with how emotions, dispositions, and lived experiences influence entrepreneurial actions, particularly under conditions of precarity. Furthermore, its emphasis on formalised settings limits its applicability to informal and non-Western contexts, where entrepreneurial practices are shaped by distinct institutional logics and constraints. To address these gaps, the present study examines how entrepreneurs operating in precarious environments devise informal, situated strategies to navigate uncertainty and resource scarcity in Ghana’s fashion industry.

Kuehn, Newport, and Corrigan (2013) extended the discussion on hope by examining the motivations behind online social production. Using in-depth interviews and multiple case studies of production experiences at SB Nation and Yelp consumer websites, the researchers interrogated the motivations, practices and perceptions contributing to voluntary production. Twenty-seven interviews were conducted from both groups, 10 of whom were females (all from Yelpers) and 17 males (8 from Yelpers and eight from SB Nation bloggers). After the interviews, the data was transcribed and coded, and themes were derived. Thematic content analysis showed potential employment hopes, including full-time roles within the SB Nation for bloggers. Secondly, hope was a motivating factor that inspired the continuous use and dedication to online work despite the absence of rewards. Consistent with previous findings, Kuehn et al. (2013) found that some interviewees knew acquaintances who had secured jobs through hope. For others, although hope labour is risky and may not translate into their jobs, they are inspired by the power of hope to make the social production journey worthwhile.

Kuehn et al. (2013) offer a valuable contribution by exploring how cultural and creative workers manage precarious employment through affective and relational strategies. The study highlights the role of emotional labour, community support, and adaptive practices in sustaining creative work. However, its analytical framing tends to focus more on coping mechanisms than on the broader structural and embodied conditions that shape these responses. The study pays limited attention to how dispositions, habitual practices, and field-specific logics influence strategic behaviour. Additionally, its Euro-American focus constrains the applicability of its findings to informal and resource-constrained settings in the Global South. This study contributes by examining how fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana mobilise embodied dispositions and socio-cultural resources to navigate precarity, offering a more context-sensitive and practice-oriented understanding of informal entrepreneurship.

Similarly, Alacovska, Langevang and Steedman (2021) explored the role of hope in four different creative industries in Ghana. This study sought to extend the scholarship on hope by examining its dynamics in the cultural and creative industries from the global South and drawing from field research conducted in 2018 in the form of in-depth semi-structured interviews among creative entrepreneurs. A total of twenty-four (24) creative professionals were selected from Accra using purposive sampling technique. Most of the study participants were between the ages of 20-30 years, with 15 being males and 9 of them were females. The participants had diverse socio-economic backgrounds and different educational levels. On average, the interviews lasted 90 minutes; each was audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and coded using the NVivo software. Three main themes emerged from the data: hope was categorized into hustling, waiting and spiritualizing. The findings indicated that the interviewees believed the industry in Ghana was evolving and that a promising future lay ahead. Participants also acknowledged the government's efforts to revitalize the industry through digitization. Furthermore, the interviewees employed various strategies demonstrating their determination to take action despite facing challenges and chronic precarity.

Additionally, hustling was found to be a prominent manifestation of actively navigating precarity and uncertainty in the creative industries. Most creatives looked past the problems of the industry into the future, into the possibilities that lies ahead of them. They are motivated to keep hustling, the vision of the future mobilized and guide them into the future. Entrepreneurs interviewed in this study saw the future as a space where these problems will dissipate, instead of being petrified by these challenges the kept going on, taking a shot at developing the industry. Others hustled to expand their audiences in order to increase their hopes of getting by. For some creatives maintaining side jobs and being proficient in other genres helped safeguard a steady income as sales are sporadic and uncertain. The creative workers interviewed engaged in a spectrum from hustling to waiting, they deployed waiting as a hopeful strategy. Creatives expressed waiting as a strategic form of hoping, in this form of waiting, the entrepreneurs are not passive about the future, they employ strategic hustling skills and this makes their enterprises thrive. From the study findings, it was revealed that waiting emerged as an active, reflexive practice and an everyday mode of hope. This implies that waiting is not a Utopian kind of hope, where the individual is passive, in a state of abeyance and defers their entrepreneurial actions. Results of the study also revealed that in precarious spaces, entrepreneurs employ a form of religiosity and spirituality in dealing with uncertainty in their enterprises. More so, the findings showed that work and spirituality are closely linked in this part of the world. Praying was one of the spiritualizing modes of action performed by many entrepreneurs either at the start or at the end of work or both. A number of creatives invoke magic and witchcraft, in such precarious geographies, belief in witchcraft is a means of keeping hope alive, it provides an explanation of abrupt failure and protracted hardship. Furthermore, most of the entrepreneurs interviewed also devise precautionary measures not to arouse the fury of evil spirits. Creative entrepreneurs often perceive their work, such as fashion, music, or visual arts, as susceptible to attracting the wrath of malicious spirits. This belief stems from the innovative and unconventional nature of their creations, which may challenge traditional norms or practices, intersecting cultural and spiritual considerations with their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Alacovska, Langevang, and Steedman (2021) make a valuable interdisciplinary contribution by examining how hope, temporality, and affect influence entrepreneurial subjectivities, particularly in precarious creative and cultural industries. Their work sheds light on the emotional and future-oriented dimensions of entrepreneurship, providing a nuanced understanding of how individuals navigate uncertainty and make decisions in unpredictable environments. However, the study does not sufficiently explore the embodied and habitual aspects of practice, such as how dispositions like taste, intuition, and resilience are developed and applied in everyday decision-making. This study extends their work by integrating Bourdieu's theory of practice and Neo-institutional theory to examine how personal and sociocultural factors are embodied and enacted within Ghana's informal fashion economy. By expanding the geographical and conceptual scope, this study provides a more grounded and context-sensitive understanding of strategic decision-making within informal, constrained environments.

For over two decades, Lounsbury and his colleagues (2001, 2008, 2012, 2019) have explored how entrepreneurs' projections about future possibilities shape their decisions and envision entrepreneurial opportunities. Their work has sparked significant discussions around the role of the future-oriented dimension of decision-making in shaping entrepreneurial possibilities and imagination in guiding entrepreneurial decision-making. In 2019, Lounsbury and Glynn aimed to provide a framework to lay a foundation for a broader and more integrative research agenda for creative entrepreneurship. The single case study design of Martha Stewart showed how hope for future possibilities beyond immediate constraints motivated entrepreneurs to envision the possibilities that lie in wait in the future. Additionally, the stories of future projection serve as a blueprint for action and provide motivation and orientation in navigating the challenges. Furthermore, the study's outcome showed that under extreme uncertainty, stories of the future aim to generate confidence in and motivation for various lines of action, whether that involved decisions on current market dynamics or redefining future markets.

Similar to claims by Lounsbury et al. (2019), Emirbaye and Mische (1999) offered a framework for understanding human agency through the lens of temporal orientation emphasizing three interrelated dimensions: iterations, practical evaluative and projective. The findings from the conceptual paper indicated that entrepreneurs, particularly those operating in dynamic environments, rely heavily on the projective dimension to innovate and maintain a competitive edge. This aligns with Lounsbury and Glynn's assertion that future-oriented narratives are essential in entrepreneurial activities, especially in crafting cultural and market legitimacy.

Lounsbury and Glynn (2019) made a pivotal contribution by deepening the understanding of how culture shapes entrepreneurial processes. Their work foregrounds the role of narratives, symbols, and institutional logics in enabling entrepreneurs to mobilise resources and generate legitimacy. Drawing on a cultural and institutional lens, they argue that entrepreneurship is not merely about opportunity recognition or resource acquisition, but also about meaning-making and the storytelling practices that connect ventures to broader audiences and expectations. However, the study places less emphasis on how such cultural processes are lived and enacted through everyday, embodied practices, particularly within informal economies or non-Western settings. The focus remains largely on ventures operating within relatively structured institutional environments, limiting insights into how culture and strategy interact in highly precarious or informally organised contexts. This study contributes to these gaps by drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of practice to explore how entrepreneurs in Ghana’s fashion industry mobilise embodied dispositions such as taste, resilience, and intuition—within culturally specific and informally structured environments.

By doing so, it links cultural entrepreneurship with everyday practice in a way that reflects both structural constraint and agentic improvisations. While the above studies offer valuable contributions to the understanding of hope, affect, and entrepreneurship, they predominantly centre on Global North contexts, with limited engagement with informal economies in the Global South. Moreover, many of these works overlook the embodied and habitual dimensions of practice, often isolating hope from other dispositions such as resilience, taste, and intuition. Methodologically, few studies combine qualitative depth with analytical generalisability. This study addresses these gaps by exploring how hope interacts with personal and sociocultural factors in Ghana's informal fashion industry, employing a mixed-methods approach grounded in Bourdieu’s theory of practice and Neo-institutional theory.

Based on the reviews this research question (RQ) was posed:

> How do precarious working conditions influence entrepreneurs’ decision-making in the Ghanaian fashion industry?

2.2.1.2 The role of precarity on decision-making

One of the most investigated dimensions of precarity is uncertainty. Uncertainty is a crucial feature of managerial decision-making (Artinger et al., 2013). Uncertainty is central to the entrepreneurial process and decision-making. The entrepreneur is central to the entrepreneurial process; entrepreneurs go through different uncertainties as decisions are made, new ideas are generated, and the environment or the entrepreneur changes during the decision-making (Packard et al., 2017). The decision-making process comprises bits and pieces of uncertainties that need to be solved by the entrepreneur. In this study, decision-making through judgment, choice, and selection emerged as a crucial means of navigating the uncertainties inherent in entrepreneurship. Usually, decision outcomes depend on cognition/intuition, social factors/cultural/contextual factors, and behavioural factors (Mensah et al., 2020).

Nokhiz, Patwari, Ruwanpathirana, and Venkatasubramanian (2021) examined the different types of decision-making processes and their impact on an individual's level of precarity. They employed a simulation-based methodology to investigate the dynamics of precarity using population-level economic data. The study found that when the prices of goods and services rise significantly, it affects the level of precarity for each individual, particularly those already experiencing heightened instability. Additionally, an individual's perception of precarity lessens when they see others facing similar or even greater levels of precariousness.

From a judgment perspective on entrepreneurship, Foss, Klein, and Bjornskov (2018) discussed how entrepreneurs utilize limited resources to meet consumer demands and maximize profits. Their findings indicated that entrepreneurs often make decisions based on practical experiences and contextual factors such as political influences, culture, history, and the legal framework. Institutional factors play a crucial role in shaping decision-making and judgment. Entrepreneurs often pursue innovation in uncertain environments, experimenting with different resource combinations to find the most effective ways to meet consumer needs and generate profit. This paper extends existing research by emphasising how contextual, historical, and institutional factors can either limit or enable entrepreneurial decision-making. It also calls for further investigation into how entrepreneurs manage and adapt to precarious working conditions.

Tao and Rui (2007) investigated the impact of precarious work conditions on entrepreneurial decision-making, focusing on factors that influence brand decisions in uncertain environments. The study utilized a quantitative research design and employed the Perceived Environmental Uncertainty (PEU) questionnaires developed by Duncan (1972), Miller (1993), and Miles and Snow (1978) to measure levels of uncertainty among participants. The study's population consisted of 1,000 Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) students from four universities in China, including Wuhan University and the University of Economics and Law. From this population, 400 students were selected using a stratified random sampling method and divided into five strata, with each stratum consisting of 80 participants. Data analysis was conducted using logistic regression. The findings revealed that perceived environmental uncertainty significantly influences brand strategic decisions and performance outcomes. Specifically, the study found that when entrepreneurs face higher levels of environmental uncertainty, they are more inclined to pursue purchasing brand manufacturing decisions. Conversely, when entrepreneurs experience low entrepreneurial orientation and low perceived environmental uncertainty, they are likelier to adopt licensed-based manufacturing decisions.

In a recent study, Zayadin, Zucchella, Anard, Jones and Ameen (2022) advanced the understanding of entrepreneurial decision-making under precarious work conditions. Using an interpretivism approach and a qualitative research methodology, this study explored precarity's impact on decision-making in Jordan's volatile regional context, how entrepreneurs perceive uncertainty, and why they choose their course of action in managing this condition through several phone calls, emails and meetings with entrepreneurship associations in Jordan. A non-probability sampling technique was employed to reach 30 entrepreneurs who were reached and agreed to partake in the study. An in-depth interview was conducted among the selected entrepreneurs, and an exploratory research design was employed to identify critical issues in the data (Anand & Walsh, 2020). The nature of the interview guide was open-ended and semi-structured. This allowed the researchers to gain rich information about their account of the discussed issue. On average, the interviews took an hour to 2 hours and were audio-recorded and transcribed using the NVivo software. The interviews were conducted in their native language and transcribed into English. The data analysis showed that events related to the Jordan instability had created a context of high uncertainty, high ambiguity, time pressure and emotional intensity, which affected entrepreneurs' decision-making in the region. The study found that the interaction between entrepreneurs' goals, decision-making, and perceived uncertainty results in diverse approaches to opportunity. In the case of Jordan, many entrepreneurs tend to avoid uncertain ventures, instead favouring more practical, hands-on opportunities despite the challenges they pose. This suggests that entrepreneurs are capable of navigating uncertainty by developing coping strategies. The findings also revealed that in precarious contexts entrepreneurs are committed to launching new ventures.

The study revealed that perceived uncertainty significantly influences entrepreneurial decisions around business expansion. In Jordan, political instability has disrupted consumer spending patterns, discouraging investment in new initiatives. Regional instability has also limited cross-border expansion. Entrepreneurs who are able to make sound decisions in uncertain contexts tend to cope more effectively with the demands of the industry. Respondents cited various challenges: financial limitations, slow technological progress, safety concerns, theft of creative ideas, and a lack of institutional and emotional support. Despite these obstacles, many remained committed, demonstrating a capacity to endure stress and make calculated decisions to navigate precarity in their businesses.

Franssen and Kuipers (2013) conducted a study to analyze the decision-making processes of global market editors in the Netherlands' global market under conditions of uncertainty. Employing Bourdieu's theory of practice and Neo-institutional theory, this paper traces the various stages in decision-making from when editors first hear of a manuscript to the last moment when the book is published. Drawing on quantitative data analysis and interviews of the literary field editors of Dutch adult fiction and poetry production in 2007 and interviews with 24 editors. Using principal component analysis (PCA) to analyze the data, the study's findings showed that Dutch editors confront three main decision-making challenges. The challenges include overabundant new titles, competition over buyers and uncertainty over the nature and quality of manuscript titles that will resonate with consumers. The study's findings also revealed that social support, symbolic capital, the editors' personal experiences, and information sharing enable them to cope with the industry's uncertainty. Furthermore, the study's outcome showed that when editors constantly rely on each other, this results in 'sameness/ similarities (commonly known as isomorphism) between editors in the same niche.

In another study, Foster and colleagues (2011) joined the debates on the benefits of networking in decision-making under conditions of precarity. The researchers investigated how gatekeepers in the cultural and creative industries use social networks to manage complex searches in decision-making. The study's findings indicated that gatekeepers use social networks to search and select market processes characterized by time pressures, competition, and instability. Further, the findings demonstrate a high degree of interaction between individuals and groups within the same organisations on how to navigate demand uncertainty and excess supply. As a result, entrepreneurs with stronger support networks are better equipped to cope with the industry's challenges.

In a recent study, Mohammadi, Sajadi and Sakhadru (2019) aimed to identify the factors influencing entrepreneurial decision-making in Tehran's electronic business. The researchers developed a model to explain entrepreneurs' decision-making process under precarious conditions, uncertainty, and time pressure. They sampled 20 electronic business entrepreneurs using the snowballing approach. The theoretical path showed preconditions, both intervening and contextual variables that impact decision-making. These conditions ultimately determine whether or not a decision will be made. Hence, contextual factors and intervening variables significantly influence how decision-making strategies lead to specific outcomes.

Matthias and Hadida (2006) developed a theoretical framework to assist music entrepreneurs in the talent selection process within the music industry. In their study, the researchers applied the resource-based view and strategic decision-making theories to identify the talent selection process in the music industry. By applying both theories to facilitating talent selection, it was realized that an incremental decision-making process needs to exemplify a standardized approach for decision-makers in precarious work conditions.

To understand how creative producers make product decisions in the uncertain fashion modelling industry. Godart and Mears (2009), using observation, interviews and network analysis, the scholars explored how fashion entrepreneurs, stylists and directors from New York, Paris and London make decisions about their models. The snowball sampling technique was employed to sample 30 Spring/Summer fashion show models. The thematic content analysis revealed that when fashion entrepreneurs faced time constraints, ambiguous selection criteria, and competitive pressure, they depended mainly on their social networks for strategies to manage the given situation. Typically, through a mechanism known as optioning, fashion producers learn of their competitors' choices, preferences and judgments and adjust themselves with similar statuses. The outcome of the ethnographic study revealed that the popular claim that creative producers conceive their own decisions based on their tastes and preferences is a hoax. This is because when faced with precarity, entrepreneurs rely on each other and share information to navigate the inherent precarity of their work.

A new strand of research has increasingly taken up the notion of institutional factors and social networks on entrepreneurs' decision-making under uncertain circumstances. Smits's (2016) conclusions are similar to those of Godart et al. (2009) and Schrieber and Riepel (2018). Smits (2016) accounts for the influence of social networking, institutional factors and personal preferences on the decision-making of Dutch film distributors. The quantitative data analysis indicated that most film distributors relied on their social networks. Given that there are more films yearly than there are consumers, personal taste is one of the factors influencing the choice of these distributors. This suggests that networking is a social influence by which decision-makers assess their choices before deciding.

A study by Brydges and Hracs (2019) examines how fashion entrepreneurs select a "home base" for their business activities. It highlights the various forms of mobility they utilize to seize opportunities within the Canadian fashion industry. The paper reveals that some fashion entrepreneurs relocate to urban centers to pursue these opportunities, while others prefer to remain in their home base.This qualitative study involved 87 participants, including 53 fashion entrepreneurs and 34 executives and managers in the fashion industry. The findings suggest that fashion entrepreneurs make locational choices based on their preferences, experiences, and needs. Factors such as the costs associated with relocating and personal connections to friends and family significantly influence their decisions. For example, choosing to leave Canada often hinges on whether the entrepreneur aims to establish an international brand.

Using a structured interview, Dash and Nalam (2009) examined the impact of uncertainties on the functioning of supply chain decisions in the fashion industry in Bangalore city. The research findings showed information about the context in which the textile products are being supplied and the current supply chain state. They also found that the entrepreneur must be able to forecast or predict demands based on experience. Additionally, the changing customer preferences have a very high impact on decisions regarding inventory placements.

In contrast, Samdanis and Lee (2019) investigated the role of sensemaking in the organisational failure of the auction industry. Based on a single case study design of the historical case of Philips. Secondary data were collected from scholarly publications, magazines, yearly reports and unique books. A within-case data analysis was used to analyse Philips' strategic decision-making within a time frame. Samdanis et al. (2019) noted that while some researchers claim that decision-making occurs linearly and sequentially, it is interesting to note that most decisions, choices, selections and judgments are reached through a non-linear and iterative process that allows adjustments. For many entrepreneurs in the art industry, intuitive thinking forms the basis of their decision-making. The research highlighted limitations regarding studies that exaggerate or assert decision-making is based on a cause-and-effect relationship.

Further, in analyzing fashion entrepreneurs' make-and-buy decisions, Okpala et al. (2019) assessed the role of choice in the textile industry in Nigeria. The study population included 12 active textile companies with management staff and textile mills. Data collected from the field were analyzed using regression and descriptive analyses. Okpala and colleagues demonstrated that cost-benefit analysis influenced production and buying decisions, especially in sectors that operate under uncertain conditions.

Schrieber and Rieple (2018) explored the factors driving decision-making within the U.S. music industry. Their study emphasized the crucial roles of symbolic capital, social networks, and intuition in navigating the complexities of uncertainty associated with decision-making. Through in-depth interviews and observational data gathered from 36 owner-managers, they also engaged with employees and stakeholders from various music firms to enrich their findings. The research analyzed a comprehensive data set of 40 decisions categorized into important areas such as expansion and diversification, marketing and promotion, firm relocation, and talent selection over the last two years. Furthermore, valuable information was obtained from company websites and social media channels, supplementing the study's breadth. All interviews were meticulously transcribed and processed using NVivo, ensuring robust qualitative data analysis and management that contributed to a deeper understanding of industry dynamics.

A thematic content analysis was conducted to identify relevant themes from the data gathered. The findings indicated that owner-managers made satisfactory decisions, which aligns with the bounded rationality theory. Furthermore, decision-making in micro-firms is often iterative and non-sequential, challenging the traditional views of rational choice decision theorists. Considering the uncertainty of the music industry, many owner-managers rely on their social networks, intuition, and symbolic capital to navigate the industry's volatility. Schrieber's work focused on decision-making within the music industry; there is an opportunity to study whether owner-managers/small-micro size firms in other sectors make decisions similarly. Additionally, studying other sub-sectors of the cultural and creative industries will contribute to the knowledge of factors that influence decision-making that may have yet to be observed in this study. Based on the above review this research question (RQ) was explored:

> RQ: How does hope orient and shape entrepreneurs' decision-making in the Ghanaian fashion industry?

2.2.1.3 The role of precarity on entrepreneurial performance

The impact of non-standard forms of work/contingent work/precarious work has been debated extensively in extant literature. This work arrangement exists across industries, particularly in the cultural and creative industries (Alacovska et al., 2021; Hesmondhalgh, 2015; Gill et al., 2009). Epidemiological research across disciplines has inconclusive outcomes on the impact of precarity on entrepreneurial performance. On the one hand, some research findings have shown that precarious forms of work reduce costs, allow individualism/flexibility, and thus improve financial benefits of firms (Kreshaj et al., 2021). On the other hand, other findings indicate that precarious work conditions impede the occupational health and safety of employees and have a negative impact on the success of most startups (Fisher et al., 2017).

Dempster (2009) investigated the impact of demand uncertainty on entrepreneurial performance (success and failure) in the creative industries. Also, the study sought to examine factors that contribute to the firm's success and failure and ascertain relevant strategic methods in navigating precarity. Using an in-depth historical single case study of Jerry Springer the Opera, the study identified and explored three distinct sources of uncertainty. Among these, demand uncertainty—particularly related to consumer behaviour—was found to significantly affect performance. Unpredictability in consumer demand made it difficult to forecast trends in purchasing behaviour. However, when controlling for other variables, the study found that factors such as awards, marketing efforts, and promotional activities positively influenced consumer interest and demand. A key strategy identified for managing demand uncertainty was the multi-staged production process, which helped mitigate associated risks and allowed for adjustments based on audience reception at each stage. This flexible approach enabled entrepreneurs to better assess consumer preferences and adapt their strategies, thereby influencing their prospects for future success. Given the influence of regional and cultural differences, the researchers recommended replicating the study in other contexts and sectors within the creative industries to gain a broader understanding of performance dynamics across the sector.

To improve entrepreneurs' performance under precarious work conditions. Jusoh (2010), in a similar study, examined the impact of perceived uncertainty, firm size and business strategy on performance measurement systems. This research was based on data collected from top executives of manufacturing firms in Malaysia. In all, 950 participants were selected from a pool of 2400 federates. The questionnaires were mailed to the top manufacturing firms' top officials. The study's outcome showed that perceived environmental uncertainty negatively impacted firms' financial and internal processes measures. This implies that the higher the degree of precarity, the lower the tendency of entrepreneurs to use financial measures like operating income, sales revenues, manufacturing time and labour.

In a cross-sectional survey, Weingarten, Pagell, Durach, and Humphrey (2021) provide an explanatory analysis of the financial performance implications of precarious work. Both primary and secondary data were collected from manufacturing companies in the UK. Information was gathered from two participants per firm. Secondary data was collected from employees, industrial clusters, annual financial reports, net income and total goods sold. The

UK's Health and Safety Executive database was sourced for information on any of the firms' occupational health and safety management. A self-administered questionnaire was given to the study participants to measure the firm's occupational health and safety issues, as well as financial performance and skill-enhancing strategies. The findings of the hierarchical regression analysis were inconclusive for most of the hypotheses. Precarity significantly adversely affected occupational health and safety performance and cost performance. However, low levels of precarious work increase flexibility and financial performance. It was also evident from the study data that high-performance work practices did not moderate the relationship between flexibility and precarious work conditions. Weingarten and colleagues concluded that future research could examine the relationship in other jurisdictions.

Kannadhasan, Aramvalarthan, and Tandon (2013) conducted a study to examine the effect of perceived environmental uncertainty and perceived company performance on strategic investment decisions. The researchers surveyed thirty-six automotive companies listed on the BSE/NSE in India using a cross-sectional survey method. Three different questionnaires were sent to senior members in the finance departments of each company to gather data. These questionnaires measured Perceived Environmental Uncertainty, Perceived Company Performance, and Risk Analysis Techniques. The Perceived Environmental Uncertainty questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from "predictable" to "never predictable. " Sub-scales addressed factors such as competitors, consumers, suppliers, financial markets, government regulations, trade unions, and technological changes. For assessing Risk Investment Decisions, the study utilized the Capital Asset Pricing Model (CAPM) and another 5-point Likert scale questionnaire that ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." To evaluate company performance over the past three years, the researchers created a self-constructed questionnaire that included sales, profitability, cash flow generation ability, market share position, potential efficiency, and competitive position. The data was analysed using Partial Least Squares (PLS), a multivariate statistical tool. The findings indicated a positive and significant relationship between perceived environmental uncertainty and risk investment decisions, indicating that higher perceived environmental uncertainty is associated with increased investment risk. Additionally, a significant positive relationship was found between perceived company performance and strategic investment decisions, meaning that perceived company performance corresponds to higher levels of strategic investment. The findings suggest that increased perceived environmental uncertainty leads to higher risks associated with strategic investment decisions.

In exploring the relationship between perceived uncertainty and economic performance in volatile environments, Bourgeois (1985) examined how top managers' perceptions, organisational goals, and firm performance interacted in a turbulent work context. Data were drawn from both primary sources and secondary materials, including industry statistics and end-of-year reports. Twenty participants from public corporations in the Pacific Northwest were interviewed. To assess the level of environmental volatility, the study used Tosi et al.'s (1973) self-administered volatility questionnaire. Perceptions of uncertainty and organisational goals were measured using Duncan's (1972) and Bourgeois' (1980b) 5-point Likert scales. Economic performance was evaluated through a composite index comprising return on gross increment of assets, net profit, and improvements in profit margins. The findings suggested that managers should actively develop strategies to reduce uncertainty, particularly when it adversely affects the task environment, as uncertainty can significantly impact firm performance. Interestingly, these results diverged from much of the existing literature, which typically posits that high perceived uncertainty negatively affects performance.

2.2.2 The impact of entrepreneurs' decision-making on entrepreneurial performance

Recently, there has been significant interest in the impact of uncertainty on entrepreneurial performance on the production of cultural and creative products (Caves, 2000; DeVanny, 2004). This section draws on empirical findings to explore the interactions between entrepreneurial decision-making and performance in a tumultuous work environment. In their study of factors that impact entrepreneurs' decision-making on business performance, Weerasekara and Bhanugopan (2021) specifically examined the mediating role of entrepreneurial culture, educational institutional support and business and social networks on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. Five hundred and twelve questionnaires were administered online to SME owners in both urban and rural areas of New South Wales. Using the partial least square structure equation modelling analysis, the researchers analyzed the data gathered from the respondents. The study's outcome showed that entrepreneurial culture, educational institutional support and business and social networks mediate the relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making style and SMEs' financial performance. The findings of this study revealed the relevance of rational-strategic decision-making on organisational performance. Weerasekara et al. (2021) found that entrepreneurs' decision-making style impacts the financial performance of small and medium-scale enterprises.

Consistent with Weerasekara et al.'s (2021) study, Long, Wang and Wang (2021) examined the effects of entrepreneurial decision-making on new venture sustainability. Based on an empirical analysis of sizeable random sampling and secondary data collected by CPSED, the three-wave pilot study focused on the decisions made by nascent entrepreneurs. The findings showed that entrepreneurs' personal experiences affected the sustainability of their new venture. Research findings showed that causation and effectuation play a role in the decision-making process of new venture sustainability. Similarly, the study found that avoiding contingencies and seeking partnerships significantly sustain the new venture. In contrast, leveraging contingencies, goal orientation, and means orientation have an inverse relationship with new venture sustainability.

In their study on strategic decision-making and performance in social enterprises, Manolopoulos, Salavou, Papadopoulos, and Xenakis (2022) emphasize the importance of proactive personality traits in entrepreneurs' decision-making in Greece. The researchers conducted a survey targeting all 380 social sector insurance organisations. Their analysis uncovered a notable positive correlation between a rational decision-making approach and the financial performance of social enterprises. Furthermore, the findings revealed that financial performance is positively linked to intuitive and incremental decision-making models. Drawing on insights from the existing literature, the study formulates the following hypothesis:

> H_1 Entrepreneurs' decision-making will impact entrepreneurs' performance in Ghana's fashion industry.

2.2.3 The influence of perceived uncertainty on the relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance.

Empirical research linking perceived uncertainty to entrepreneurs' decision-making to entrepreneurial performance has yielded inconsistent findings. Some researchers have argued that perceived uncertainty could benefit or harm the relationship between decision-making and performance. In a study examining the effects of causation and effectuation on firm performance, Yu, Tao, Tao, Xia, and Lo (2018) explored how firms cope with environmental uncertainty. Using a stratified sampling technique, 800 entrepreneurs from 10 software firms in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Changchun, China, were sampled for the study. Out of the 800 self-report questionnaires administered, 312 responses were received by the researchers. Sixty-seven per cent of the participants were males, and thirty-three were females. On average (55%) of the software firms have 1-100 employees, with 48.4% of the firms established within the past 8 years. A measure developed by the researchers was administered to measure the firm's performance. The items are measured on a 7 -7-point Likert scale. Similarly, Chandler et al.'s (2011) 7 -7-point Likert scale was administered to measure the level of causation in decision-making. To measure effectuation, a 15-point items questionnaire was administered to measure their decision-making. For uncertainty, McKelvie et al.'s (2011) 5-point Likert scale was employed to measure environmental uncertainty. Gargiulo and Benassi's (2000) grouping strategy split the study sample into Group 1 and Group 2. The hierarchical regression analyses showed that causation positively affected firm performance when environmental uncertainty was low and high. However, effectuation positively affects performance when environmental uncertainty is high but not when uncertainty is low. Effectuation and causation significantly positively affect firms when environmental uncertainty is high. However, causation and effectuation had an inverse relationship with firm performance when environmental uncertainty was low.

In a similar study, Peng, Liu, Jiao, Feng and Zheng (2020) investigated the curvilinear effects of effectuation and causation on new venture performance and the contextual effect of environmental uncertainty in emerging economies. Based on empirical data from Hangzhou, an entrepreneurial hub in China. The survey population was drawn from a directory of Hangzhou SMEs. The directory contained 106,679 entrepreneurs provided by EMAGE COMPANY, China's most prominent professional directory survey. A total of 407 participants were sampled for the study, with firms with an average age of 3 to 5 years and firms with 20-50 full-time employees. Using Chandler et al., 's (2011), McKelvie et al., 's (2011) and Brush et al. (1992) were adopted to measure the various dimensions of decision-making, environment uncertainty and new venture performance. Results of the hierarchical OLS analysis revealed that there was a J-shaped curvilinear relationship between effectuation decision logic and new venture performance. The study's findings seek to inform entrepreneurs that effectuation decision logic is a slow growth process in new venture performance; this is because it takes time to master the skills of becoming an effectuator. Moreover, an inverted U-shaped curvilinear association existed between causation decision logic and new venture performance. The finding suggests that the decision-making logic of causation promotes new venture performance but at low to moderate levels of causation. Also, the findings showed that environmental uncertainty moderates the relationship between effectuation and new venture performance. However, environmental uncertainty did not moderate the relationship between the decision logic of causation and new venture performance.

In a recent study, Uzoamaka, Onwuchekwa and Obinna (2018) explored the impact of decision-making under uncertainty on firm performance. Drawing from a survey descriptive design, 322 participants were selected from manufacturing industries in South East Nigeria. The study sample was randomly sampled and selected using a random sampling technique. A 27-item questionnaire was administered to the participants, and responses were inputted into the SPSS version 20. The linear regression analysis showed that decision-making under uncertainty had a significant positive relationship with the three dimensions of performance: market performance, financial performance, and shareholder return. These findings suggest that managers are strategic about their decisions under uncertain conditions, as managers seek to maximise profits and minimise costs.

However, in another study, Singh examined how environmental uncertainty impacts firm financial performance. Using a multi-modal approach and both primary and secondary data, the study revealed that environmental uncertainty significantly negatively impacted firm financial performance. The findings suggest that irrespective of the type of decision-making strategy in place, environmental uncertainty significantly impacts the value chain and supply chain to the extent that some entrepreneurs cannot react and recover effectively from the shock and, hence, its impact on the firm's performance. Organisations employing network supply strategies were found to improve decision-making processes and buffer against the adverse effects of environmental uncertainty on financial performance. These findings suggest that if managers implement macro-level risk management practices, they are more likely to improve the senior management decision-making process and decrease environmental uncertainty, which can significantly impact firm performance. Based on the findings from the empirical review, this study posits :

H_2 Perceived uncertainty will influence the link between the decisions of fashion entrepreneurs and their performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

2.2.4 The influence of taste on the relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and entrepreneurs performance

Much work on cultural and creative industries concludes that fashion has had a long-term research focus for the sociology of taste (Coulangeon, 2005). The idea that entrepreneurs' decisions can be influenced by taste is a true statement. While fashion entrepreneurs conceive of their decision of style, design and aesthetics as a matter of personal taste and individual preferences, this finding needs to be more conclusive (Coulangeon & Lemel, 2007; Godart & Mears, 2009). Godart et al. (2009) examined how creative decisions happen under uncertainty in the fashion industry. Specifically to investigate how entrepreneurs choose their models for catwalks. Using a snowball sampling technique, 30 participants, including fashion entrepreneurs, casting directors and stylists from the four main fashion hubs - New York, London and Paris were included in the study. Each participant interview ranged between 40 and 90 minutes, and the study adopted ethnography and network analysis of the catwalk. The four fashion centres' 2007 Spring/Summer fashion weeks were analyzed. Results showed that gut instincts, individual feelings and personal taste influenced fashion entrepreneurs' decisions when selecting a catwalk model. Also, the researchers indicated that producers' decisions are embedded in their support system, information sharing, and collective taste, not by individual taste/preferences, as producers make us believe. This indicates that entrepreneurs make interdependent decisions influenced by the choices of others and affected by similar factors.

In another study, Mears (2014) examined the meanings and decisions that expert taste-makers ascribed to cultural products and identified challenges that impede their perception of creative products—using an in-depth interview and a network analysis of an ethnographic study of European fashion models. The interviews revealed that aesthetic decisions and tastes emerged from internalised norms and personal capacities. The network analysis suggests that fashion producers develop personal tastes and preferences due to status hierarchies and information shared. More so, the ethnography findings showed that taste as a situated form of knowledge production emphasizes the relevance of cultural interactions in taste decisions. The findings from the various analyses highlight the interactive role of culture in shaping aesthetic decisions and taste preferences among fashion entrepreneurs. This paper proposed a framework analysis of the relevance of culture in taste making. Drawing on historical accounts of taste from extant literature Meyer (2000) reported that institutional context influence taste decisions. Similarly, the study found that in collectivist cultures or pluralistic societies political and social factors influence taste decisions.

In contrast, Woodward and Emission (2001), using extensive data from the Australia Everyday Culture Project (ACEP), examined the meanings ascribed to taste and determinants of 'bad' and 'good' tastes. Primarily, primary data was obtained through a random sample survey of 2756 creatives from music, film, television, visual arts and design, housing and furniture, newspapers and magazines, housing and furniture, and fashion and food. The study employed an approach that combined qualitative insights with quantitative analysis. Woodward et al. (2001) found that individuals have different evaluative attachments to objects, behaviours and attitudes. Generally, an individual's judgment about an object hinges on quality, quantity and composition. Empirical data demonstrated that decisions about taste are independent of cultural and aesthetic selections. It can be inferred from the findings that cultural, political and social patterns did not influence the taste and aesthetic choices of the study participants. Furthermore, the researchers argued that participants' characteristics, such as confidence and open-mindedness, might have influenced their taste decisions. The analysis also showed that negative judgments are more easily expressed with concrete and specific examples than positive decisions.

Yinfang, Jiaquan, and Wendeng (2020) examined taste from physiological, psychological, and social perspectives, finding that it significantly influences decision-making. Their study revealed that taste affects both the risk-taking behaviours of taste-makers and the purchasing decisions of consumers.

Gardiner's (2019) study, "Taste and organisation Studies," explores how cultural notions of taste influence organisational perceptions and practices. Using the British fish and chip shop as a case study, Gardiner illustrates how societal tastes and class-based judgments shape organisational identities and employee experiences. The research suggests that taste is not merely a personal preference but an organizing principle that affects decision-making and performance within organisations.

A study titled "The Entrepreneurial Decision-Making: A Complex Choice Where Taste, Risk, Endowments, Necessity, Opportunity, Personal Traits, and Behaviour Matter" by Bonnet, Brau, and Cussy (2008) explores how entrepreneurs' personal tastes influence their decision-making processes. The research suggests that taste—encompassing personal preferences and cultural influences—interacts with factors like risk tolerance and opportunity recognition, ultimately impacting entrepreneurial performance.

In their seminal paper, *"The Role of Aesthetic Taste in Consumer Behaviour,"* Hoyer and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) explored the extensive research surrounding taste and its influence on consumer decision-making. They proposed a framework for future aesthetic judgment research, highlighting how cognition and expertise shape consumer behaviours. However, their findings emphasized that consumer tastes are fundamental drivers of judgment, influencing how individuals evaluate consumption situations. Additionally, the study revealed that taste plays a significant role in affective and sensory processes, suggesting that aesthetic taste is crucial in determining how products are perceived and chosen. This aligns with the insights presented by Yinfang et al. (2020), who also recognized the importance of taste in shaping consumer behaviour. Although the relationship between taste and decision-making has been studied, the relationship between taste and entrepreneurial performance still needs to be examined in the context of cultural and creative industries. Notably, the impact of taste on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance may be more pronounced than previously acknowledged. Based on the above findings, this study posits that:

H_3 Entrepreneurs' taste will influence the link between decision-making processes of entrepreneurs and their performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

2.2.5 The influence of strife/competition on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance.

The sectors within the cultural and creative industries are characterized by constant strife and competition, in particular within the same context and abroad (Franssen & Kuipers, 2013). In spite of this challenge, entrepreneurs are expected to thrive in such tumultuous work conditions. Whereas uncertainty and precarity has been given much attention in the cultural and creative industries literature, much can not be said about the concept 'strife/ competition.' Hence, this study seeks to explore the influence of strife on the link between decision-making and performance of fashion entrepreneurs.

A study by Akomea et al. (2023) examined how competitive intensity affects the relationship between managerial capabilities and SME performance. The findings suggest that in highly competitive environments, the indirect effect of managerial capabilities on performance through entrepreneurial orientation is strengthened, while the effect through social capital is weakened. This indicates that competition can significantly alter the pathways through which decision-making impacts performance.

Using a social network theory of organisational coordination, Tsai (2002) investigated how coordination mechanisms influence knowledge sharing within intra-organisational networks characterised by collaborative and competitive relationships. The study focused on a large, multi-unit petrochemical company. It employed the Quadratic Assignment Procedure (QAP) and multiple regression techniques, and the study analysed how formal hierarchical structure and informal lateral relations influence knowledge sharing and how inter-unit competition moderates the relationship between such coordination mechanisms and knowledge sharing. The study analysed how formal hierarchical structure and informal lateral relations influence knowledge sharing and how inter-unit competition moderates the relationship between such coordination mechanisms and knowledge sharing. Additionally, the research examined the moderating role of inter-unit competition in these relationships. The findings indicated that centralisation, as a formal hierarchical structure, had a significant negative impact on knowledge sharing. In contrast, as an informal lateral mechanism, social interaction positively impacted knowledge sharing across departments competing for market share. Furthermore, the study found that internal resource competition did not moderate the relationship between centralisation and knowledge sharing, nor between social interaction and knowledge sharing. However, knowledge sharing was negatively affected among units competing for internal resources. These findings suggest that the competitive dynamics within organisational units influence the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms in fostering knowledge sharing. The researcher proposed extending the organisational capability theory to include the role of intra-organisational competition. These findings are essential, as knowledge sharing between organisational units can improve overall performance. This improvement can be achieved through collective learning and the synergistic advantages of exchanging information, expertise, and localised knowledge among competing units.

Chang and Tsai (2002) explored the distinctive competitive strategy employed by Taiwan's IC design industry and investigated the origins of its core competencies. The study revealed that instead of investing heavily in fundamental research to develop advanced technology, Taiwanese IC companies strategically allocated their limited resources to excel as rapid followers. They achieved this by adopting and adapting practices from self-made or well-established firms in the industry. The findings revealed that these companies prioritised adaptability and flexibility in applying existing technologies. This strategy allowed them to establish a distinct niche and gain a competitive edge, which contributed to their rapid growth in the industry. Furthermore, the study underscored that the success of IC design firms hinged on their ability to be fast followers—not simply imitators, but firms that could swiftly upgrade their design capabilities and integrate relevant technologies effectively.

A study conducted by Jansen, Van Den Bosch and Volberda (2006) in a study "exploratory innovation, exploitative innovation, and performance: Effects of organisational antecedents and environmental moderators" examined how environmental aspects such as dynamism and competitiveness moderate the effectiveness of exploratory and exploitative innovation. The study's findings indicated that centralisation negatively impacted exploratory innovation, whereas formalisation positively influenced exploitative innovation. Also, the findings indicated that social interactions within departments are an important antecedent of both exploratory and innovative behaviours. Additionally, the research showed that pursuing innovation tends to be effective in dynamic environments, while pursuing exploitative innovation benefits a department's financial performance in more competitive environments.

Hakim, Santoso, Takwin, Sunitiyoso, and Abraham (2021) conducted an experimental study to investigate how conscientiousness and competition influence the quality of group decision-making, using a sample of 240 graduate students. The study applied logistic regression analysis to evaluate the effects of these variables. The results indicated that individuals with high levels of conscientiousness were more likely to make poor group decisions, as their tendency to adopt less effective problem-solving strategies significantly negatively impacted their overall performance. Additionally, competition alone was found to have no significant impact on decision quality. However, the interaction effect between conscientiousness and competition did affect the overall quality of group decisions. Based on the above arguments, this study hypothesized that:

H_4 Strife will influence the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making processes and performance in the Ghana's fashion industry.

2.2.6 The influence of intuition on the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance.

Recently, there has been a significant focus in management scholarship on the connection between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance (Zayadin et al., 2022). However, more data on the subject still needs to be collected. Specifically, examining potentially relevant contextual variables needs to be done more extensively in extant studies. This section enhances our understanding by exploring the connection between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance, as well as the influence of intuition on this relationship.

Elbanna, Child, and Dayan (2013) developed and examined a model to better understand how intuition influences decision-making and performance. The study used convenience sampling to select 100 private manufacturing firms. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to individuals involved in strategic decision-making within the sampled firms. The data were analysed using Smart PLS 2.0 M3 software (Ringle et al., 2013), chosen for its minimal analytical requirements. The results revealed a positive relationship between intuition and decision uncertainty. However, intuition was not significantly associated with either financial or non-financial performance, suggesting that different performance dimensions are influenced by distinct aspects of strategic decision-making. Additionally, decision motives did not predict the use of intuition, while environmental uncertainty was found to moderate the relationship between decision-making and intuition.

In a recent study, Samadanis and Lee (2018) developed a conceptual framework to analyse the link between sensemaking and organisational failure. The study adopted the single case study design approach and relied on secondary data from academic literature, magazines, annual reports and autobiographies. The case design was employed to analyse the data. The findings indicated that the process of pricing an artwork relies mainly on intuition or gut feelings. The data analysis also showed that sensemaking and organisational failure are situational and idiosyncratic in a firm, industry, and context. The results also showed stakeholders in art organisations often rely heavily on intuition when making decisions. As a result, the success or failure of individuals within these organisations depends largely on their capacity to make effective strategic choices in uncertain conditions. Finally, the study highlights the limitations of intuition in decision-making, which could lead to organisational failure if the strategic decision-making process is ignored.

Similarly, Ritchie, Kolodinsky and Eastwood (2007) examined how top executive managers' reliance on intuition affects nonprofit organisations' financial performance. The study showed that there is notable link between intuitive decision-making and financial performance. Chaston (2009) emphasizes that intuition is essential for owner-managers to succeed in entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial settings. Therefore, organisations need to create training programs that focus on developing intuitive thinking skills, especially for managers who primarily rely on rational decision-making.

Moreover, Szanto (2019), in a study among top managers of companies in Hungary, examined the role of decision-making in corporate performance. The study found no relationship between a rational optimizing approach and business performance (market share and profit-sales ratio). However, a significant positive relationship exists between business performance and intuitive decision-making. This implies that successful business owners rely more on intuition than rational thinking processes, suggesting that intuitive decision-making plays a more prominent role in decision-making.

Zacca, Dayan, and Elbanna (2017) investigated the influence of conflict and intuition on new product development and overall organisational performance in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) using survey data from 150 owner-managers in the United Arab Emirates. The study found that intuition plays a significant role in decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. However, there was no direct link between intuition and SME performance. While a relationship between intuition and the exploration of new products was supported, the findings suggest that intuition-driven decisions were less beneficial than those based on more strategic, analytical approaches.

In a related study, Musso et al. (2020) examined how decision-makers' overconfidence influences intuitive practices and international performance. The findings revealed a notable inverse relationship between intuition and firm performance, suggesting that intuition may be less effective in complex decision-making contexts such as internationalisation, where more strategic and analytical approaches are required. Additionally, the study showed that intuition mediated the relationship between decision-makers' overconfidence and international performance.

A study by Sanda, Afun, Alacovska, and Damoah (2023) examined the relationships among intuition, decision-making, and performance among 720 fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana's creative industry. Using Amos-based structural equation modelling (SEM), the researchers found that decision-making significantly impacts performance. Although there was no significant correlation between intuition and decision-making, a significant association between intuition and performance. Furthermore, intuition did not moderate the connection between decision-making and performance; instead, it mediated the relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and their entrepreneurial outcomes, such as overall performance. Based on the present empirical literature the study posits that:

H_5 Entrepreneurs' intuition will influence the link between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

2.2.7 The influence of past experience on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance.

Over the years, scholars have been keen to investigate the role of experience in decision-making (Rassmussen & Madsen, 2002) and entrepreneurial performance. Studies show that entrepreneurs' prior experience influences their decision-making and, consequently, their performance (Faroque, 2021). This experience is the foundation for decisions made within firms, organisations and institutions.

One study examined the impact of experience, entrepreneurial outcomes, and decision-making in internationalisation. Faroque (2021) reported that past experiences affected the decision-making of owner-managers. The data exhibits how prior experience indirectly impacts a firm's internationalisation decisions through market orientation. The study also revealed that several heuristics and biases originating from the entrepreneurs' experience affect performance internationalisation.

In a different context, Dew, Read, Saravathy, and Wiltbank (2009) examined Saravathy's entrepreneurial frame decision problems through effectual logic. They conducted qualitative, in-depth interviews with 27 entrepreneurs and 37 MBA students in the United States. The qualitative data analysis revealed that relying solely on personal experience led entrepreneurs to encounter various decision-making errors. This suggests that entrepreneurs are more prone to mistakes when they base their decisions on past experiences. The study also found that experienced entrepreneurs were more likely to utilize their personal decision-making experiences than novice entrepreneurs. Furthermore, a weak relationship was observed between personal experience and performance.

Drawing on the effectuation theory, Laskovaia, Lee, Bogatyreva and Hermann (2022) examined the hidden mechanisms and boundary conditions behind the translation of passion into performance outcomes. Using the bootstrapping-based mediation, ordinary least squares moderated regression and moderated mediation analysis with a sample of 105 executives from the United States. The results showed that decision-making plans based on previous experience invigorate harmonious passion toward effectual entrepreneurial performance. The findings showed that harmonious passion indirectly increases firm performance through effectuation. However, the direct link between harmonious passion and performance was insignificant. Additionally, the proposed mediation model was strengthened when executives attained high levels of entrepreneurial experience. Based on the above empirical findings the present study posits that:

$H_{6:}$ Personal experience will influence decision-making and entrepreneurial performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

2.2.8 The influence of social networks on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance.

Most organisations over the years have relied heavily on research and development (R&D), technology and innovation to adapt to the ever-changing demands of the business environment following Schumpeter's research on innovation (Schumpeter, 2003). However, over the years, there has been a significant shift in the relevance of innovation to successful business growth and social networks. The impact of social networks on managers' decision-making and organisational performance has emerged in the management literature (Perez et al., 2015). Social support refers to the resources individuals gain through their connections with others, their participation in a network, or simply by being recognized or having a positive reputation. This suggests that the survival and growth of an enterprise depend primarily on the quantity and or quality of the company's network system. Although a strong link exists between social support and entrepreneurial performance, a few studies have challenged this assertion. In this section, this thesis examines the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance, along with the influence of social support.

Oluseye and Oladele (2013) examined the nature of social support and entrepreneurial performance. Using the exploratory research design and purposive sampling technique, 120 entrepreneurs were sampled from Ota, Nigeria. The study found that social support networks significantly affect business operations and that a network-based system contributes significantly to entrepreneurs' success. Therefore, entrepreneurs with more robust social support systems are likely to succeed in the business market than those with weaker social ties.

In another context, Perez, Morales and Pulles (2016) examined how the support system of CEOs impacts their cognitive factors and, consequently, organisational performance. The study employed survey data from 203 manufacturing and service sectors in Spain. Data were analysed using the structural equation model—this statistical instrument aimed to determine the existence and strength of exogenous variables. The study found that network size affects strategic flexibility decisions. Although the strength of network size positively correlated with strategic flexibility decisions, the association was insignificant. Also, social support and organisational performance had a significant positive relationship. Furthermore, the study findings implied that the link between social support, organisational performance and strategic flexibility decisions can be strengthened or weakened by network size, the support system's characteristics and the support system's strength.

In a recent study, Ibrahim et al. (2021) examined the impact of adversarial networks, friendship, and advice on the entrepreneurial success of mobile phone retailers. The study employed an explanatory research design to explore the causal relationships between these variables. Data were collected using questionnaires from a randomly selected sample of 199 entrepreneurs in Quetta City. A self-administered questionnaire was employed for this purpose. The hierarchical regression analysis indicated a strong positive correlation between the degree of friendship networks and entrepreneurial success. This finding indicates that as the quality of friendships increases, entrepreneurs tend to achieve tremendous success. However, the study's outcome indicated a significant negative correlation between adversarial networks and entrepreneurial success. This suggests that when entrepreneurs face many competitors in the market space, their chances of succeeding diminish.

In another study, Chen, Chang and Chang (2016) examined the effect of entrepreneurial orientation and social networks on middle managers' creative performance. Data were gathered through a survey of 337 middle managers in research and development (R&D) and the manufacturing industry in Taiwan. The hierarchical regression analyses revealed a curvilinear relationship between social networks and managers' creative performance. This finding implies that as middle managers' external support increases, their creative performance also increases. Likewise, the results showed that middle managers' external networking has an inverted U-shaped relationship with their creative performance. Chen et al. (2016) explained that when the number of one's social support increases beyond a specific limit, it diminishes the time an individual devotes to fruitful interactions with each contact for receiving relevant information. Furthermore, excessive external social interactions can expose individuals to an overwhelming amount of diverse and sometimes conflicting information, potentially hindering creative thinking and leading to information overload. In contrast, internal social support—through strong, trusted relationships—can help moderate the link between entrepreneurial orientation (particularly innovation) and creative performance. Innovation underpins creative performance and depends on access to a balanced and sufficiently broad range of information for effective idea generation.

In a related study examining the moderating effect of social support on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance of SMEs in Nakuru, Nigeria, Kiprotich, Kimosop, Kemboi, and Kiprop (2015) found that social support positively moderated the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation (risk-taking and proactiveness) and entrepreneurial performance. Based on the empirical findings in the extant literature, this study posits that:

H_7 Social networks will influence the relationship between decision-making and performance within the fashion industry in Ghana.

2.2.8 The influence of cultural values on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance

As businesses grow and expand into other market spaces, scholars must understand how entrepreneurs' cultural values accompany, change and influence the designer's product decisions (Hwang, 2013). Less well documented is the relationship between designers' culture and the designs they produce within the fashion entrepreneurship literature. However, the necessity of integrating the culture of entrepreneurs into creative design activities has been examined by some researchers (see Salimi, 2002; Yaveroglu & Donthu, 2002; Zec, 2002; Bell et al., 2003; Hidaka, 2003; Press & Cooper, 2003). These extensive studies support the relevance of culture in product design and entrepreneurial activities, which means the product design process is not exclusively due to factors such as social networking, cultural intermediaries, structural strength, and material products. Instead, it appears tired by unknown factors such as the designer's cultural values, aesthetic preferences, emotions and other non-physical properties. Various cultural factors influence entrepreneurs in the fashion industry. Cultural influences come into play in product development as entrepreneurs' choices, decisions and selections are shaped and re-shaped by their own cultural and societal values (Razzaghi et al., 2008). This section highlights the role of cultural values in the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance.

In another study, EstradaCruz, VerduJover and GomezGras (2018) examined the role of culture in entrepreneurs' decision-making. Based on 2013/2014 Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students' Survey (GUESS). A total of 5076 founders of their firms were sampled and included in the study. Questionnaires were administered to assess the study participants' social identity, effectual, causal logic and cultural dimensions. Smart PLS was used to analyse the effect of cultural values on entrepreneurs' decision-making. The findings of this study supported the hypothesis that cultural values will influence decision-making. Results also showed that decisions to venture into new firms vary from culture to culture. In a related study, Akhtar et al. (2018) explored the role of cultural values in mobile phone adoption in Pakistan. The study found that cultural values moderated the relationship between mobile phone users' intentions and social networks.

In another study, Hwang (2020) explored the relationship between fashion designers' cultural values and design decisions. Using purposive and convenience sampling techniques, 12 South Korean fashion designers were interviewed. The data were coded and transcribed using the constant comparison method of qualitative analysis. The findings revealed that cultural values influenced the designers' decision-making processes in both direct and indirect ways. Some designers were not fully aware that their cultural backgrounds shaped their approach to design. Nevertheless, cultural values were found to have a direct impact on the creative performance of these fashion entrepreneurs. Furthermore, cultural values directly influence the creative performance of fashion designers. Hwang (2020) reported that cultural values such as Confucianism influenced the designers' decision-making process within the design process. Taking the Confucian value of hard work creates a precarious work environment where workers labour without rest. According to Hwang (2020), this hinders productivity and creativity. In addition, the Confucian idea of Semyon (principles to follow, obligations to fulfill) deeply affected consumers' tastes and styles. In some situations, Korean target market's tastes limit designers' creativity and innovation.

This findings align with previous research by Razzaghi and Ramirez (2005). Their study sought to propose a framework that influences designers' creative processes. It was evident from their research that non-physical qualities of the products, such as pleasurability, experience, emotion, the soul of the product and the designers' culture, often influence the physical aspects of the design processes. It was evident from this study that cultural values often affect the formation of the product design at the early stages of the design process. The findings also showed that the level of cultural activity is often at the unconscious or, at most, the subconscious level, which is often unknown to the designer. This implies that the influencing effect of cultural values on the creative process and product design is an uncontrollable and unknown element to the designer.

Similarly, Hofstede (2001) also observed that the integration of culture into the design process is mainly unconscious since no human mental activities can be culture-free. This suggests that the designers' cultural values and preferences can unconsciously influence the design process. Also, Carlson (1992) calls this process the 'cultural creed', suggesting that designers intrinsically enforce a new product based on their pre-existing frames based on their past experiences and cultural upbringing rather than inventing new frames.

Many studies have linked decision-making, entrepreneurial activities and cultural values. Some studies have shown the causes of cultural negligence in product design, for instance. Reese (2002) reported that a lack of technical know-how and education results in designers needing to integrate their cultural values into the design and creative processes. Similarly, De Souza (1999) observed that most design processes are customized contrary to manufacturing on a large scale. Hence, designers need help to draw a link between the influencing effect of their cultural values on their design decisions and the finished product. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) and ICSID (2002) also reported that the cost of research and globalization has erased the direct impact of cultural integration in the creative processes. Thus, the inconclusive role of cultural values in the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance is worth examining. Based on the above empirical findings, the present study posits that:

H_8 Cultural values will influence the relationship between entrepreneurial performance and entrepreneurial decision-making in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

2.2.10 The influence of cultural intermediaries on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance

Cultural intermediation is now a standard feature in all occupations: sales, marketing, public relations, music, fashion, and all institutions providing symbolic goods and services (Hadley, 2021). Cultural intermediaries, also known as bloggers and influencers, operate in the space between production and consumption. Their role connects culture and the economy, shaping how consumers perceive products and services. These intermediaries directly or indirectly influence entrepreneurs' decision-making, impacting performance in different social contexts. This discussion examines how cultural intermediaries influence the link between entrepreneurial decision-making and performance. Negi and Pabalkar (2020) explored the marketing techniques employed by Instagram influencers and their impact on the consumer decision-making process on online sales. The study drew on data from 200 women in India, along with other key influencers involved in the fashion decision-making process. The analysis revealed that cultural intermediaries significantly shaped consumer preferences and decisions at various stages of the purchasing journey. Additionally, the findings highlighted the powerful impact of social media posts and blogs on consumer behaviour.

Mainolfi and Vergura (2020) examined the impact of engagement and homophily on the intention to buy fashion products that fashion intermediaries recommend. A self-report questionnaire was administered among 252 Italian and 278 Taiwanese fashion consumers to test this proposed model. The results indicated that fashion bloggers' credibility positively influenced engagement with the blog. However, it did not influence consumers' intent to buy fashion products. Also, higher engagement with the fashion blogs influenced the intentions of consumers to buy from that fashion blog. In a similar study, Zain, Perry and Quinn (2018) examined how fashion bloggers influence Malaysian female fashion consumers' pre-purchase decisions. Their findings indicated that renowned cultural intermediaries significantly impacted consumers' intentions to buy fashion products.

Arriagada (2019), in their study' Communicative Value Chains: Fashion Bloggers and Branding Agencies as Cultural Intermediaries.' The study explored how fashion intermediaries influence consumer buying decisions in Santiago de Chile. An in-depth interview was conducted using semi-structured interviews with fashion bloggers. The study findings report that cultural intermediaries influence and shape consumers' buying decisions directly and indirectly. Similarly, Kaushal (2021) reported comparable findings. In an industry saturated with choices, navigating purchasing options can be overwhelming. As a result, consumers increasingly rely on cultural intermediaries to guide their decisions. Kaushal (2021) observed that in the United Kingdom, approximately 95% of individuals aged 18 to 34 depend on these intermediaries when making fashion-related purchases. Based on the findings above this study posits that:

H_9 Cultural intermediaries will influence the relationship between decision- making and performance in the Ghana's fashion industry.

2.2.11 The influence of resilience on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance

Recently, there has been a growing interest in organisational resilience. However, individual resilience, particularly from an entrepreneur's perspective, has received less attention (Santoro et al., 2020). This section provides relevant insights into the connections between resilience, decision-making, and performance. Santoro, Bertoldi, Giachino and Candelo (2020) investigated the impact of entrepreneurial resilience on entrepreneurial success and the moderating role of stakeholders' engagement. A survey was conducted among SME operators in different firms, including IT, automotive, food and beverage, retail and consulting in Italy. Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) or owner-managers were randomly selected to partake in the study. A total of 117 owner-managers were randomly selected and included in the study. The participants completed both open-ended and close-ended questionnaires. The findings of the hierarchical regression analysis indicated a positive correlation between resilience and entrepreneurial success. Moreover, the findings showed that a vast network of external stakeholders provides entrepreneurs with higher benefits for resilience and informs their perception of success in business activities. Resilience enables entrepreneurs to take appropriate actions and make decisions responding to unanticipated events threatening their businesses' success. This suggests that social ties enhanced their resilience and perceived success as a wide range of networks enable entrepreneurs to build resilience and augment perceived success.

In a similar study, Ayala and Manzano (2013) investigated the link between the dimensions of resilience and the success of seasoned entrepreneurs in the tourism industry in Spain. The study adopted a 5-point Likert questionnaire with three sub-scales: hardiness, resourcefulness and optimism. The hierarchical linear regression analysis showed a significant positive relationship between the three dimensions of resilience and entrepreneurial success. The relationship between resourcefulness and entrepreneurial success was stronger than the other relationships examined. Furthermore, the multivariate model analysis demonstrated resourcefulness's importance on objective and subjective growth measures.

These findings have been further confirmed by Sobaih, Elshaer, Hasanein and Abdelaziz (2021) in a research titled "Responses to COVID-19: The Role of Performance in the Relationship between Small Hospitality Enterprises, resilience and Sustainable Tourism Development." In this study, the researchers explored the impact of managers' resilience on sustainable tourism development and the moderating role of performance. A self-report questionnaire was distributed to owner-managers of small hospitality businesses throughout

Greater Cairo, Egypt, gathering valuable insights into their experiences and challenges. Data were analyzed using structural equation modelling (SME), and the results revealed that resilience had a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial performance. Based on the above empirical review, this study posits that

H_{10} Resilience would mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical review and hypotheses developed in the sections above, the conceptual framework shown in Figure 2.1 below is developed to guide this study

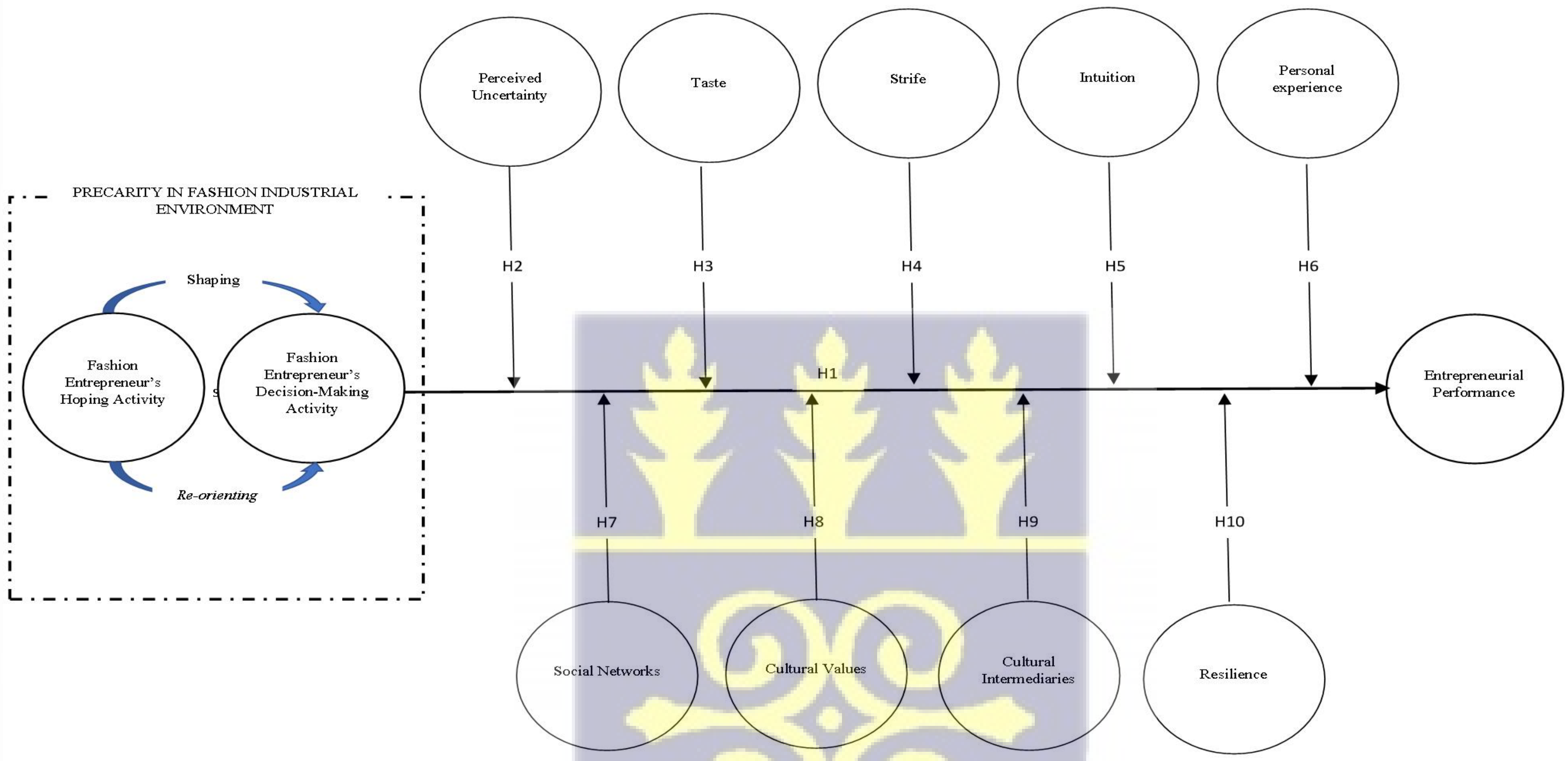

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The first part of the framework outlines how precarious work conditions in the fashion industry impact decision-making among entrepreneurs. It explains how hope orient and reshape the decisions of fashion entrepreneurs. It also highlights how the decision-making of fashion entrepreneurs is influenced by personal and sociocultural factors that impact their entrepreneurial performance. Guided by this framework, the study explores how precarious work conditions in the fashion industry shape and re-orient entrepreneurs' decision-making of fashion entrepreneurs. The second part of the model also examines the influence of decision-making on entrepreneurs' performance. This suggests that entrepreneurs' performance, which implies the success or failure of their businesses, depends on the decisions of these entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the interaction between entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance is influenced by personal and sociocultural factors, including entrepreneurs' taste, intuition, personal experience, resilience, perceived uncertainty, social support, cultural values, and cultural intermediaries.

This model details this study's key variables of interest in the form of a hypothesized model. The thinking is that precarious work conditions in this study in the Ghanaian fashion industry influence entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance (success and failure). In the same vein, hope acts as a strategy that shapes, orients, and reshapes entrepreneurs' decision-making in this industry. The model also suggests .that there is a link between entrepreneurs' decision-making and their performance. The conceptual framework explains personal and sociocultural factors that influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. These factors influence the relationship between decision-making and performance links.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodologies applied in this study, explaining the rationale behind each choice. It starts by discussing the research philosophy, design, and chosen methodology. The chapter then provides an overview of the study's setting, data sources, target population, and sampling methods. It goes on to describe the creation of the interview guide for the qualitative research and the development of scales for the quantitative analysis. The chapter concludes with a review of the methods and procedures applied, and the ethical considerations observed throughout data collection.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Generally, all scientific studies are founded on a philosophical view (Holden & Lynch, 2004: Proctor, 2005; Baikie, 2010). The term research philosophy also known as research paradigm (Guba, 1990) or worldview (Gage, 1989) refers to beliefs and assumptions about knowledge acquisition and creation (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Research philosophy explains the researchers' thinking and reflection of life and the world around them (Lather, 1986). It reflects the impact of the beliefs and principles of researchers on their action of investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Kuhn (1970) paradigm explains a common agreement between researchers about how problems should be understood and addressed. Social scientists' investigations are usually grounded in a few paradigms. None of which is superior to the other, merely more or less useful in a particular situation. Each approach shape knowledge creation and provides a general understanding of a phenomenon being examined or explored (Babbie, 1998).

The philosophy of a research reflects the assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge (Babbie, 1998). It explains the researcher's understanding of the research questions, methodology, research strategy, data collection techniques and analyses of the findings (Crotty, 1998; Saunders et al., 2009). Research philosophy enables the researcher to precisely define, in more profound terms, the 'why' for the study other than just choosing the methodology - the 'how' (Holden et al., 2004).

How researchers address ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological considerations provides a framework for understanding and distinguishing various philosophical perspectives (Creswell, 2014). Hence, a distinctive logical relationship between the ontology, epistemology, axiology, and consequently the methodology of their chosen philosophy serve as a framework that clarifies and distinguishes one paradigm from another (Creswell, 2014). Considering the diverse philosophical perspectives, the paradigms most frequently referenced in management research and organisational studies include social constructionism, positivism, post-positivism, and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2009).

Positivism is a philosophical stance that asserts reality is single and exists independently of human consciousness, with knowledge being objective. This approach typically involves gathering data in numerical form to perform statistical analyses and draw conclusions. As a result, the positivist paradigm primarily employs quantitative methods and quantitative analytical tools to address research problems. In contrast, the post-positivism philosophy recognizes that while an objective reality exists it can never be attained, our understanding of it is inherently imperfect and influenced by our perceptions and biases (Crotty, 1994). Post-positivists critique the idea of a single, objective reality, arguing that reality is socially constructed and context-dependent. Post-positivists use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, maintaining a critical approach that acknowledges the limitations of knowledge and the potential for revision.

On the other hand, the social constructionism philosophy posits that multiple realities exist, shaped by human experiences and interpretations. Constructionism is inherently subjective and context-dependent, relying on qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. The approach of constructionism is qualitative-qualitative as compared to positivism which is qualitative-quantiative. Whereas pragmatism is a belief and a stance that falls within the positivist and constructivism continuum and much like postpostivist philosophy, pragmatism philosophy means that truth cannot be certain but constantly requires revisions. Pragmatists hold that the process to acquire knowledge is a continuum instead of two poles that are in opposition and mutually exclusive (Hampson et al., 2023). This research paradigm exists between the two poles of objectivity and subjectivity (Creswell et al., 2018). Pragmatism holds a pluralistic and dynamic view of reality. Rather than positing a single, objective reality or entirely subjective multiple realities, pragmatist ontology views reality as contextual, experiential, and shaped by practical consequences (Creswell et al., 2018). In this study, constructs such as precarity, hope, and success are not treated as fixed or universally defined; instead, they are understood as situated and emergent phenomena, enacted and made meaningful through the lived practices of fashion entrepreneurs operating within Ghana's informal economy. Pragmatist epistemology is anti-foundational and problem-centred, asserting that knowledge is valid if it effectively addresses real-world issues. In the context of this study, concepts such as hope, resilience, taste, social networks and personal experiences are not treated as abstract constructs but as practical tools employed by entrepreneurs to navigate constraints. Knowledge is both constructed through experience and tested for its usefulness, which supports the adoption of a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative insights with quantitative analysis.

It is more focused on research output, practicability, usefulness and actions rather than philosophical musings. Thus, this study employed the pragmatism philosophy as it prioritises practical outcomes and the usefulness of the findings of the study (Hothersall, 2019). Pragmatism paradigm has its basis in the scholarly contributions of Pierre, James, Mead, and Dewey (Cherryholmes, 1992). Pragmatism philosophy focus on the practical consequences of research and believe that reality is constantly changing based on actions and experiences. The philosophical view of pragmatism holds the view that knowledge is considered valuable if it is useful and actionable. They argue that the worldview of the researcher arises out of actions, situations and consequences of an act, rather than the antecedent of a condition as in the case of positivism (Creswell, 2013). This paradigm also asserts that reality is constantly constructed, renegotiated, debated and interpreted to create knowledge to edify reality (Guba et al., 1994).

Pragmatic research philosophy is not committed to any one system of worldview (Creswell, 2013), it is not aligned to qualitative or quantitative methods and approaches. It is unlike positivism which is tilted to quantitative and deductive reasoning or constructionism with its affinity for qualitative approach and inductive reasoning. It offers a flexible and reflexive approach to research design (Felizer, 2010). The complementarity` of qualitative-quantitative approaches complement the strength and weaknesses of both approaches. In this stance, the pragmatist researcher is at liberty to select the research design and methodology which best address a research purpose. Pragmatism is associated with abductive reasoning which allows one to move back and forth between inductive and deductive reasoning. This possibly enables the researcher to actively create theories in the field of study (Goldkuhl, 2012). The pragmatism research paradigm was selected due to its alignment with the practical and problem-centred orientation of the study. It embraces both objective and subjective forms of knowledge, enabling the use of mixed methods to explore complex social phenomena from multiple perspectives. This study adopts a mixed-methods methodology, consistent with the pragmatist paradigm.

Pragmatism supports the use of qualitative, quantitative, or combined approaches, depending on what best addresses the research problem. In this context, qualitative interviews and narratives are employed to uncover the lived experiences and embodied dispositions of fashion entrepreneurs. Complementing this, quantitative tools such as surveys and scales are used to identify broader patterns in how hope and related factors influence performance. This flexible and purpose-driven design reflects the core principles of pragmatism, prioritising methodological pluralism to generate practically relevant insights.

This approach is particularly suited to research on decision-making and entrepreneurial performance in an under-researched context, where the integration of contextual, lived experiences and measurable outcomes is aaaaaessential. Moreover, pragmatism ensures that the research remains anchored in real-world relevance, generating insights that are both theoretically grounded and practically applicable.

3.2 Research Approach

In this study, a mixed methods approach was employed, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. This approach leverages the strengths of each method to offset the weaknesses of the other (Cameron et al., 1988), thereby increasing the overall reliability of the data collected (Easter-Smith et al., 1991; Da Vinci, 2009). By using both qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study, rather than relying solely on one, a more nuanced perspective was achieved. Proponents of this research paradigm recommend using a multi-modal method when the study's objectives, research questions, and hypotheses require both qualitative and quantitative data (Tashakkori et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2004).

The study specifically utilized an exploratory sequential research design, beginning with the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Participants for the qualitative phase were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and their ability to provide in-depth insights into the phenomena being studied. These fashion entrepreneurs had direct experience and knowledge, enabling them to speak to the challenges of the fashion industry. The data gathered from the qualitative phase were transcribed, and used to develop themes to generate survey instruments for the second phase of the study. This phase was followed by the collection and analysis of quantitative data, allowing the initial qualitative insights to be expanded upon with a broader quantitative analysis. Survey questionnaires were administered to fashion entrepreneurs in an attempt to generalize the findings from the initial qualitative research. The survey data was then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

The third phase of the study involved integrating the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative strands (Clark & Plano Clark 2019). Simply using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods in a single study does not automatically classify it as 'mixed methods.' What truly defines mixed methods research and underscores its value is the integration, linking, or combining of these two strands of data. Integration can occur at various levels of a study such as the design level, methods level, or interpretation level and can be achieved through different approaches, including connecting, building, merging, or embedding (Creswell et al., 2011; Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). In this study, the first instance of data integration happened at the design level through the use of a sequential design, where the results from the initial phase were utilized to inform and shape the second phase of the research design.

To more comprehensively address the research questions, integration at the interpretation level was employed, linking the qualitative data with the quantitative findings. In the final analysis, areas of divergence and convergence between the qualitative and quantitative phases were closely examined. This process allowed for the formation of inferences and an overarching understanding developed through the integration of both data strands (Tashakkori & Teddie, 2021), providing deeper insights into the precarious nature of the fashion industry in Ghana.

This three-stage analysis process post-qualitative phase, post-quantitative phase, and during data integration ensured a comprehensive exploration and validation of the research findings. The goal of this mixed methods approach was to build upon and extend the initial qualitative exploratory findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The exploratory sequential research design differs from the explanatory sequential approach in that it first explores a concept before validating it, offering greater flexibility in uncovering new ideas through the qualitative method (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

Mixed method strategies offer the opportunity to combine traditional survey-based data collection with qualitative approaches such as interviews and observations (Sieber, 1973). This approach allows findings from one method to enhance, clarify, and elaborate on the results obtained from another (Greene et al., 1989). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) emphasize that triangulation, or the confirmation of results through different approaches, is crucial in mixed methods research. Additionally, mixed methods are particularly valuable when a study aims to broaden the scope and depth of the research by employing multiple lines of inquiry (Greene et al., 1989). The increasing complexity of the research problem and the need for a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives and questions drove the use of this approach. Moreover, employing mixed methods enable the contextualization, generalization, and assessment of the credibility of the findings (Almeida, 2018; Schoonenboom, Johnson & Froehlich, 2018).

3.3 Research Design

Research design refers to the overall strategy used to conduct a study. According to Zikmund (2003), it is the master plan or blueprint that outlines how the study will be carried out. This design provides the framework and roadmap for understanding the study's objectives and addressing the research questions. As Saunders et al. (2009) note, it details the specific sources for data collection and identifies potential challenges that could impact the research process. Research design refers to the overall strategy used to conduct a study. Justification for design decisions should be based on the study's objectives, questions, and research philosophy.

There are three main types of research design: explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory (Creswell, 2013). In the present study, an exploratory research design was employed to examine entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance under precarious working conditions in Ghana's fashion industry. Exploratory research design is employed when the objective is to explore a phenomenon that has not been extensively studied or is not well understood. This approach is particularly useful for gaining insights into complex issues, identifying variables, and developing hypotheses. It is often used to explore new areas where little prior research exists, or where existing theories may not fully explain the observed phenomena.

By employing an exploratory approach, the study sought to explore the key variables related to precarity, decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. This involved identifying how entrepreneurs responded to and managed precarious conditions and the factors that impacted their decision-making processes and consequently their performance. Exploratory research design was inherently flexible, allowing for adjustments based on emerging findings. This flexibility was crucial for addressing the complex and dynamic nature of the fashion industry and its associated challenges in Ghana.

3.4 Study Population

In conducting a study, understanding the population is essential. The population represents the entire group or unit from which information for the research may be gathered (Banerjee et al., 2010). It encompasses all participants to be included or excluded from the study (Banerjee et al., 2010). This research focused on fashion entrepreneurs from three regions in Ghana, identified as primary entrepreneurial hubs by Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA, 2015). The selection of these regions was based on their distinct socio-economic backgrounds, considering the impact of creative and cultural industries on urban economic development (Florida, 2002; Power, 2002). Entrepreneurs, being both influencers and influenced by their environments, led to the choice of regions with diverse socio-economic contexts (Gibson, 2010; Brydges, 2017; Gough et al., 2023).

While creative urban hubs have traditionally been the focal point in cultural and creative industries literature, recent scholarly critiques, such as those by Gough et al. (2012), highlight an overemphasis on these areas. Additionally, most studies tend to concentrate on cultural hubs and the capital city of Accra, leaving a gap in understanding the experiences of creative artists in more remote locations (Gibson 2010). Consequently, this study took an alternative approach, seeking to explore and analyze the diverse experiences of creative entrepreneurs in regions beyond the commonly studied creative hubs. This shift in focus aims to contribute valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by creative artists operating in more remote settings. This research adopts a multi-sited design with a comparative dimension; however, its primary focus is not on conducting a synchronic analysis that highlights similarities and differences (Gough et al., 2012). Instead, it employs a process-oriented approach that examines how practices evolve, develop, and change over time. This approach emphasizes context and identifies recurring themes and patterns across sites (Moore, 2005; Gough, 2012). Although differences between the sites are evident, the primary focus of this study is on identifying shared processes and practices that cut across locations. This emphasis on commonalities inevitably results in a less detailed exploration of certain nuances, variations, and site-specific differences within and between the regions (Langevang, 2017). Rather than prioritizing contrasts, the study highlights patterns of interaction and continuity, shedding light on the broader dynamics that shape entrepreneurial decision-making and performance across contexts.

Increasing policy and academic attention has highlighted the significance of cities and regions in attracting and retaining creative workers (Brydges, 2017). In Ghana, the labor market has traditionally been characterized by informal labor and precarious work (Lamptey, 2017). According to Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA, 2015), Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale are recognized for their vibrant entrepreneurial activities and are key centers to produce creative fashion products (Alacovska et al., 2020).

Tamale, the third-largest city in Ghana, is a metropolitan area and serves as the capital of the Northern Region. It is one of the fastest-growing cities in West Africa (Ghana Web, 2013;

Mongabay, 2014). Predominantly inhabited by Muslims and Dagombas, Tamale's central location in the Northern Region positions it as a hub for administrative and commercial activities. It functions as the economic and financial capital of the northern region, hosting regional branches for financial institutions and telecommunications companies. During the study, several suburbs were visited, including Kanvilli, Gumani, Nyanshegu, Tishigu, Lamashegu, and Gumbihini, among others.

Kumasi, often referred to as 'Comaassiii,' is a major city in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It serves as an intermediary city between Accra and Tamale and is the second-largest city in Ghana. Kumasi is recognized as the commercial, industrial, and cultural hub of the region. The city is home to a concentration of banks, department stores, schools, hospitals, and hotels, particularly in the bustling areas of Adum, Bantama, Kejetia, Asawasi, Pampaso, Asafo, Asokwa, and Bompata. Traveling south from Kumasi leads to Accra, the capital city of Ghana, situated on the southern coast of the Gulf of Guinea (Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census, retrieved 2022). As the largest city in Ghana, Accra is renowned for its wealth and cosmopolitan nature, offering a high quality of life. It is the center of the country's administrative and economic activities. Accra, along with Kumasi and Tamale, plays a significant role in fostering entrepreneurial development and growth, serving as a transit point for immigrants and a destination for migrants.

The locational preferences of creative workers are understood to favor places that are diverse, walkable, with low barriers to entry, a thick market, and a wide range of lifestyle amenities (Jacobs, 1969; Clark et al., 2002; Florida, 2002; Florida et al., 2008). More so, Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale were selected as study sites because they have a uniquely high concentration of entrepreneurs in Ghana (AMA, 2015). These cities were included in the study due to their feasibility, accessibility, and manageability, which provided a high likelihood of obtaining a diverse range of entrepreneurial experiences with precision.

These locations are major market centers known for their economic activities and creativity in production, making them ideal for starting businesses. Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale are cities with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. These areas, along with other economic hubs in Ghana, provided the opportunity to thoroughly examine and explore the issue of job insecurity in the country's fashion industry. Despite the challenging working conditions, it was observed that fashion entrepreneurs in these areas developed strategies to successfully navigate and establish a niche for their fashion businesses. Importantly, entrepreneurs in the fashion industry expressed a sense of enjoyment and fulfillment in their enterprises.

Although there is a lack of available data on the size and other characteristics of the cultural and creative industries in Ghana, several studies have highlighted that certain sub-sectors such as fashion (Langevang, 2017), music (Shipley, 2013), and film (Meyer, 2015) serve as launching points for young entrepreneurs looking to establish small businesses to support themselves and express their creative talents (Alacovska et al., 2021). The variations in the societal and economic backgrounds within the study sites allowed the researcher to determine whether the findings would align, diverge, or intersect in the analysis (Creswell, 2013). The researcher discovered that despite focusing on fashion entrepreneurs from different geographical contexts, their entrepreneurial experiences and working practices were notably similar. By comparing these instances, the researcher found that the findings could offer new insights into how business owners navigate the challenges of the fashion industry in Ghana.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample represents a subset of the population, and the sample size denotes the number of elements from the population included in a study (Singh & Masuku, 2014). The sample size plays an important role in determining the precision of the research findings and the ability to draw valid conclusions. During the qualitative phase, 60 fashion entrepreneurs from Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale were interviewed. In the quantitative phase, 732 fashion entrepreneurs were chosen, with the justification that at least 200 participants are generally adequate for an advanced quantitative analysis (VanVoorhis & Morgan, 2007; Hair et al., 2021). It is often impractical to study an entire population, so it is important to select a representative sample, as demonstrated in surveys (Saunders et al., 2015).

Sampling is essential because populations of interest are often large, diverse, and geographically dispersed, making it impractical to study the entire population due to constraints in time, budget, and accessibility. Saunders et al. (2003) emphasize that a census investigation does not necessarily provide a more meaningful outcome than a well-planned sample survey. The process of choosing a sample is referred to as a sampling technique (Singh, 2018). As it was impossible to determine the exact number of fashion entrepreneurs after consultation with the association heads within the Ghanaian fashion industry and to reach a diverse group of industry players, the snowball sampling technique was utilized as the sampling frame. As a form of convenience, snowball sampling is often combined with purposive sampling, where participants are selected based on their specific characteristics and or their membership to a group.

The recruitment strategy used for qualitative data collection was similarly applied in the quantitative phase. However, response rates in academic surveys for quantitative research have been declining for several decades at both micro and macro levels (Baruch, 1999; de Leeuw, 2005; Baruch & Holtom, 2008). De Leeuw (2005) points out that these challenges often limit research and recommends optimizing data collection procedures to minimize total survey error while staying within time and budget constraints and selecting the most cost-effective method. This decline has been attributed to concerns about privacy, confidentiality, misuse of personal information, and general cynicism (Johnson & Owens, 2003). Consequently, the study details the data collection process used to survey a hard-to-reach population, especially when traditional sampling methods were not feasible. The low response rate from directly contacting fashion entrepreneurs aligns with Baruch and Holtom's (2008) observation that random sampling often results in reduced participation.

The declining response rates currently being observed using traditional methods of surveying the population also introduce risk by challenging the validity and reliability of the study. Traditional survey methods demand careful design and thorough documentation to ensure the representativeness of the target population, often leading to increased costs and extended timelines. Newer sampling methods, such as snowball sampling in quantitative studies, offer several advantages. These include potentially higher response rates by more effectively reaching the target population, enhanced privacy for participants answering sensitive questions, easier access to the survey, reduced data collection costs, and improved reach to traditionally hard-to-reach populations. In this study, snowball sampling was employed to evaluate the feasibility of the study, identify participants, and aid in the distribution of fashion entrepreneurs.

The process and insights gained during the data collection journey using this method are detailed in the study. While some argue that snowball sampling can lead to biased results, it is possible to obtain a representative sample if the initial contacts and requests for participation are made with the appropriate individuals within the target population (Goodman, 2011).

Gaining recognition and acceptance within the group was crucial for establishing contact with fashion entrepreneurs. Upon gaining recognition and acceptance, an introductory message was posted on the group's WhatsApp page or announced at association meetings to introduce the researcher and express gratitude for the opportunity to connect. This initial communication aimed to establish a dialogue and build rapport with the members of the associations and those on various WhatsApp platforms. During each meeting, some members responded positively, indicating the development of a relationship with at least some within the network. Establishing a credible network and fostering trust from a distance with association leaders was important in securing consent from participants.

Snowball sampling involved identifying initial participants who then referred other potential participants, resulting in a diverse and representative sample of individuals in the industry (Patton, 2014). The snowball technique is a widely used method in non-probability sampling particularly qualitative approach, with its central characteristics being networking and referrals. The snowball sampling technique involves selecting an initial group of participants who help identify or recruit additional members of the study population (McDaniel & Gates, 2018). This technique was deemed appropriate for this study due to several reasons: first, there were no readily available records for workers in the informal sector, including those in the fashion industry. Even if such records existed, using them would present significant ethical challenges (Murahwa, 2016), as snowball technique is utilized for the everyday, mundane and mainstream activities. Secondly, the snowball technique was necessary due to difficulties in accessing fashion entrepreneurs post-COVID-19 and during the Christmas season.

In this study, the researcher began with a small number of initial contacts, referred to as "seeds," who met the inclusion criteria and were invited to participate in the research (Partker, Scott & Geddes, 2019). The participants who agreed were then asked to recommend other contacts who met the inclusion criteria and might also know other willing participants, creating a chain of recommendations. Established contacts within the Ghanaian fashion industry, developed through cold outreach and networking, were utilized to recommend other fashion entrepreneurs willing to participate in the study.

3.6 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Defining explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria for study participants is crucial in developing robust and effective research protocols. Inclusion criteria serve as a framework for identifying individuals ideally suited to partake in the study, ensuring that the selected participants meet specific characteristics and qualifications related to the research (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). Conversely, exclusion criteria play an important role in eliminating individuals who do not meet specific requirements, thereby protecting the integrity of the study's findings. This study carefully selected participants to align with the research's scope and objectives. This thoughtful selection process enhances the relevance and applicability of the research outcomes.

The inclusion criteria specifically targeted fashion entrepreneurs operating in key urban areas; Accra, Tamale, and Kumasi, ensuring that the sample accurately reflects these regions' dynamic fashion industry landscape.

i. The fashion entrepreneur must be at least 18 years of age.

i. The fashion entrepreneur must be an individual who designs, produces, sells and market clothes.

ii. The entrepreneur must be actively involved in the operational, functional and managerial decision-making of the fashion business.

iii. An additional criterion was that the entrepreneur must be the owner as well as manager of the fashion business.

iv. The owner of the business must be based in Ghana and not necessarily a Ghanaian.

v. The entrepreneur must be an individual who either produces clothes for the domestic market or abroad or both.

vi. The entrepreneur must be an owner of a small/micro business in Ghana and not a designer for another company or a larger fashion business.

vii. The participants also included early career fashion entrepreneurs as well as those with more than 20 years of industry experience.

The exclusion criterion for this study was to exclude fashion entrepreneurs not living and working in Accra, Tamale, and Kumasi.

i. The study excluded fashion entrepreneurs with more than one hundred workers. Typically, small businesses, including micro businesses, micro-and-small-sized businesses, and very small businesses, were prevalent in the cultural and creative landscapes, but these industries had not received the needed attention in the academic literature (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; 2015).
ii. The study excluded fashion buyers, retailers and marketers.
iii. This study excluded key informants such as cultural intermediaries, gatekeepers, and influencers within the Ghanaian fashion industry.
iv. Officials from fashion associations such as the Association of Ghana Apparel Manufacturers (AGAM) and Ghana Cooperative Fashion Designers Association were not included in the study.
v. Also, fashion officials such as government representatives, fashion studies academics, public relations officers, and media personnel were also not included.
vi. The study excluded students from fashion schools, as well as fashion interns and apprentices.

3.7 Sources of Data

The collection of data was an important part of the methodology and analysis (Malhotra, 2009). Data sources can be categorized into primary and secondary sources. Primary data, also known as "fresh data," is the most direct form of data collected firsthand from interviews, surveys, observations, experiments, and questionnaires (Douglas, 2015). In primary data sources, data is gathered specifically to address the study's objectives and questions (Burns & Bush, 2007). In this study, primary data were collected through interviews, surveys, and observations.

Secondary data denotes information that has been previously gathered (Douglas, 2015). It involves using existing data produced by other researchers or institutions. Examples of secondary data sources include literature reviews, archival studies, fashion magazines, blog posts, journal articles, and internal records. This study employed both primary and secondary data due to the distinct strengths and weaknesses of each type. Primary data is initially collected and tailored to answer specific research questions or hypotheses. It involved gathering firsthand information directly from the source, which included surveys, interviews and observations. The advantage of primary data lies in its specificity and relevance, as it captures insights directly related to the current study's context. For instance, this thesis gathered primary data through interviews and field observations with participants actively engaged in the fashion industry. This direct engagement allowed for collecting unique insights that might not be available through other means, adding authenticity and depth to the study's findings.

Secondary data, in contrast, is information previously collected and documented by others, often available through published sources like books, academic journals, industry reports, and databases. Secondary data offers the benefit of drawing on a body of established knowledge, providing a contextual foundation and helping to frame the research within existing theories and findings. This thesis obtained secondary data from a comprehensive literature review of relevant studies on fashion entrepreneurship, performance, hope, and decision-making processes. By integrating these sources, the study aimed to address the limitations of each and gain a more comprehensive understanding of how entrepreneurs in the Ghanaian fashion industry navigate challenges.

3.8. Scale Development

The development of a comprehensive item pool was a precautionary measure to ensure strong internal consistency (DeVellis, 2012; DeVellis, 2021). Developing questions for each variable involved leveraging insights from literature, consulting subject matter experts, analyzing results from a pilot study, and conducting interviews with fashion entrepreneurs. Collaborating with experts aimed to improve the content validity of the items selected for the pool. Additionally, converting interview items from the pilot study and responses from the main study into scale items for construct measurement proved to be an effective strategy.

To ensure the clarity of the test items, the researcher consciously avoided double-barreled questions, in accordance with the recommendations of Bernard, Brauer, Abrami and Surkes (2004) and Spector (1992). The linkage of items measuring a specific construct was guided by a common thread, aligning with the researcher's definition of the study construct. Each item was meticulously crafted to be brief, straightforward, and easily comprehensible to respondents. The deliberate avoidance of jargon, expressions, and colloquialisms further contributed to item clarity (Spector, 1992). Another deliberation centered around the decision to include positively and negatively worded items in the scale development. In most cases, the items were framed positively to minimize potential confusion, in line with the guidance provided by DeVellis (2012).

3.8.1 Designing the Scale

An essential stage in scale development entails transforming the item pool into a survey instrument for pretesting and refinement. During this phase, meticulous attention is given to the order of the items, with the vital consideration of randomizing their appearance to participants to mitigate potential order effects (Choemprayoung & Wildemuth, 2009). In this study, the use of response categories such as 'agree or disagree' or frequency response categories on a 5-point Likert scale was deemed appropriate. Each scale was accompanied by a concise set of instructions for respondents, aligning with the recommendation of Choemprayong and Wildemuth (2009) that a detailed opening instruction provides a ‘frame of reference' for participants, enabling them to engage thoughtfully in evaluating the items. Consistent with Spector's (1992) guidance, the survey instructions explicitly prompted participants to reflect on their recent decisions within the context of their work. Additionally, Spector (1992) recommends that the researcher elucidate the responses while explaining the instructions. This approach ensures that participants have a clear understanding of how to interpret and respond to the survey items, fostering meaningful and accurate responses.

3.8.2 Full Administration and Item Analysis

This stage follows the administering of test items resulting from Phase 3 to a large sample of participants, and analysis of the resulting data. After settling on the test items, the researcher set out to the field deciding on the sample population for the study. In this study, Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs based in Kumasi, Tamale and Accra were purposively selected for the study. Choemprayong and Wildemuth (2009) contends that it is important to administer the tests in a context similar to that which was sampled during the pilot test. In this study, fashion entrepreneurs living and working in Koforidua were sampled for the pretesting. Koforidua shares some characteristics with the three sites selected for the data collection. These areas are known for their diverse socio-economic activities and are known for their entrepreneurial activities and are home to Ghanaian fashion shows. Ultimately, the decision of which category of participants should be selected in the development of scale depends upon the feasibility and the availability of the respondents.

Various perspectives exist regarding the recommended number of participants for the full administration of tests and item analysis. To navigate these differing opinions, the researcher opted for a sample of 732 fashion entrepreneurs, a size deemed sufficient to mitigate concerns related to subject variance (DeVellis, 2012). This choice is particularly important as a sample size below 200 poses challenges in various aspects of data analysis (Nunnally, 1978). To ensure robust data for analysis, a sample size exceeding 300 is considered ideal (Nunnally, 1978).

Following sample size selection, the next important step is item analysis, involving the examination of item variances, means, standard deviations, and item-total correlations

(DeVellis, 2012). For instance, in assessing item variance, the researcher examined the range of responses for each item. Items with the broadest range of responses were retained, while those with a limited range were eliminated, as they may not effectively discriminate among participants with different levels of the construct being measured (DeVellis, 2012).

Subsequently, the researcher conducted item-total correlations, comparing the correlation of each item to the set of items. In line with Nunnally's (1978) benchmark of .30, items with corrected item-total correlations below this threshold were excluded from the analysis. This process aims to ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument in examining the construct under investigation.

In the process of scale development, evaluating the means and standard deviations is crucial. The researcher eliminated items with means below the average benchmark, considering the use of a 5-point Likert scale where a mean of 3 is considered ideal. Additionally, a factor analysis was conducted to identify scales and sub-scales that load together, revealing latent variables or factors underlying a set of items. In this study, various factors loaded together, forming sub-scales of the main scale.

To delve into the underlying latent variables, exploratory factor analysis was initially conducted. This phase aimed to identify and understand the latent variables that contribute to the observed factors. Subsequently, confirmatory factor analysis was employed to test and validate the conceptual model, affirming the proposed factor structure. This two-step approach ensured a comprehensive exploration and validation of the factor structure within the scale development process. An overview of the study's data gathering and analytical techniques is presented in the next section.

3.8.2 Measures/Instruments/Scales and Interview Guide

Scholars including Yin (2018), Creswell (2014), and Miles et al. (2014) emphasise that the validity of research findings depends significantly on the data collection and analysis procedures employed. This section first outlines key theoretical insights on interviews, then explains why the semi-structured and structured approach was deemed most appropriate. The data collection instruments used in the study combined both qualitative and quantitative elements. Semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires were employed in a sequential and complementary manner to gather comprehensive information.

3.8.3 Interview Approach

A purposeful conversation involving the exchange of views or information between individuals is recognised as an interview (Saunders et al., 2009). This method typically involves one party, often the interviewer, guiding the interaction to elicit meaningful responses from another party, the interviewee. Within the context of this study, the interview serves as a valuable tool for gathering rich, in-depth data from fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana. It enables the exploration of individual and collective experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of precarity and hope. More specifically, the interview method facilitates an understanding of how personal attributes and sociocultural dynamics shape entrepreneurial decision-making and influence notions of success, which might not be gained through quantitative measures. The qualitative approach is particularly well-suited to the study of

Ghana's fashion industry, given its complex, informal, and often precarious nature. In this context, entrepreneurial outcomes are significantly shaped by subjective experiences and locally embedded sociocultural factors. Moreover, this approach responds to ongoing concerns about the limited scholarly attention given to cultural and creative industries in the global South (see Araeen, 2005; Darkwah et al., 2024; Kilu et al., 2025). It also aligns with broader calls to decolonise dominant Western frameworks used to study and theorise precarity, advocating instead for models that reflect the lived realities and contextual specificities of creative work in the global South (Alacovska et al., 2018). In light of this, the use of interviews as a scientific method requires careful reflection on the theoretical assumptions that underpin qualitative inquiry. Such reflection becomes especially important when engaging with complex, culturally situated phenomena like precarity and creativity in informal economies, where conventional Western epistemologies may fall short in capturing the depth and nuance of lived experiences.

Drawing on the perspective of Kvale (2012), the answer is affirmative. Kvale (2012) argues that methodological questions surrounding interview practice inevitably lead to broader theoretical concerns. Specifically, qualitative interviews challenge conventional understandings of social knowledge, meaning, reality, and truth in social science. Rather than focusing on objective data to be measured, the emphasis shifts towards interpreting meaningful relationships situated within particular sociocultural contexts. In line with Kvale's (2012) reasoning, interview becomes more than a data collection tool, it serves as a medium for accessing the lived realities of individuals. In the context of this study, the value of the interview lies in its capacity to generate insight into how societal environments shape the commercialisation processes of fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana. The qualitative interview, therefore, facilitates an in-depth exploration of context-dependent experiences, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial outcomes in conditions marked by informality and precarity. Kvale further emphasises the epistemological shift in research interviews—from knowledge generated through detached observation and experimental manipulation to knowledge developed through conversations with those whose experiences are the focus of inquiry. This shift highlights the dialogical nature of interviews, where participants not only respond to questions but also actively construct and articulate their own interpretations of their lived world.

Of particular relevance to this study is Kvale's conceptualisation of the research interview as a conversation about the human life world, wherein spoken discourse is later transformed into textual material for interpretation (Kvale, 1996). The interpretive process is informed by hermeneutic principles, which originally focused on classical texts but have since been extended to include speech, discourse, and action. According to Kvale, hermeneutics contributes to interview research in two main ways: it clarifies the dialogical process that gives rise to interview texts, and it guides the interpretation of those texts, understood as an ongoing conversation between the researcher and the material. These interpretive insights are critical for uncovering the layered meanings behind entrepreneurial actions and decisions in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

3.8.3 Types of Interviews

Interviews can range from highly structured formats that employ standardised questions for all participants to more informal, unstructured conversations. Between these two extremes, various semi-structured approaches exist, allowing for flexibility while maintaining some consistency across interviews (Denzin, 2001; Saunders et al., 2009; Roulston et al., 2018). The three main forms of interviews include structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2009). Structured interviews follow a rigid format in which the wording and sequence of questions remain identical for all respondents. This uniformity ensures that any differences in responses can be attributed to genuine variations in respondents' perspectives or experiences, rather than inconsistencies in the interview process itself. Such standardisation enhances the comparability of data across respondents and strengthens the reliability of the findings (Bryman, 2016; Robson et al., 2016). Standardised interviews, also known as "quantitative research interviews," are the method used to gather quantifiable data (Saunders et al., 2009).

Unstructured interviews are however, informal. In this type of interviewing, general questions are asked based on the interest of the researcher. It is also referred to as 'in-depth interviews' as there are no predetermined list of questions and the participant is allowed to speak freely about events, beliefs and values on a subject matter (Saunders et al., 2009). This type of interview is also known as informant interview since the interviewee's perceptions guide the conduct of the interview (Robson, 2002; Ghauri et al., 2005; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

Compared to structured interviews, both unstructured and semi-structured interviews are considered non-standardised and are commonly referred to as forms of qualitative research interviews (King, 2004). In semi-structured interviews, a set of guiding themes and questions is prepared in advance; however, these are flexible and can vary across interviews depending on the specific context (Saunders et al., 2009). Certain questions may be omitted or rephrased based on factors such as the organisational setting, the interviewee's gender, or the relevance to the research focus. The sequence of questions is not fixed and can be adjusted according to the natural flow of the conversation. Furthermore, follow-up or probing questions may be introduced to gain deeper insight into emerging issues, shaped by the unique dynamics of each interview situation.

A semi-structured interview was employed among the three main types of interviews, structured, unstructured, and semi-structured, due to its balance between consistency and flexibility for the qualitative phase of the study. Unlike structured interviews, which follow a rigid set of predetermined questions, the semi-structured approach allows for a guided yet adaptive conversation, enabling more profound exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. This flexibility was particularly relevant for the study, as it facilitated probing and follow-up questions based on responses, while still maintaining a focus on key themes aligned with the research objectives. Compared to unstructured interviews, which can lack direction, the semi-structured format provided enough structure to ensure comparability across interviews without limiting the richness of the data. This made it especially suitable for capturing the complexity of participants' decision-making processes within their social and cultural contexts.

The initial stage of the study adopted the semi-structured interview, the purpose was to explore the research questions and objectives and cover the themes for discussion (Saunders et al., 2009). In semi-structured interviews there were a list of questions and themes to be covered in a thematic framework by the researcher (Saunders et al., 2015). The semi-structured interviews followed an interview guide focusing on the influence of precarity and the role of hope in shaping decision-making and performance among entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry. Each interview had the same questions except for female entrepreneurs that had questions that centered on gender.

This allowed the investigator to reflect on responses that influenced the respondent's decision-making. For each decision that was discussed the respondents elaborated on some internal and external factors that directly or indirectly influenced their decision-making. Upon reflection and sharing their experiences, fashion entrepreneurs explained how some of the factors had informed their decisions in the past especially in situations when they were uncertain about what to do. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. In the study, interviewees were allowed to remain anonymous; therefore, each transcript was assigned a code instead of using their real identities. In the data collection, the researcher ensured that her personal biases (reflexivity) did not interfere with the study process.

The qualitative aspect of the research was followed by a survey, where standardized questions were administered to collect the quantitative data from the larger population of fashion entrepreneurs. This part of the research sought to examine the impact of entrepreneurial decision-making on entrepreneurial performance and to further assess the impact of personal and sociocultural factors on the link between entrepreneurial decision-making and performance within Ghana's fashion industry.

3.8.4 Interview guide for fashion entrepreneurs

The interview guide designed purposely for fashion entrepreneurs had six (6) main sections. First, **Section A o**f the guide presented questions on the business profile of the entrepreneurs. Among others, some specific questions used in this section include (**refer to Appendix A for the full questions):**

i. Can you describe how you started your fashion business?

ii. Is your business affiliated to any union or association? Please give details.

Section B of the interview sought to conceptualize fashion entrepreneurs' understanding of precarious working conditions including hardships, difficulties, uncertainty and their experiences working in the Ghanaian fashion landscape. The following questions were asked:

i. What are some of your experiences as a fashion entrepreneur in Ghana?

ii. Do you perceive that working in the Ghanaian fashion industry is challenging and full of many struggles?

Section C, the third part of the interview guide had questions on decision-making under precarious working conditions. This section explored how fashion entrepreneurs made decisions as owner-managers in the fashion industry. Each question in this section explored how personal and socio-cultural factors influence the decision-making of owner-mangers. Some of the questions include:

i. How do you make decisions as an owner-manager in the fashion industry in Ghana?

ii. In what ways do global and local trends influence your decision-making as a fashion entrepreneur in Ghana?

Section D presents interview questions on entrepreneurial performance in Ghana's fashion industry. This part of the interview had six (6) questions. Among others, the following questions were explored:

i. How do you measure performance (success and failure) of your business within Ghana's fashion industry?

ii. What are the indicators of growth in your business?

Section E of the interview guide examined and explored fashion entrepreneurs' strategies for navigating challenges in Ghana's fashion industry. Some of the questions include:

i. How do you navigate the challenges you face every day working in the Ghanaian fashion industry?

ii. How does the hope of better earnings propel you to work hard to improve your designs and output in Ghana's difficult fashion industry?

The last section of the interview guide **Section F,** included questions on the socio-demographic information of the respondents. The following demographic information including gender, age, educational background, legal name of business, number of years in business, number of individuals employed under this business and alternative fashion products were asked.

3.8.4 Survey instruments for fashion entrepreneurs

In addition to the interview guide, survey questionnaires were administered to Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs in three (3) regions in Ghana. The structured questions were generated as a sequence, that is after the qualitative data was analyzed. This is to serve as a form of triangulation for weaknesses of the qualitative study and vice-versa. The type of questions gathered for this study was self-constructed as there are no developed scales to the best of my knowledge and search. Hence, the survey instruments employed was informed by the Theory of Practice (Bourdieu, 1977) and Neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio et al., 1983), insights from reviews of existing studies (see Dietrich, 2008; Schrieber, 2014; Schreiber et al., 2018; Alacovska et al., 2020). More so, as indicated after analyzing the data of the initial aspect of the study that is the qualitative study, the themes that arrived from the study informed the direction of questioning in the structured interview.

The structured interview or questionnaire spanned from **Section A to Section K.** Each fashion entrepreneur was asked to respond to statements based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from **1= Strongly Disagree Agree, 2 =Disagree, 3= Neither Agree or Disagree, 4 = Agree and 5 Strongly Agree.**

Section A of the questionnaire presented a sub-scale on precarious work conditions. The self-developed scale on precarious work conditions had three main sub-scales including perceived uncertainty, labour insecurities and social protection. The first sub-scale perceived uncertainty had 13 items, with each item on the scale reflecting on various aspects of uncertainty and instability in fashion entrepreneurship. Some of the items on the scale include *"consumer demands and preferences are easy to predict," "the mode of production of fashion products is subject to change"* **(refer to the full scale in Appendix B)**.

Section B presents questions on entrepreneurs' decision-making. The study participants were made to reflect on decisions made at most in the last two years. The scale was developed along principles of decision-making among owner-managers of micro and small enterprises within the creative sector. The scale assessed decisions made on daily basis, as well as managerial, functional and operational decisions by owner managers of fashion businesses. Using a 10-item scale, the following questions assessed entrepreneurs' decision-making on design modification/alteration, relocation, selection and hiring, marketing and value chain decisions, investment decision, expansion and collaborating. Specifically, the researcher asked the following: *"in the past two years I have considered changing or modifying my designs," "in the past two years, I have made decisions about social media strategies (Tiktok, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) for visibility."*

Section C of the structured interview details items on the influence of entrepreneurs' taste on decision-making. The scale on entrepreneurs' taste examined how taste influences decision-making processes. Basing on Bourdieu's theory of practice, which explains the role of taste in entrepreneurs' consumption, preferences and judgment attached to decisions (Hennion, 1997; Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007), the relationship between taste and decision-making was examined. According to Bourdieu (1984) the individual taste (in this case the entrepreneur) influences the opinion of a commercial viability of a product. The 5-item scale had the following questions *"I am aware that personal taste influences my creative design process," "I am aware that entrepreneurs in the fashion industry have collective/similar preferences."*

Section D, sought to ascertain the role of entrepreneurs' intuition in decision- making under precarious work conditions. The 7-item questionnaire was based on the impact of intuition in managerial forecast in the creative industry. Based on Behling and Eckel (1991) conceptualization of intuitive behaviors of managers, seven questions were designed from the 6 principles of intuition some of which include; *"My intuition comes to me quickly and it drives my decisions as an entrepreneur," "I trust my intuitions, especially in unfamiliar situations."*

Section E of the survey presented the sub-scale on entrepreneurs' personal experience in decision-making. The 4-item scale measured how entrepreneurs' past experiences informed their decision-making informed their present and future decisions. An example of the item is: *"Do your experiences influence your inspiration and design process as fashion designer?"*

Section F *measures* entrepreneurs' resilience. The scale refers to the extent to which entrepreneurs are able to withstand adversity and bounce back from life difficulties with experience. This 5-item scale examined entrepreneurs' hardiness and resistance to pressure overtime. The scale incorporated items such as *"I feel I can handle many things (e.g. taking in a lot of orders) during the peak seasons, "When I'm in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it."*

Section G of the structured interview measured the impact of cultural intermediaries on the decision-making of entrepreneurs. The cultural intermediaries questionnaire is a 4-item scale, with each item explaining the role of gate-keepers, influencers, bloggers and celebrities in the decision-making process. Items on this questionnaire include, *"Do you benefit from* *sponsoring influencers," "In moments of uncertainty do you rely on influencers in your decision-making"*

Section H to examine the impact of cultural values in the relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. A 5-item self-administered questionnaire was employed to ascertain whether entrepreneurs' leverage on their heritage and background in their decision-making. Among other questions asked some of the questions examined include: *"Are your decisions to design for a particular person based on your cultural values," "Are your decisions on what to design based on your cultural values."*

Section I, a 5-item scale was employed to assess the role of social network on the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance.The scale examined when, why, what and how entrepreneurs accessed social support and the meanings ascribed to their support system. An example of the question include: *"As a fashion entrepreneur, I am aware that external sources of information influence my decision-making."*

Section J, the competition scale examines how entrepreneurs directly and indirectly compete for customers, position, promotion and recognition in the organisational field. The 7-item scale on strife/competition was administered to examine the effect of competition on decision-making. Items on the competition/strife include: *"I am aware that my competitors influence my decisions in the fashion industry," "I am aware of tough price competition in the fashion industry."*

Section K the competition/strife scale seek to examine the various dimensions of entrepreneurs' performance. The entrepreneurial performance scale, was designed to assess indicators of growth as well as to ascertain the entrepreneurs' perception about success and failure in the fashion landscape. Some measures on the 11-item scale include *"I am aware of my business in the public image, " "My brand has introduced different products into the industry."*

Section L The final section of the structured interview focused on gathering participants' biographical details. Questions included socio-demographic information such as age, gender, and educational background, tenure, business name, year of establishment and number of employees.

3.8.5 Expert Piloting

The initial piloting phase involved a group of experts: Prof. Mohammed Aminu-Sanda, Prof. Obi Berkoh Damoah, Prof. Ana Alacovska, Dr. Robin Steedman, and Dr. Adwoa Bobie. Their expertise in strategy, labor, and sociology contributed to refining the questions in the interview guide and survey questionnaire. These experts, with their deep knowledge of cultural and creative studies, provided valuable feedback on the representativeness and suitability of the questions. Their input also facilitated the assessment of content validity and allowed for necessary revisions to the questionnaire's structure before moving forward with pilot testing among the target group.

The study began with a pilot on a small number of fashion entrepreneurs in Koforidua in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Piloting the interview guide among this group of professionals was necessary to ensure that the participants would have no problems understanding or answering questions and followed the instructions correctly (Fink, 2003). Their responses provided an idea of reliability and suitability of the questions. To enhance competence and confidence in administering the test, several key dimensions were evaluated in line with Bell's (2014) guidelines. The process involved measuring the time required to complete the questionnaire, assessing the clarity of instructions, identifying any unclear or ambiguous questions, noting any questions that made respondents uncomfortable, ensuring no major topics were overlooked, and gathering additional feedback or comments that indicated the need to revisit and revise the questions as the study progressed.

3.8.6 Data Processing: Data Cleaning and Screening

To enhance the clarity and usability of the interview guide and questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted prior to data collection. This process helped to ensure that participants could interpret and respond to the questions with ease and that data recording would proceed smoothly. To evaluate the dataset's face and content validity, a pilot study was conducted in which 30 questionnaires were distributed to fashion entrepreneurs in the Eastern Region. Following this pilot study, the first data collection phase began with the primary goal of gathering data for exploratory factor analysis (EFA). This step was essential because the questionnaire items were self-generated and developed in conjunction with relevant literature on the variables being measured, as there were limited existing scales available for some of the constructs. All variables were subjected to a thorough data screening process to identify out-of-range values, missing entries, or input errors.

During the exploration phase (Study 1), 300 questionnaires were distributed to participants in Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale. The responses collected from these questionnaires were used to perform EFA and reliability analysis, which helped refine the scale items by eliminating those with weak factor loadings. Items with factor loadings below the recommended threshold of 0.50 and those with poor reliability results were excluded from further use. Before proceeding to discuss the process and results obtained from the Exploratory Factor Analysis, the profile of the respondents are analysed and presented in Appendix E.

The decision to use a sample size of 300 participants is consistent with recommendations from several researchers, including Clark & Watson (1995), DeVellis (2012), and Nunnally & Bernstein (1994), who advocate for larger sample sizes to achieve more thorough and reliable analyses. In contrast, some researchers, such as Spector (1992), suggest that a sample size between 100 and 200 may also be adequate. In line with established psychometric guidelines, the sample size was determined based on the more rigorous recommendations of Clark and Watson (1995), DeVellis (2017), and Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) to ensure robust data analysis.

Table 3.1 shows the demographic characteristics of participants, revealing that 37.2% are male and 62.8% are female. The age distribution indicates that the majority fall within the 25-34 age range (39.5%), followed by those aged 35-44 (25.2%) and 45-55 (21.3%), with only 8.0% of participants in the 18-24 age group. Regarding education levels, 45.5% of participants have education below Junior High School, while 22.3% have completed SHS/WASSCE. Additionally, 18.6% possess vocational qualifications, 6.3% hold diplomas, and 7.3% have achieved a first degree. Regarding their affiliation with their establishments, 38.5% have been associated for 10 years or more. Other time ranges include 23.3% with 4-6 years, 18.6% with 7-9 years, 13.6% with 1-3 years, and 6.0% with less than a year. This detailed dataset offers valuable insights into a diverse demographic profile. It highlights a larger representation of females, a concentration of participants in the mid-age range, a variety of educational backgrounds—with a significant number having education only up to junior high school and a notable presence of long-term relationships with their respective establishments.

Preliminary Analysis

To determine the suitability of the data for factor analysis, key aspects such as the number of variables, correlation values, missing data, and sample size were examined.

Missing Data

The dataset was first processed to ensure it was ready for factor analysis. Following the collation of responses, editing and coding were conducted. During this stage, missing values were identified, particularly within one of the construct items. These missing entries were classified as scale-type input values. To address this, the expectation–maximisation (EM) technique was applied, as it is suitable for estimating values when missing data are not systematically distributed. Little's Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test was used to verify this assumption. The test produced a statistically insignificant Chi-square value with a p-value of .652, indicating that the missing data were completely random (Little & Rubin, 2002), thereby justifying the use of the EM technique.

Normality

To ensure the reliability of factor analysis, univariate and multivariate normality must be confirmed, and outliers addressed (Child, 2006; Field, 2009). Non-normality can affect the calculation of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients (r) between variables, which are critical to exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Additionally, outliers can lead to the formation of artificial factors, potentially distorting the results. As a result, Mahalanobis distance was utilized to evaluate the data distribution.

Number of Variables

One of the key requirements for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is the number of variables included in each factor. It is widely accepted that at least three variables are necessary to create a factor from the observed variables in EFA (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2012; Izquierdo et al., 2014). While factors with two or fewer variables can technically be created, they should be interpreted with caution. Such factors are considered reliable only when the correlation between the variables is low in relation to other variables and when the correlation value exceeds 0.7 ($r > .70$) (Yong & Pearce, 2013). In this study, all latent variables were represented by four or more observed variables or indicators.

Correlation Value

The primary statistical method used in factor analysis is the correlation coefficient, which assesses the relationship between two variables. In factor analysis, it is assumed that a linear relationship exists between the factors and variables. As such, the correlation value plays a crucial role in the analysis. To evaluate the performance of the item pool, a correlation matrix was initially used to explore the relationships among items (DeVellis, 2012). DeVellis (2012) recommended assessing the corrected item-total correlation for each item, which involves correlating a specific item with all other scale items, excluding itself. This approach prevents inflated correlation coefficients by eliminating the correlation of an item with itself. Additionally, in line with Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) recommendations, coefficients greater than 0.5 were considered appropriate for inclusion in factor analysis. The corrected item-total correlations are presented in Table 3.2. The primary goal of this item analysis was to remove items that did not contribute to the internal consistency of the scale (Spector, 1992). Items with coefficients below 0.5 were therefore excluded from further consideration, ensuring that only those items that enhanced the internal cohesion of the scale remained.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

In attempting to examine the link between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance, a questionnaire comprising seventy-five (75) items were administered to the participants to measure the following variables: decision-making, perceived uncertainty, entrepreneurs' taste, intuition, past experience, cultural values, cultural intermediaries, strive/competition, resilience and performance. The results of the KMO and Baartlett's test revealed that the data was suitable to be used for factor analysis (KMO= 0.849). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also achieved statistical significance thereby confirming the suitability of the data for exploratory factor analysis (Taherdoost et al., 2022).

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed on a dataset comprising of seventy-five (77) items. Even though four hundred (320) questionnaires were administered for Phase 1 of the study, after data screening and cleaning, twenty (20) responses were excluded because of large sections of missing data. An EFA with varimax rotation was performed on the dataset containing 300 items. All items below 0.50 were suppressed in accordance with the recommended threshold for EFA analysis (see Appendix for list) (Baistaman et al., 2022; Taherdoost et al., 2022).

To assess whether the data was indeed factorable, two measures were assessed, namely The Kaiser-Meyer-olkin (KMO) value and the results from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (WIlliams et al., 2010; Napitupulu et al., 2017). For the data to be deemed favorable, the KMO value should be equal to or greater than 0.6 (KMO> 0.6). Additionally, the results obtained from the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity needs to be statistically significant to confirm that the data is indeed factorable. After conducting these two checks, the results obtained, as indicated in Table 3.1, indicate that both standards were achieved, confirming that the data was factorable.

Table 3.1: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Barlett's Test of Sphericity

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.818
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	12210.213
	df	2926
	Sig.	.000

From Table 3.2, it can be deduced that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value obtained was .818 which exceeded the minimum required threshold of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1970). The results from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also achieved statistical significance (Approx. Chi-Square = 12210.213, df = 2926, significance .000). The findings indicate that the data is factorable and the researcher can proceed to conduct the factor analysis. After this process, the questionnaire was revised to include only the remaining items with strong factor loadings. These refined items were then incorporated into a revised questionnaire, subsequently used in the study's second phase which involved a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural model assessment. This systematic approach ensured the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments for the final analysis.

3.8.7 Data Collection Methods

3.8.6.1 Data collection tools

The interview guide was structured into three main sections, each with several sub-sections. These sections were designed to comprehensively cover the research topics and ensure a thorough exploration of each area. The first section included personal information, business operations practices and strategies for navigating precarious work conditions. Each section was designed to elicit detailed responses, providing a comprehensive understanding of the fashion entrepreneurs' experiences and insights. Additionally, the interviewer-structured questionnaire addressed eleven key variables: perceived uncertainty, intuition, taste, personal experiences, decision-making, cultural intermediaries, cultural values, resilience, strife/competition, and entrepreneurs' performance. Each section and variable were designed to elicit detailed responses, providing a thorough understanding of the fashion entrepreneurs' experiences of the industry.

3.8.6.2 Data collection procedure

After testing the instruments in Koforidua in mid-December 2022, I reached out to fashion entrepreneurs by obtaining their phone numbers or email addresses from their Instagram pages, and some were referred by friends and family who knew them personally. I compiled a list of entrepreneurs who agreed to participate and scheduled convenient dates and times for interviews. The data collection process began with a qualitative study in Accra. The first interview took place in Adenta on December 3, 2023. Subsequent interviews were conducted in various locations in Accra, including Borteyeman, Kwasiebu, Mallam-Weija, Gbawe, Legon Campus, East Legon, Madina, Dansoman, Asylum Down, Adabraka, Ashale Botwe, and other areas. On average, five interviews were conducted each week over a period of five weeks. Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes.

Twenty-five (25) interviews were conducted in Accra, with data collection concluding after the 25th interview, at which point data saturation was achieved—no new insights were obtained from subsequent interviews. At the end of the Accra interviews, fieldwork continued in Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region and a recognized entrepreneurial hub in Ghana. Initial contacts in Tamale were facilitated through the recommendation of Dr. Rufai Kilu, Nuru Mohammed, and Hamdeeya Dam Yakubu. Dr. Rufai and Nuru had previously interacted with several fashion entrepreneurs during their fieldwork in Tamale, which aided in establishing rapport with the respondents. Hamdeeya Dam Yakubu, a former colleague and teaching assistant at the University of Ghana Business School (2017-2018), also played an essential role in securing these connections, leveraging her network and local presence in Tamale.

When I decided to include Tamale as one of my research sites, I reached out to Hamdeeya Dam Yakubu. She provided me with several contacts, including her dressmakers marking the beginning of my fieldwork in the Northern Region. One of these contacts, Mr. Muntaka, who is the president of the Tailors and Dressmakers Association in Tamale, became my first gatekeeper in the area. A week before the trip, a list of the fashion entrepreneurs and their locations were compiled for the trip to Tamale. Contact was then made with these individuals, all of whom consented to participate in the study.

In Kumasi, I connected with Miss Ashorker, a student at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and a mentee of Mr. Nuru Mohammed, who provided valuable assistance with the data collection. Although I enjoyed my time in Kumasi and developed lasting friendships in areas such as Asafo, Asokwa, Kumasi Atonso, and New Tafo, where I remain in contact with Mr. Nathaniel Frimpong, I encountered significant challenges. Many of the contacts who initially agreed to participate in the study ultimately disappointed me. Some failed to answer their phones or turned them off after scheduling meetings, while others showed little interest in the interviews, often refusing to share even basic information, citing privacy concerns. This experience was disheartening, as I had expected greater receptiveness in Kumasi. After 25 days of data collection in Kumasi, I returned to Accra to commence the second phase of data collection, which focused on the quantitative aspect.

However, just as I thought I had encountered the worst challenges in Kumasi, Accra presented its difficulties.

One challenge I faced was accessing some entrepreneurs (supposed ‘high-end fashion entrepreneurs’), particularly in Accra. On multiple occasions, I faced issues such as some gatekeepers/secretaries to these fashion entrepreneurs not permitting me to interview these designers. Some gatekeepers made the excuse that the designers were not interested in being interviewed or unavailable, preventing us from asking the entrepreneurs themselves.

A second challenge was contacting fashion entrepreneurs. Many of the contact numbers and email addresses listed on their social media profiles (such as Instagram) were incorrect or inactive, likely due to changes in their contact information. Additionally, I encountered difficulties with unfamiliar names and locations of entrepreneurs' shops. Some questions about their significant achievements, measures of growth, and performance indicators in the fashion industry were considered sensitive by some entrepreneurs. As a result, some respondents chose not to participate in the interviews or provided incomplete information. This created issues during the interviews. Additionally, there was a low response rate, which affected data collection, especially for the structured interviews. Some participants refused to continue answering questions, claiming they were tired or busy. Since it is unethical to pressure or coerce study participants to respond, the researcher had to discard those questionnaires.

The interview guide and questionnaire were piloted with a group of experts to refine the questions and ensure clarity. Feedback was gathered on various aspects such as question clarity, time required, and any issues with the questions. Based on the pilot results, necessary adjustments were made to improve the interview guide and questionnaire. After finalizing the instruments, a list of fashion entrepreneurs was compiled. Contacts were established through social media and referrals from acquaintances.

3.8.7.2 Conducting interviews

When conducting interviews, especially formal ones, it is important to consider various factors. A study by Valentine (2013) suggests that the interview setting can influence the outcome. In this research, interviews were held in private and public spaces such as homes, offices, shops, parks, and fashion showrooms, if the respondents were comfortable. Private spaces are typically quiet and free from disruptions, but can create a formal atmosphere that may feel awkward. On the other hand, public places like showrooms and parks may be noisy and affect the recording quality, but they offer a less formal setting that allows participants to express themselves freely. Interviews held in showrooms and shops allowed for the observation of the entrepreneurs' design process and provided a glimpse of their latest collections, offering valuable insights into their work.

The fieldwork was strategically scheduled from January to mid-April 2023 and extended into May. This time frame avoided the busy Christmas, New Year, and Easter celebrations, which are significant events in the Ghanaian calendar. During these periods, most designers are preoccupied with deadlines and demands, making it unsuitable for interviews. When face-to-face interviews were not feasible, we conducted interviews via telephone and Zoom, providing flexibility in scheduling. In cases where interviews canceled last minute or had prior commitments, we employed alternative methods, such as rescheduling for a more convenient time, conducting interviews via phone or video call, or arranging follow-up questions through email. This type of interviewing helped overcome the expenses and geographic challenges associated with in-person interviews (Grabher & Ibert, 2014). Regardless of the interview mode, an interview guide was followed to ensure consistent and timely discussions (Valentine, 2013).

The interviews started with brief, simple questions to help the interviewees relax and build rapport. Several of the interviewees were eager to share their stories, and my role as the facilitator was to guide the conversation and cover all the essential points. Following Valentine's advice (2005), the study concluded with a round of questions and some casual inquiries to wrap things up.

3.8.7.2 Methods for data analysis

This study combined qualitative and quantitative data analysis through distinct yet complementary procedures. Responses from in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis in NVivo. In addition, detailed notes were taken during interviews to address any challenges with recording quality and to capture the content of any interviews that were not recorded. The data was transcribed, sorted, and structured to aid the analysis, offering valuable insights into its overall nature and importance. A primary goal was to identify the factors influencing entrepreneurs' decisions and subsequent performance, which required a thorough understanding of the data's depth, reliability, and significance.

Subsequently, all the data were assigned codes. Coding organises the data into categories and label a category in the margins (Creswell, 2013). Each transcript was assigned a unique numerical code to ensure efficient tracking and identification of participants' responses. This systematic approach facilitated the accurate tracing of interviewees' contributions, minimising the likelihood of errors during data analysis. Additionally, this method proved invaluable for subsequent analyses, particularly those involving data re-coding, as it streamlined the process, saving time and ensuring consistency in interpretation and organisation. By adopting such a structured coding system, the research maintained clarity and precision, enhancing the overall quality and reliability of the findings (Saunders et al., 2009).

Analyzing the qualitative data

In qualitative research, data analysis involves reviewing texts to identify key themes and variations within the transcripts. This process includes finding codes and sub-themes, ultimately developing overarching themes that shed light on the phenomena of interest. Qualitative data are rich, textually dense, and rooted in the lived experiences of the individuals interviewed (Levitt et al., 2018). Through qualitative data analysis, researchers aggregate data into codes and themes (Creswell, 2013), classifying individuals, objects, and events based on their common traits and meanings within the data (Creswell, 2013).

Although the methods for analyzing qualitative data can vary among academic traditions, one common goal across these approaches is to identify and explain the experiences related to a specific investigation (de Farias et al., 2020). In the social sciences, thematic analysis is the most widely adopted qualitative method, serving as the foundation for all qualitative approaches in the scientific community (Braun et al., 2019; Liamputtong, 2019). Every qualitative method includes a phase for theme identification, although the specific steps between coding and writing up results may differ depending on various philosophical perspectives or methodological frameworks (Tomasella, 2022).

Abductive thematic analysis is proposed as a method that clearly defines its pragmatic methodology, particularly suited to the pragmatic interpretive paradigm. This philosophical stance often employs multiple methods to creatively generate new knowledge based on research evidence (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012; Tomasella, 2022). The novelty of the abductive approach makes it ideal for researching qualitatively small businesses, such as fashion entrepreneurship, where insights and experiences are often drawn from more prominent, established fashion labels (Ritchie et al., 2013). Abductive thematic analysis synthesizes elements of both abductive reasoning and thematic analysis (Tavory & Timmermans, 2013), focusing on identifying and analyzing themes within the data. Its benefits make it more adaptable than other forms of thematic analyses, as it is flexible and intuitive (Boyatzis, 1998). The abductive thematic approach outlined by Tavory et al. (2013) was employed in the analysis.

The following paragraphs described the distinct phases involved in conducting an abductive thematic analysis within the context of fashion entrepreneurship research. The thesis explicitly examined how precarity influenced the decision-making processes and performance of entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry. The initial data analysis phase involves creating a codebook and familiarizing oneself with the data. This immersion stage aims to understand the content and context of the collected data thoroughly. The immersion phase involved developing a comprehensive understanding of the data's content and context. Each transcript was thoroughly reviewed at least twice to interpret the participants' expressions. This initial step served as the foundation for analysis to identify keywords connected to specific themes. The themes generated were guided by the two primary theoretical frameworks underpinning the study (see Chapter Two). Codes were developed from the transcripts to uncover the underlying themes. These codes formed the building blocks for constructing sub-themes and main themes (Tomasella, 2022). Data was systematically organized and structured through this coding process, with each section and question labelled and tagged according to participants' responses. This structured approach facilitated the synthesis and communication of findings. For instance, codes such as "many micro-businesses," "oversupply of fashion products," and "struggle to find workers" were derived when participants were asked about their experiences as entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry.

The second phase involved transcribing and coding the interviews. Following the initial coding, transcripts were revisited to identify patterns, concepts, and themes. Data was transcribed verbatim immediately after interviews or within a few days. A field diary and interview guides were used to document field notes and salient points during the interviews. These memos supported the interpretation of findings (Glaser, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994). By the end of this phase, several codes were developed, serving as a basis for sub-themes and main themes.

The third phase focused on merging codes. At this stage, the analysis moved beyond code identification to reflection on the meaning of the codes, leading to the development of latent and emergent codes. This marked a turning point in the analysis, reshaping the findings. For example, when participants were asked about challenges in the fashion industry, responses often highlighted networking instead. This led to the concept that leveraging networks could be beneficial and problematic, encapsulated in the idea that networks are a "good master and a bad servant." Identifying deviant cases and non-standard patterns were critical, with terms such as "severing ties" emerging as codes for participants who objected to maintaining close relationships with clients or colleagues.

The fourth phase involved refining themes. This stage required deeper analysis to validate the themes and sub-themes against the study's objectives. A final review of the transcripts ensured that no significant information was overlooked. In line with abductive thematic analysis, findings were allowed to "marinate," enabling a thoughtful reflection on the theories being extended. This process refined the emerging concepts. NVivo software was instrumental in organizing and reevaluating themes, while feedback from supervisors and research assistants, including you, enhanced credibility. Participants were also invited to review a draft analysis to ensure accuracy and validity, further strengthening the credibility of the findings (Barbour, 2014).

The final phase involved writing up the findings. This stage balanced deductive logic, linking the findings to established theories and inductive insights drawn directly from the data (Tavory et al., 2012). The theoretical frameworks of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) Neo-Institutional Theory and Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (1972) guided the development of codes, sub-themes, and themes. For instance, Bourdieu's emphasis on social, symbolic, and economic capital highlighted the importance of these resources in navigating uncertainties within the fashion industry. However, the findings revealed gaps in the theory, particularly in addressing the negative impacts of leveraging relational networks in informal and precarious work contexts. Additionally, the theory needed to explain how social actors manage, transform, and terminate economic relationships. This study addresses these gaps, emphasizing the dual nature of social capital in fostering and constraining entrepreneurial decision-making and performance

To ensure the credibility, dependability, and transparency of the findings, direct quotations from participants were included to provide empirical support for theorisation, enhancing the robustness of the study's conclusions.The quantitative data collection and analysis followed the qualitative phase, providing a comprehensive examination of the research topics. This approach enabled a thorough exploration of the qualitative data, facilitating the identification of significant themes and narratives relevant to the research questions. The findings were extensively discussed, with direct quotes from the interviews included. This was followed by a thorough analysis of the results, presenting them based on the meanings, values, and beliefs expressed by the participants in response to the questions.

Following the initial qualitative study, the findings informed the development of standardised instruments for the quantitative phase. A structured questionnaire was designed to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. Data collection was followed by analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The dataset was cleaned to detect and address outliers, as recommended by Pallant (2016). Descriptive statistics, comprising means, standard deviations, reliability, validity, skewness, and kurtosis, were computed for each variable. Demographic information, including participants' sex, age, educational background, and years of experience, was also summarised. Inferential statistical techniques were then applied to assess correlations among the key variables. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was employed to reduce dimensionality and identify key underlying factors. Finally, AMOS-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted to test the hypothesised relationships, assess the psychometric properties of the scales, and examine the explanatory power of the model.

Structural Equation Modeling

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) can be applied to address research questions involving the direct or indirect observation of one or more independent and dependent variables. Its primary objective, however, is to test and validate proposed causal relationships, making SEM fundamentally a confirmatory technique. In this study, SEM was conducted using the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS, version 21.0) to perform confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) and assess model fit at various stages (Byrne, 2010).

SEM involves the specification of two core models: the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement model evaluates how well observed variables represent underlying latent constructs. Using AMOS, all latent variables (or constructs) were linked to their observed indicators to assess item reliability. Items with weak factor loadings were excluded to enhance the overall quality of the measurement model (Kaplan, 2000). CFA was then used to establish both convergent and discriminant validity of the scale items. The overarching aim of the CFA is to reduce measurement error by ensuring that each item reliably reflects the intended construct.

SEM was particularly relevant to this study as it enabled the simultaneous analysis of multiple relationships among both observed and latent variables. The study aimed to examine the nexus between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance, including both direct and indirect effects within this relationship. SEM offered a robust analytical framework for validating the measurement model and testing the structural paths that link these constructs (Kline, 2005). Unlike traditional regression techniques, SEM allows for the modelling of complex causal relationships within a single comprehensive model. This was crucial for confirming the study's theoretical framework and ensuring the reliability and validity of the constructs. Additionally, SEM's capacity to control for measurement error enhanced the precision of the results and provided a deeper understanding of the causal processes at play.

3.8.7.4 Ethical issues and consideration

The study adhered strictly to established ethical standards throughout the research process. Approval was obtained from the relevant ethics committee prior to data collection. Key ethical principles were observed, including informed consent, disclosure of intent, confidentiality, and compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols, each of which is outlined below:

Informed Consent

In both the qualitative (semi-structured interviews) and quantitative (structured questionnaires) phases of the study, participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their involvement. Before data collection commenced, the study's objectives and procedures were explained clearly. Participants gave their informed consent either in writing or verbally, depending on contextual appropriateness. They were also assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

Disclosure of Intent

The intent and scope of the research were fully disclosed to participants prior to their engagement. This included explanations about the academic purpose of the study, how their responses would contribute to understanding decision-making and entrepreneurial performance, and the potential benefits of the research to policy and practice. This transparency helped to establish trust and clarify expectations.

Confidentiality

All information collected was handled with strict confidentiality. For the qualitative interviews, names and identifiable details were excluded from transcripts and replaced with pseudonyms. Quantitative data from questionnaires were coded to ensure anonymity. All data were stored securely, with access restricted to the research team. Findings have been reported in a way that avoids revealing the identities of individual participants or organisations.

Adherence to COVID-19 Protocols

Data collection was carried out in line with public health guidelines to minimise health risks to participants and the research team. Where interviews were conducted in person, measures such as mask-wearing, physical distancing, and the use of hand sanitiser were strictly observed. In contexts where physical meetings were not advisable, interviews were conducted via phone or video call. These adaptations ensured that ethical and health considerations were not compromised during fieldwork.

Ethical clearance was granted by the University of Ghana Ethics Committee for Humanities, under ethical approval number ECH 074/19-20. An introductory letter seeking approval and consent of the study participants was sourced through the Department of Organisation and Human Resource Management. Participants reported their acceptance of participating in the study and signed the Protocol Consent letter, which ensured that participation was voluntary, and they were free to withdraw from the research at any point and for any reason.

Having outlined the study's methodological foundation, including the research design, data collection techniques, and analytical procedures, the next chapter presents the qualitative findings. This chapter draws on in-depth interviews and field observations to explore how entrepreneurs in the Ghanaian fashion industry experience and respond to precarious working conditions. It highlights the lived experiences, aspirations, and strategic behaviours of these entrepreneurs as they navigate institutional voids, market uncertainty, and socio-cultural pressures. The analysis is organised thematically to capture recurring patterns and context-specific practices, with a particular focus on how personal dispositions interact with external constraints and opportunities. Through these insights, the chapter lays the groundwork for a nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial agency and adaptation in resource-constrained settings.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

As a recall, the following two (2) objectives were outlined in Section 1.5: (i) to explore the role of precarity on the decision-making processes of fashion entrepreneurs and (ii) to examine how hope orients and shapes entrepreneurs' decision-making in the Ghanaian fashion industry of Chapter One. In achieving these objectives, the first component of the conceptual framework (see Figure 1) highlighted in Chapter Two was framed after the literature review. Thus, in this chapter, the objectives relative to the framework are answered by the thematic analysis outlined in the following sections. The first thematic analysis focuses on fashion entrepreneurs' perceptions of Ghana's fashion landscape. The second thematic analysis explores setting up a business in Ghana's fashion industry. The third theme explores how Ghanaian-based fashion entrepreneurs measure performance. The chapter is rounded off with a postscript analysis of the findings. Hence, the following research questions —(i) How does a precarious work environment influence how creative entrepreneurs in the fashion industry employ hope in their decision-making? (ii) How does hope orient and shape entrepreneurs' decision-making in the Ghanaian fashion industry? were examined in the following sections.

The qualitative study employed a systematic coding structure to organize data effectively. For example, fashion entrepreneurs based in Accra were assigned codes 1 to 20, while those operating in Tamale were designated codes 21 to 33. Entrepreneurs working and residing in Kumasi were categorized with codes 34 to 60. This coding approach ensures clarity and facilitates a comprehensive analysis of the diverse perspectives from these key regions, providing a robust foundation for exploring entrepreneurial dynamics across Ghana **(see Appendix C).**

4.1. Analysis of Fashion Entrepreneurs' Perceptions in Ghana's Fashion Landscape

4.1.1. Interviewees' perceptions of hardships/difficulties in fashion business

Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs have to endure the hardships of life on the frontier of the fashion industry. The industry is a challenging field that demands workers to take on multiple roles, including being creative, entrepreneurial, and managerial. This often leads to hardships, as workers struggle to balance these different responsibilities, along their personal lives. One male fashion entrepreneur located at Tech junction in Kumasi shared his fair share of difficulties:

> It is very, very difficult because I am alone here and I have to go and source for fabrics and come and cut, and sit down and sew. Sometimes when I allow them to sew, and I have to correct every mistake. It is very, very difficult. I have been telling my colleagues from the university… If I have two or three people and they cannot even sew but they can sort fabrics out, and one person who can do marketing for me, I will be very okay, but I am the only one. **(Interviewee 49).**

This interviewee shared the difficulties in having to play all the minute roles as a manager and the creative person of the brand. From this excerpt it can be inferred that owner-managers experience some difficulties because of the many minute responsibilities they have to play. According to this interviewee, it is challenging to manage and juggle through all the various roles in the fashion industry due to limited human resources. He said:

> I also teach students. it is very difficult. Sometimes they will come for like three years internship and after maybe six months or one year and they will be having bad influence from colleagues, from family and friends. They are influenced to leave and start their own business. Most of them do not build the required capacity before they leave, and this has been the sequence. **(Interviewee 49).**

It is evident that, interns and trainees do not find working with their trainers as attractive. The reason being that there is pressure on them to start their own businesses while in training. This affects trainers who depend on such labour to meet deadlines. A number of the participants (e.g. Interviewees 1, 5, 6, 16, 27, 38, 48 and 51) expressed the challenges associated with finding workers in Ghana's fashion industry. For example, a male designer in Accra expressed his frustration as such:

> It seems people want to work but sometimes when they come and you give them fabrics to do something for you to see, the kind of work they will do for you, is not encouraging. So, you have to train them, and after they have gotten to your standard, they will now begin to show that without them the work cannot go on. You train them to a level then one day they pick up their bags and move out. **(Interviewee 15).**

This interviewee mentioned that getting the right people to work with has always been his greatest challenge. Most of them come without the requisite skills and techniques and they have to be trained. When you train most of them up to a certain level, they will just leave. Those who stay also think without them your business will not succeed. It can be inferred from this narrative that building and retaining a skilled and motivated team is an arduous task for most independent brands in the Ghanaian fashion landscape. A female dressmaker based in Pankrano, Kumasi, had the following to say:

> The challenge with the "work and pay" system is that, before you employ someone, you have agreed to whatever terms and conditions, the salary and all that, but in the end, you cannot trust them. You cannot trust them with your clients. You cannot trust them with your money. Some will start to steal from you. That means you always have to be here, or you have to get a camera here to monitor whatever goes on here. Some of them will also try to poach your clients, and then in the end they take them away from you. **(Interviewee 34).**

This passage highlights the myriad challenges faced by Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs, emphasizing two major issues. Firstly, the struggle to find reliable workers stands out as a significant challenge, reflecting the difficulty in recruiting individuals who can be trusted with the responsibilities essential for the business's success. Secondly, the entrepreneurs also face substantial obstacles in the form of exorbitant taxes and high utility bills. These financial burdens add to the overall hardships experienced by Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs. The inclusion of a personal account from a female fashion entrepreneur based in Kumasi provides a more specific and relatable perspective on these challenges.

> I think taxes is another challenge. Yes, I always say the collectors of taxes make it very difficult for small businesses to run in Ghana. Immediately they see that you have set up a nice place, I do not know what runs through their mind but then they are just quote unnecessarily high amount for you to pay…where do they expect you to get that amount from as a start- up. **(Interviewee 35).**

As expressed by this designer, on the one hand emerging brands are judged alongside actualized brands in terms of their capacity, image and returns; as such they are charged exorbitant prices without considering their output. The narrative suggests that lack of considerations for emerging business owners affect the growth of their businesses, which contributes to the hardship of the industry. Similar to this, a male designer based in Kumasi had this to say about lack of government interventions for small business owners. He said:

> You know we are not well developed over here and even our electricity is another factor. You can be working, and the lights will be out for the whole day. When it comes to the internet, our internet is not stable and is also expensive. These are all part of the struggles we go through in the industry. But the government has no plans for small business owners. **(Interviewee 49).**

The statement highlights the inconsistency in the electricity supply, with power outages lasting for an entire day. The mention of unstable and expensive internet further underscores the infrastructural challenges in the fashion industry. He added that there is a perceived lack of support or initiatives from the government to address these challenges. This excerpt implies that there are several challenges with emerging industries which hinder the efficiency of businesses and competitiveness.

It can be deduced from the above narratives that workers have to endure the hardships of life on the frontier of the industry. The hardships entrepreneurs face in their simultaneous roles in coordinating and managing complex supply chain, from sourcing raw materials to production and distribution in a self-enterprising space suggests the difficulties and hardships of the industry. Moreover, owner-managers in Ghana's fashion industry often grapple with persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled labour, a concern that aligns with the findings of Aakko et al. (2018), who emphasise the scarcity of technical expertise and the inadequate training infrastructure that hinders the development of a competent workforce. These difficulties are compounded by the limited availability of formal apprenticeship schemes and the informal nature of most training systems, which often results in inconsistent skill acquisition and high turnover rates.

In addition to human capital constraints, fashion entrepreneurs contend with prohibitive operational costs, notably high utility bills, which significantly impact profitability and long-term sustainability. This resonates with observations made by Danso et al. (2018) and Sarpong et al. (2013), who underscore how unreliable electricity supply and inflated water and energy tariffs undermine the smooth running of fashion enterprises, particularly for small and medium-sized operators who lack the capital buffer to absorb such shocks.

Furthermore, there is a widespread perception among entrepreneurs that governmental institutions exhibit limited interest in addressing their sector-specific concerns. Many fashion entrepreneurs feel marginalised by policy frameworks that either ignore or inadequately support their work, leading to a sense of disenchantment and alienation from public institutions. The lack of targeted interventions—such as subsidies, tax reliefs, or access to affordable credit—reinforces the view that the fashion sector remains undervalued despite its significant contributions to employment, cultural expression, and national identity. These structural and institutional obstacles contribute to a broader climate of precarity within the industry, shaping not only business decisions but also the aspirations and resilience strategies of fashion entrepreneurs. These studies underscore the challenging and demanding industry. While many of the challenges discussed in previous studies are commonly encountered in discussions of entrepreneurship in the global South, there appears to be a gap in the extensive exploration of workers' perceptions in such fields. Thus, this study aims to offer a broader understanding of entrepreneurs' viewpoints, moving beyond the general challenges of fashion entrepreneurship. By doing so, it enriches our understanding of the diverse issues at play, revealing the ambivalence, tensions, and complexities inherent in the industry.

4.1.2. Interviewees' perceptions of uncertainty in fashion business

A recurring perception derived from the interviews is the notion that the fashion industry is inherently unpredictable and challenging to determine. Many fashion entrepreneurs (e.g. Interviewees 1, 2, 18, 29, 47, 48 and 60) share the belief that success factors are elusive due to various factors. These factors include the ease with which designs can be replicated, tenure insecurity/forced evictions, abrupt exit of workers, customer poaching or raiding, and absence of state support for fashion entrepreneurship in Ghana. The instability within the fashion industry, particularly concerning forced evictions of tenants from properties, is linked to a common practice among landlords—readily evicting Ghanaian business owners who cannot afford exorbitant rents. This unpredictability, coupled with the challenges associated with the subsequent relocation period, has a detrimental effect on the growth trajectory of fashion businesses and their mental health. Tenure insecurity affects millions of businesses annually. Interviews shed light on the impact of tenure insecurity and weak national policies on property leasing. The unpredictable time frame for relocation following eviction negatively impacts the growth of their businesses. Consequently, many landlords prioritize renting to foreigners who often have the financial resources to meet rental demands. This practice leaves local fashion entrepreneurs in a state of limbo, unable to sustain their business activities and rendering them inactive. The interviews further emphasized that, despite the adaptability of fashion businesses to changing consumer demands, the inefficacy of certain national policies poses a significant hindrance. A male fashion designer based in Kumasi highlighted the impact of these policies on navigating and responding to the dynamic nature of the fashion industry.

> If you can be able to foresee the future, you will get it. If you are able to foresee the future and know the trends, what will be happening, what am I supposed to do? How can I make it out? You can easily determine what consumers would want at every season. They are always the same things. Shirts, trousers we have been wearing those are the same things for more than twenty years. There is still no significant changes. It is women fashion that changes but men's fashion is the same. What makes the industry uncertain and unstable is government policy. It is government policies that make the industry unstable. **(Interviewee 54).**

The interviewee's comment above suggests that even though the fashion industry is based on trends, with the requisite skills and knowledge, one can easily adapt to the ever-changing demands of consumers. The interviewee emphasized that, despite the adaptability of the fashion businesses to changing consumer demands, the inefficacy of certain national policies poses a significant hindrance. This excerpt suggests that the absence of government interests in the fashion industry affect the industry a great deal. This perception was shared by a male fashion entrepreneur based in Tamale, as highlighted in the comment below.

> The prices of things have gone up. How to break even is even difficult these days. These days you cannot charge to make profit; you just charge people so that you stay in business. Because if you do not accept what they are offering, you will be sitting down doing nothing. And I think it is better to do something small to be able to pay your bills than having nothing to do at all. So, the fashion space right now is not stable at all, and it is unpredictable. **(Interviewee 31).**

The above interviewee's comment buttresses the assertion that the fashion industry is facing instability due to the ongoing economic crisis. This indicates that the absence of effective government interventions contributes to the uncertainty and unpredictability experienced in the fashion sector. In essence, the absence of supportive policies creates an environment where businesses, particularly those in the fashion sector, struggle to navigate the economic precarity and maintain stability. Similar to this, a female fashion entrepreneur living and working in Accra shared a similar experience.

> It seems that certain designers face challenges in gaining visibility within the industry, as there appears to be a preference for a specific group of designers. The focus on a limited set of individuals creates a perception that attention is consistently directed toward them during industry events and in the share of resources. This dynamic makes it difficult for other designers who lack personal connections or advocates within the industry to secure opportunities. **(Interviewee 12).**

As described by the participant, the system appears less inclusive and open, suggesting that success is often contingent on social ties rather than meritocratic achievement. This narrative reveals a competitive field structured by unequal access to opportunities, thereby creating an uneven playing field that undermines the stability and growth of local designers. In Bourdieu's terms, this reflects a logic of the "survivors of the fittest," where only those with sufficient social capital—connections, networks, and embedded cultural know-how—can navigate and withstand the precarities of the field, often at the expense of equally or more talented but less connected individuals (Bourdieu, 1996). Within such a structure, success tends to follow a zero-sum logic, where one designer's advancement implicitly restricts the opportunities available to others, especially when gate keeping practices and limited resources make it so that gains are distributed unevenly rather than collectively expanded.

From the above narratives, it can be deduced that a certain degree of uncertainty is commonly acknowledged as an inherent aspect of the reality faced by owner-managers in the fashion industry. Success factors are elusive, designs can be easily replicated, tenure insecurity, and abrupt exit of workers, and customer poaching all of which implies that the industry is unstable and unpredictable. The findings is in partial agreement with works of Franssen et al. (2013) and Godart et al. (2009), who found that success in the fashion industry is a game of chance. The findings, however, provides additional insights into the causes of uncertainty in the fashion industry.

The results support Adobor, Darbi, and Damoah's (2021) findings that while many organisations are accustomed to routine uncertainties from markets and the external environment, they often struggle with episodic uncertainties, unforeseen, high-impact events like the COVID-19 pandemic. In Ghana's fashion industry, COVID-19 posed particular challenges, disrupting supply chains and consumer behaviour. Fashion entrepreneurs responded with various adaptive measures, such as exploring digital platforms, collaborating with colleague fashion entrepreneurs, and rethinking product offerings to stay afloat.

By examining how issues such as tenure insecurity and customer poaching contribute to uncertainty in this context, the study offers new insights that transcends the traditional causes of uncertainty often examined in the global North scholarship. Several studies that have explored uncertainty in the fashion industry have examined the concept from the perspectives of value chain and supply chain proposition (Bielby, 1994; Caves, 2000; Godart et al., 2009) without considering how operational and managerial roles contribute to uncertainty of the field. It is evident from the qualitative analysis that by treating the spread of uncertainty around the fashion industry as a single phenomenon produced by consumer demands and the production processes, evinced in the work of Godart (2009) and others obscure the very nature and degree of uncertainty in the industry. The findings appear to pack and unpack the minute factors that are often overlooked in the literature at the micro level but lead to uncertainty in an already precarious work context. Thus, drawing a synergy between issues at the micro and macro level is important in explaining macro-level phenomena .

4.1.3 Interviewees' perceptions of fashion business lacking social support and benefits

Owner-managers, like the ones in this study, face many challenges due to their size and negative stereotypes of society. As expressed by some fashion entrepreneurs in this study, their works are not remunerated or recognized through monetary compensations by family and friends, as entrepreneurs often engage in unpaid labour typically for start-up businesses. In Kumasi, a female fashion entrepreneur shared how society's perception of creative work stifle growth. She said:

> Fashion is gaining popularity in Ghana in recent years. A few years ago, if someone expressed the desire to pursue dressmaking, many parents would oppose the idea, as they failed to see a promising future in that field. Even today, some parents remain sceptical and prefer their children to opt for professions like nursing or teaching, deeming them more secure and honorable. **(Interviewee 41).**

The interviewee astutely identified a prevailing societal trend pertaining to occupational stratification, particularly underscoring the significant divergence in societal regard for 'white collar jobs' in comparison to 'blue collar work.' This observation extends to a widespread societal perception that assigns blue collar workers to a lower social stratification. Consequently, the work performed by individuals in blue collar roles tend to be marginalized, receiving less acknowledgment and value from society. This implies that, in the past, if an individual expressed an interest in pursuing a career in dressmaking, many parents would strongly object to the idea. This opposition was rooted in the belief that such a profession lacked a promising future or financial stability. Instead, parents often encouraged their children to pursue careers in more traditional and perceived stable fields, such as nursing or teaching. Another female fashion entrepreneur in Kumasi shared her frustration of how society perceives their profession. She had this to say:

> I need to determine whether people value the designers or their products. Ghanaians often favour imported items over locally made ones. Consider this: someone will walk into a boutique and readily purchase a jumpsuit priced at 500 cedis. However, they complain when they visit my shop and encounter a similar item crafted from high-quality fabric at the same price or even less. This reflects a troubling perception of local craftsmanship that we must address. The issue is significant here in Kumasi, and I intend to explore how this mindset plays out in Accra and beyond. It is time to shift our perspective and elevate the value of our local designers and their products. **(Interviewee 35).**

The participant is expressing a concern about a prevailing attitude among some people in Ghana, particularly in Kumasi, regarding the value they place on locally produced fashion items and the designers behind them. This narrative points to a challenge faced by local designers in Kumasi and potentially other parts of Ghana. It suggests that there might be a perception issue or a lack of understanding among consumers regarding the quality, craftsmanship, and value of locally produced fashion items. The interviewee is troubled by the fact that customers seem to devalue the work of local designers or question the pricing of their products when compared to imported alternatives, as highlighted in the comment below:

> We do not produce anything as a country. Assuming we were producing our own fabrics, our own machines like we do not make importations of anything from outside and we do fix our own things here. Like these difficulties will not happen here. That is how I see it because we will not say the industry is difficult because the difficulty of the industry stems from these things. We turn to consume things produce from foreign countries, so we turn to put a lot of value on their fashion. **(Interviewee 55).**

According to the interviewee, the challenges and hardships faced by local fashion entrepreneurs stem largely from the influx of foreign styles into the domestic market. He further observed that consumers in the region tend to favour imported fashion items over those produced locally, making it more difficult for homegrown designers to compete. He also added that designers turn to copy foreign fashion without placing value on our culture.The Kumasi designer also remarked:

> In the fashion industry, building connections with suppliers is essential. Knowing reliable sources of materials can help overcome the challenges associated with obtaining quality fabrics and tools. Establishing these connections becomes crucial aspect of navigating the complexities of the

> industry. But some suppliers cannot be relied on, they are deceivers, and they can supply you with items that can affect your business in the long run. I have had many encounters in the past. At this point, it seems you can't rely on people too much in the industry. A self-sufficient approach is the way to go in the fashion business. **(Interviewee 45).**

The above narrative highlights the importance of forging strong connections with reliable suppliers. The interviewee mentioned that knowing where to get a dependable source for materials is essential in overcoming industrial challenges. However, the statement also alludes to a challenging reality, not all suppliers can be trusted. Some may engage in deceptive practices, supplying items that can adversely affect the business in the long run. The conclusion drawn that a self-sufficient approach is the way to go in the fashion business reflects a cautious stance. This excerpt implies a reduced dependence on external support, stemming from past experiences of unreliability in the supply chain. A female fashion entrepreneur in Tamale further articulates the detrimental impact of the absence of support on startup businesses. She shared her experience:

> In this part of the country, Tamale if you leave home or once you are done with tertiary education, what they are expecting is for you to work and bring something home. But for you to say you are starting a business and you ask for monetary support, they will ask you from where you want them to get the money. So, I had no form of support, I had to work my butt off to make it.
> **(Interviewee 23).**

A male fashion entrepreneur based in Tamale shared a similar sentiment. This is what he said:

> In this our Tamale here or North here, immediately they see you learning work, or they see that you have learnt work, and you are now a master, everybody thinks that you are now okay, or you are now financially okay because they see you doing cutting, they always see you sewing. So, they think that you are now getting money so you can do everything that you want for yourself.
>
> **(Interviewee 31).**

In certain cultural contexts, there exists an anticipation for individuals to achieve financial independence as they mature. Within these cultures, family members may perceive financial self-sufficiency as an indicator of maturity and individual accountability. This suggests that, as individuals grow older within these cultural norms, there is an implied understanding that they should increasingly rely on their own financial resources and capabilities, as opposed to relying on familial support. This aligns with the broader cultural value placed on achieving financial independence as a sign of maturity and personal responsibility.

The narratives above imply that negative stereotypes, societal marginalization, reliance on unpaid labor, and offering limited monetary compensation collectively indicate a lack of social support for Ghanaian-owned businesses. The findings regarding negative stereotypes align with a study conducted by He et al., (2018) and Pidduck and Clark (2021) which showed that negative perceptions can undermine the credibility and prospects for success among business owners. Similarly, the results of this study are in line with research conducted by Aakko et al. (2018), indicating that insufficient compensation poses challenges for small business owners in their endeavors to expand and thrive.

Additionally, the deductions drawn from the narratives underscore ambivalent sentiments regarding the utilization of relations for brand owners. The findings of this study have some similarities with a study conducted by Eckert et al., (2022), which highlighted the importance of network support in sustaining fashion businesses. Nevertheless, Eckert et al.'s (2022) research failed to explore the mismatches that occurs in leveraging relational networks for emerging businesses. Their findings seemed to present networking in the fashion industry in a positive manner. It is evident that while social support is essential for business growth and expansion, its complex nature can have an adverse effect on beneficiaries.

4.2.Analysis of Entrepreneurs' Perceptions of Setting-up a Fashion Business

4.2.1 Interviewees' perceptions of industrial challenges

All the fashion entrepreneurs interviewed expressed challenges in setting up a business in Ghana's fashion industry. Many of the interviewees (e.g., Interviewees 9, 16, 33, 48, and 59) perceived that limited access to educational training programs could limit the development of skills and knowledge among emerging fashion entrepreneurs, hence affecting start-up businesses. A male designer who serves as the vice president of a prestigious association in Tamale shared how lack of skill sets affect industry workers. He explained that most fashion entrepreneurs are not able to penetrate the global scenes as a result of this. With over 20 years of experience in the fashion industry, this entrepreneur shares invaluable insights that are sure to inspire and motivate.

> Looking at the way of our sewing is, it is not good. What we sew here mostly it will not meet the international sewing standard because everybody has the way he does his work. Instead of us developing a common measurement method, there is nothing of the sort. Everyone and how they sew…some will start from shoulder to hip… you will never go to a shop, and they have only two, three measuring parts; bust, waist and hips. So, all these things affect us… you cannot compete with other designers. When they give you contract from abroad, you cannot execute it because when you do it anyhow, they will bring it back. It will not be up to the standard. **(Interviewee 32)**.

He concluded by elaborating on industry efforts to address and overcome that challenge.

> Most of us as we started sewing, there are shops that you will go, the shop is full of apprentices…let us go inside the sewing, give me just straightforward measurement for a female costume…just give me the measurements. You will see that they will be fumbling because…they do not know. Even the master, yes, the master himself will have difficulties in providing a standard of measurement. **(Interviewee 32).**

The narrative from this fashion entrepreneur underscores the significant impact of a lack of technical know-how and limited capacity on the precarious conditions within the Ghanaian fashion industry. The aforementioned challenges exacerbate the difficulties faced individuals working in this sector, this implies that the absence of standardized practices in the industry, as mentioned challenges exacerbate the difficulties faced by individuals working in this sector, creating an environment of instability and uncertainty. Limited access to formal educational and vocational training in the fashion sector can be understood through Bourdieu's (1986) notion of cultural capital, which encompasses the non-financial social assets—such as knowledge, skills, and educational credentials—that contribute to social mobility. In contexts where such training is scarce or inaccessible, particularly for individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds, aspiring fashion entrepreneurs are deprived of the symbolic resources needed to navigate and succeed within the creative field. This lack of institutionalised cultural capital not only impairs the development of technical proficiency but also constrains individuals' capacity to distinguish themselves and attain a competitive edge in an industry that often privileges credentialed expertise and professionalised aesthetics. As a result, educational inequality reinforces broader patterns of exclusion and marginalisation, limiting upward mobility and sustained participation within the fashion field. Similarly, a female fashion entrepreneur working in the heart of Accra who double as a lecturer in a vocational school had this to say when asked to describe the precarious nature of Ghana's fashion industry. This is how she described the fashion industry in Ghana below:

> Mostly we copy in the wrong way, and we are not able to do exactly what we see because we are not able to go for training programs or refresher courses when setting up our businesses. We do things our own way and we do not get it right and it becomes challenging for us. **(Interviewee 1).**

The additional insight from this female fashion entrepreneur shows that the absence of standards could also hinder efforts to enhance the overall reputation of the industry and the trust of customers. Her insight sheds light on a broader educational landscape and the potential implications of these challenges on the development of future fashion professions. Another Accra based female fashion entrepreneur remarked that most of her workers are unwilling to learn. This interviewee mentioned that her trainees do not want to go through the rudiments of the training program, as such they end up half baked. This is what she had to say:

> Sometimes when I am creating the patterns, I wish she will pay attention and learn but she is not interested. All she wants to do is to cut, she is only interested in cutting. I cut it and I ask her to sew, that is all. So, they are used to the old ways. Working with such people make the work boring for you, you are not learning. There is nothing exciting about them…. I do not feel challenged because they do not challenge me. **(Interviewee 1).**

This narrative implies that the absence of prerequisite skills and training creates a precarious situation for fashion entrepreneurs, suggesting that they may encounter difficulties in navigating the complexities of the industry and establishing successful and sustainable ventures. A male fashion entrepreneur working and living in Accra also had to say about the challenges with the training program in Ghana's fashion industry, as highlighted in the comment below:

> Our problem has always been the lack of knowledge…it is lack of knowledge. We do not have knowledge in the sewing industry or the fashion industry. **(Interviewee 18).**

This interviewee emphasized the importance of skills and competence as factors necessary for creating a successful brand in the fashion landscape. However, it is evident from the excerpt that most apprentices are not interested in going through the rudiments of training. This suggests that fashion entrepreneurs the obstacle to business growth might be the trainees lack of competence other than some factors, as highlighted in the following interviewee comments of a female fashion entrepreneur in Kumasi.

> So, we are used to the free hand. So, if you are used to the free hand and abroad and you leave the shores of Ghana or you meet someone who understands fashion or a curious person wants you to teach him how to do the work, you cannot because you too you are doing it free hand, you will not be able to compete with the giants of fashion or the big labels out there. The painful thing is that, there are no institutional bodies to check and monitor what we are doing. We are just doing anything and anyhow. Everyone does what he or she likes. **(Interviewee 36).**

The interviewee perceives that some fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana may encounter some challenges to get their designs and collections into international markets and compete with international brands because of the lack of technical know-how in the fashion industry. Local brands may struggle to expand internationally without meeting basic sewing standards.

The reason for this is that when an organisational field such as Ghana's fashion industry lacks institutions both formal and informal, its social actors (fashion entrepreneurs) suffer several losses resulting in uncertainties. In addition, it was revealed that entrepreneurs' creativity and innovation may be stifled when they do not receive financial support from institutions, such as government grants for fashion startups. As an example, a male fashion designer working as an emergency nurse at the Tamale Regional Teaching Hospital expressed his concerns when it comes to funding, as highlighted in the comment below:

> When it comes to our workspace, there is a significant shortfall in funding, based on my personal experiences. This financial limitation has made it challenging for us to establish our workspace in accordance with the expected standards of a fashion house. We aspire to meet these standards, but it is difficult when most of our resources are directed towards our primary goals. Reinvesting continuously in our shop becomes financially taxing, especially when we have other ongoing expenses to manage. At the moment, we are making the best of what resources we have available. **(Interviewee 31).**

In this narrative, the interviewee highlights the difficulty of establishing a sustainable brand due to the absence or limited financial support. A female fashion entrepreneur with 20 years of experience in training of apprentices and based in Tamale shared her views as follows:

> Maybe because I have been in the business for long that is why I have been able to acquire a few machineries to be able to do what I have to do. The person across me like this, you can see she does not have an industrial machine, she

> does not have a knitting machine, she does not have an over-lock machine. She has to go round, and she does not have anybody to support to get those things. **(Interviewee 29).**

According to this interviewee, the absence of financial support through grants and loans hinders owner-managers in achieving success. This suggests funding is s common challenge; this designer considered it difficult to source for funds as business owners in the fashion industry in Ghana. Another male fashion entrepreneur based in Tamale shared a similar sentiment on how lack of institutional support has hindered his business, as highlighted in the comment below:

> At times you just imagine a style in your head, and you try to bring it out but because of lack of funds you cannot do it because it needs a lot of support, like financial support but because there is no money, you cannot do it. **(Interviewee 26).**

A lack of institutional support hinder efforts of fashion entrepreneurs to be creative and innovative. In the same vein it was gathered from the transcripts that weak regulatory framework results in the various challenges for industry practitioners. For instance, a female-based fashion entrepreneur in Accra emphasized the challenges with joining unions or associations in Accra. She shared her observations and experience as a designer with years of experience working for other brands and presently working on her own. This is what she had to say:

> The way the leaders have been behaving… instead of them to distribute the machines or items base on merits, they apply meaningless criteria to share the items among themselves. For instance, just because you do not have apprentices mean you are not doing well or because you do not have a nice shop, you are not doing well also. If you are to determine who gets a machine depending on their shop, it is better she does not come to the meeting and save that money for the machine. These are all challenges we face with the associations. I have stopped because they cannot be trusted. I am thinking of joining another one. **(Interviewee 57)**.

The interviewee's decision to affiliate with a particular association is shaped by the perceived reputation and legitimacy of that organisation. She raised concerns about the internal governance of her current association, particularly critiquing the distribution of resources, which she characterised as arbitrary and lacking meritocratic principles. Such practices, in her view, subvert the intended objectives of association meetings, which are ostensibly aimed at fostering equitable access and mutual support among members. Her reflections point to deeper issues of transparency and accountability within the association's leadership. The interviewee's contemplation of changing affiliations underscores the complex politics of associational life, where sustained participation hinges on members' perceptions of credibility, fairness, and reciprocal benefits.

This account highlights how internal politics and questions of procedural justice can shape entrepreneurial engagement within collective bodies. Another female fashion entrepreneur in Accra opted out of a specific association due to the leaders' conduct, as highlighted in the comment below:

> We have an informal tailors' association located on the roadside, but since it is not registered, I decided to look for an alternative because there are a lot of social engagements…today wedding, tomorrow funeral etc with my former association, so I have stopped. I found a new association that is set to resume activities on… **(Interviewee 7).**

It is evident from the narrative that when associations become weak its members feel insecure and leave. The decision to seek a different association stem from a lack of trust in the current one, where matters seem to revolve primarily around financial concerns, with instances of dramatic situations like someone's mother being reported as deceased and members have to attend the funeral whiles there are weightier matters. The reason being that fashion entrepreneurs may feel exploited and insecure when they sense unfair labour practices. This fashion entrepreneur expresses a desire for a more supportive and reliable association, emphasizing the importance of finding a place where members can receive assistance when needed. The reference to the new association at Jah's Love suggests a hopeful prospect for a more trustworthy and helpful community for the entrepreneur and others.

It thus emerged from the interviews that independent fashion labels seeking to establish or expand their presence in Ghana face considerable obstacles without government support. Fashion entrepreneurs employ diverse methods to finance their ventures. For instance, a female fashion entrepreneur located in Accra shared her approach to securing funds for her business in the following manner. Here is what she had to say about her 15-year career journey.

> When I started it was very hard. But I did not take it as if there is no one to help me so I will not work. There was no one I could count on. I could not go for bank loans or get support from family. There was nothing like that. It was a gradual process of re-investing the profit into the business and saving. As time goes on you are improving and saving and by God's grace, I am here today. **(Interviewee 3)**

This fashion entrepreneur's story illustrates the benefits of bootstrapping because she chose this challenging but resourceful path to grow her business. Bootstrapping, in her case, meant relying on her savings and the income generated by her business to fuel its expansion. Faced with limited access to loans and a lack of external support, she remained undeterred. As an enterprising woman, she found innovative ways to overcome prevailing challenges. Similarly, for a Kumasi based female fashion entrepreneur, a critical aspect of building a brand in the Ghanaian fashion industry is finding ways to fund your business. She described her experience of building her business from ground up through bootstrapping. This is what the mother of three had to say:

> When I started my business, there was no one to turn to for financial support. I had to struggle to get everything by myself. As the business grew and my husband realized the difficulties, I had to go through to get my over locking

> done, he offered to buy one for me. That aside, everything has been me. Ghana is not like elsewhere that you can get support for your business, especially when it comes to money. So, when I sew and save, it has been sewing, saving…buying one thing from my savings…buying two, buying three and I am here. **(Interviewee 34).**

It is evident from the above interviewee's assertion that many fashion entrepreneurs funnel their profits from one project or contract into the next, that is the standard of practice in the global South. This is the case because of the absence of national funding for small and micro businesses especially in the cultural and creative industries. For this interviewee she was fortunate to receive some assistance, she mentioned that her husband bought her a machine for over- locking. However, she explained that every other aspect of the business growth has been possible through retaining profits. This assertion is corroborated by another female fashion entrepreneur in Ghana's capital, Accra. She described how she had to work other jobs in order to establish her business.

> I learnt the work very fast so I can start saving money to start up my own business. For this reason, I did side jobs and saved the money. So, I used some of the money to buy materials because there was no system of support, and it was difficult to get loans. The bureaucratic nature of it has always deterred me. **(Interviewee 10).**

Among fashion entrepreneurs, particularly those operating in resource-constrained settings, the challenge of translating creative concepts into tangible outcomes is closely tied to limited access to financial capital. Many respondents narrated how, in the absence of formal support structures, they are compelled to rely on personal ingenuity, improvisation, and informal networks to sustain their businesses. This condition is further compounded in what might be termed precarious geographies—contexts marked by infrastructural deficits and restricted access to financial institutions. Within such environments, conventional financing options, such as bank loans, are often out of reach or perceived as risky and burdensome. While loans are recognised as a potential source of critical start-up capital, for many small-scale and early-stage fashion enterprises, they are viewed as impractical or even counterproductive. During fieldwork in Kumasi, a male designer underscored the pervasive apprehension surrounding external financing. His account, echoed by others, revealed a broader sense of mistrust and caution, shaped by past experiences and a perceived disconnect between entrepreneurial realities and formal financial systems. The following excerpt captures this sentiment and points to the complex interplay between aspiration, caution, and survival in Ghana's fashion sector.

> I do not like going for loan because I am afraid maybe I will not be able to finish paying and they will come for my business. **(Interviewee 48).**

Despite its benefits, small Ghanaian fashion businesses often have concerns and fears about taking this kind of facility. Related to this, a male Kumasi based fashion entrepreneur had this to say:

> I do not like going for loan because I am afraid maybe I will not be able to finish paying. So, I do not like loan. My support has been my brother. And my mother too has been helping me a lot. **(Interviewee 49)**

It can be inferred from the above narratives that fashion entrepreneurs may explore alternative funding options that has fewer repayment obligations like asking for assistance from family and friends. It shows how a network of relationships is consistently favoured over formal funding and borrowing from formal institutions.

Many of the fashion entrepreneurs shared stories of instability woven into the fabric of their career journeys. For many, the absence of a stable client base meant fluctuating cash flows, cycles of abundance followed by droughts, that often resulted in financial stress or even the collapse of their ventures. One female entrepreneur in Kumasi reflected on this precarious rhythm of work. Fashion, she explained, is shaped by seasonal trends and shifting preferences, making demand highly irregular. During the off seasons, she noted, the lack of consistent clients left her workshop quiet, her machines idle, and her income uncertain. These periods, she said, were the hardest, "times when you're not sure who will walk through your door next, or if anyone will at all." For her and many others, surviving these lean moments without a dependable network of clients was not just a challenge, but a test of endurance.

> The industry is unstable because it is seasonal. At times there will be so much work but from January to April, it is really difficult. You can come here and not be doing anything. It is mostly because of the expenses parents incur for school fees and other things. During those periods they have what to wear…it is more like they have what to use and what they have so they will not come and sew. It is difficult in such moments for me as designer. **(Interviewee 43).**

This comment shows that their businesses struggle during off-season, leading to financial strain for fashion entrepreneurs. As expressed by some fashion entrepreneurs, their works are not remunerated or recognized through monetary compensation by family, friends and celebrities. It emerged from the interviews that most fashion entrepreneurs often engage in unpaid labour at the initial stages of their businesses due to factors that reflect the challenges, aspirations, and necessities of starting a new venture in a competitive industry. One female fashion entrepreneur based in Kumasi shared her view as follows:

> You can imagine, if you are selling cement, I cannot come there to collect cement for free. But when you come to sew from me, you expect me to do it for free. And it is something that I hate. I am sewing, that is my career so why do you want me to do it for you for free? **(Interviewee 41)**

Thus, the fashion entrepreneur resents the expectation that they should provide a service without fair compensation. This entrepreneur laments the disregard for their profession and the hurtful realization that some individuals take their career for granted. Another fashion entrepreneur situated in Accra emphasized this recurring theme when asked to share her experiences working in Ghana's fashion industry. This is what she had to say:

> Family members want you to sew things for them for free. Some will just come; they will not even bring fabric. They expect you to get fabric for them and still sew it for them for free. Friends will come and because we are friends, if I am taking 50 cedis, I will say, oh, just pay for the linen and just the energy that I will use. So, I will not take money for the other expenses, and by doing that for a

period of time, people started taking me for granted. It came to a time I closed the business purposely because of family and friends. **(Interviewee 8).**

The narrative above challenges the common perception that sewing is merely a pastime or a pursuit of art for art's sake. Instead, it reveals a deeper reality in which fashion work is embedded within everyday struggles for survival and stability. For many of the entrepreneurs encountered, sewing is not simply a creative outlet but a vital means of livelihood. Their accounts speak to the labour, strategy, and resilience required to navigate an unpredictable market—underscoring that fashion entrepreneurship is far from a leisurely or purely aesthetic endeavour. Rather, it is a serious, often precarious pursuit shaped by economic pressures, seasonal fluctuations, and the constant effort to sustain a business in a competitive and unstable environment.

Fashion entrepreneurship is a legitimate career that merits recognition and fair compensation for the skills and effort invested by the entrepreneur. By emphasizing that sewing is more than a casual activity, the entrepreneur seeks acknowledgement for the professional nature of their work. This entrepreneur advocates for fair compensation reflective of the skills and dedication invested in the craft. A male fashion entrepreneur based in Kumasi also shared his frustration for sewing for celebrities; television and radio personalities.

If you take them money, they will not come again. They want it for free, but as for me, I will take my money. I do not create materials and I have to buy it also, and you expect that I do all this for free because you sit on television. **(Interviewee 45).**

The above interviewee’s assertion suggests that certain celebrities anticipate receiving fashion services without payment, presuming a status akin to television or radio deities. The participant's evaluation underscores a sense of entitlement among individuals who believe their public exposure warrants complimentary services. The entrepreneur, however, is actively contesting this mindset by emphasizing the importance of fair compensation.

Thus, it is obvious that that there are no clear boundaries between business and personal relationships in the Ghanaian fashion industry. Families and friends who become customers and friends overstep and take for granted the consequences of their actions on the survival of the businesses of these entrepreneurs. Therefore, fashion entrepreneurs are keenly aware of the trade-offs inherent in their entrepreneurial endeavor. When initial clients become part of one's business it can usher in a range of dynamics for the entrepreneur. Subsequent sections scrutinize the manner in which fashion entrepreneurs perceive and emotionally position themselves within different relational infrastructures in Ghana’s fashion industry in order to navigate the precarious work conditions.

The deductions made from the narratives provided highlight several indicators that point towards the industrial challenges of Ghana’s fashion landscape. These include lack of institutional support, low pay and working for free, no stable client base, and difficult access to funds. The findings of this study, which underscore the limited or absent support from government and formal institutions, resonate with the work of Langevang (2017) and

Thieme (2013). Both studies similarly emphasize the crucial role of economic support from institutions in addressing the industrial challenges faced by entrepreneurs. The absence of such institutional backing, as highlighted in the present research, intensifies the difficulties encountered by fashion entrepreneurs, obstructing their capacity to navigate an unstable market and hindering sectoral growth. These converging perspectives suggest that the lack of effective institutional support leaves entrepreneurs grappling with an environment marked by uncertainty and resource scarcity. While these studies have shown that the absence of economic aspects of institutional support leads to challenges for the industry, this study partially agrees with Langevang and colleagues (2016) since their findings provide limited insights into the role of non-economic factors or institutional support-related factors to the challenges of the industry. The findings of this study reveal that the primary obstacles to business growth are not rooted in a lack of funds, but rather in gaps in technical expertise, business orientation, and the absence of standardized practices. This aligns closely with the research conducted by Xie and Lv (2018) and Sarpong et al., (2012), whose studies highlighted the significance of non-economic factors—such as social, educational, political, and cultural institutions—in shaping the challenges faced by entrepreneurs. In the context of the fashion industry, these findings suggest that the lack of a solid foundation in these areas often impedes the ability of entrepreneurs to scale their businesses, pointing to the crucial role of institutional and knowledge-based support in overcoming such barriers.

Much like the challenges mentioned above, the narratives suggest that the Ghanaian fashion industry, like several small, micro, and medium-scale enterprises (SMMEs) globally, face limitations in terms of accessing loans and other forms of financial assistance. The qualitative analysis emphasizes how the absence of academic training and resources influence the sourcing of loans or funds from formal institutions. The findings agree with a research conducted by Decker et al. (2017) and Harvie et al. (2013), which highlighted that individuals in the industry encounter challenges due to the absence of adequate financial support. The reason is that a number of small business owners operate informally, making it challenging for these enterprises to access formal financing options. The findings concur with a study by Aidoo (2017) who also reported that the informality of Ghanaian-owned businesses contribute to their challenges in accessing loans. Similarly, traditional financial institutions often require collateral and extensive documentation, which small-scale entrepreneurs struggle to provide. This suggests that entrepreneurs' access to economic resources is deeply intertwined with their perceived legitimacy, a concept extensively explored by DiMaggio and Powell (1991) in their work on institutional theory.

According to DiMaggio and colleague (1991), organisations—whether in the fashion industry or other sectors—tend to gain access to vital resources, such as funding, partnerships, and support, based on their legitimacy within the eyes of key institutional actors. Legitimacy, in this sense, is not just about complying with formal regulations but also about aligning with societal norms, values, and expectations that stakeholders deem appropriate. For fashion entrepreneurs, legitimacy might be shaped by a variety of factors, including adherence to industry standards, social networks, or even cultural expectations about the role of fashion in the community. When entrepreneurs are recognized as legitimate actors within their industry, they are more likely to gain access to resources—such as financial backing, government support, or networking opportunities—that can propel their business forward. Conversely, those who are perceived as less legitimate may face barriers in obtaining these resources, regardless of their technical skills or business acumen. At its core, Neo-institutional theory aims to establish the legitimacy and credibility of individuals within their respective industries, creating a foundation that allows them to tackle and overcome the challenges they face. By securing legitimacy, entrepreneurs and organisations can gain access to critical resources, networks, and institutional support, positioning them to operate effectively within a competitive market. In this context, legitimacy is not just a symbolic mark of approval but a powerful strategic asset that helps actors manage sectoral complexities, form strategic alliances, and influence key industry stakeholders. This connection between legitimacy and resource access also suggests that fashion entrepreneurs must navigate complex social and institutional landscapes, where gaining acceptance from influential stakeholders—such as government bodies, financial institutions, or even community leaders—can significantly impact their ability to secure the resources necessary for growth and sustainability.

The findings are in partial agreement with Abrompah (2018) on the effect of long bureaucratic processes on accessing loans among small business holders. However, this study takes a step further to explore how belief systems and superstitions inform decisions and contribute to industrial challenges in the informal sector. The findings showed that lack of financial knowledge and skills required to secure funding or manage the finances effectively, further limits their access to funding sources. It can also be deduced, even in cases where loans are accessible, the reluctance of certain Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs to borrow stems from their perceptions, beliefs, and stigma regarding potential indebtedness and concerns about repercussions from financial institutions. These concerns are often influenced by cultural perceptions, superstitions, past experiences, and lack of financial literacy deeply rooted in the Ghanaian context.

Another notable observation from the above narratives is that intense competition in the fashion industry implies the absence of a stable client base, as several micro-businesses vie for the same customers, creating industrial challenges. The fashion industry has certain characteristics and structures, which leads to unstable client base. The absence of customer loyalty to specific fashion brands are mostly influenced by conditions such as background characteristics of the entrepreneur such as attitude of fashion entrepreneurs, personality, role and behavior of the entrepreneur. This finding agrees with a study conducted by Bryant (2007) who reported that personal challenges and individual characteristics of entrepreneurs affect the marketing of fashion products, however, the qualitative findings made additional contribution to studies on small, micro and medium scale enterprises that the work culture of such businesses influence the stability of their client base. The findings are consistent with Owusu-Ansah's (2015) research, which found that the lack of a stable client base leads to income instability, limited job benefits, and increased reliance on seasonal demand for fashion entrepreneurs.

This section highlights additional factors contributing to the instability of the fashion industry, particularly the seasonality of demand, which is shaped by cultural events, holidays, and changing fashion trends. The findings align with Sarpong's (2012) assertion that entrepreneurs in the fashion industry face challenges due to the bespoke (custom-made) nature of production, which limits their ability to compete with ready-to-wear and mass-produced brands. At the same time, the qualitative evidence challenges Bobie's (2022) claim that bespoke production in Africa has largely given way to mass production. This contradiction warrants further exploration, especially given the widespread presence of tailors and seamstresses who continue to produce custom-made garments across the Ghanaian fashion landscape. In a context dominated by micro-businesses that respond directly to individual client preferences, the shift towards mass production appears far less pronounced.

4.2.2 Interviewees' perceptions of Fashion Entrepreneurs' Decision-Making Processes

This thesis explores the decision-making practices of fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana. This topic has received limited attention, particularly regarding the factors influencing decision-making in the fashion industry. Production, value creation, and supply processes in fashion are characterized by high levels of uncertainty, risk, and ambiguity, resulting in a low likelihood of success. Fashion entrepreneurs often struggle to communicate their products' value and functionality, creating tension between rational and emotion-driven decision-making processes.

Drawing from an analysis of interviews and observational data collected from sixty participants, this study offers insights into how decisions are made within Ghana's fashion industry. The research identifies both personal and sociocultural factors as significant factors that influences decision-making. Furthermore, it emphasizes the subtle and complex nuances involved in the decision-making processes within this sector. The findings contribute to the work of Biebly and Biebly (1994), Godart and Mears (2009), and Schreiber and Riepel (2018), providing new perspectives on decision-making in micro-businesses within the creative industries under conditions precarious working conditions. For instance past experience played a significant role in many decisions made by Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs. Experience-based decisions are those made from vicarious learning, direct learning or previous experiences. Findings from the interviews showed that experience was a key factor in the decision-making processes of Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs. Decisions were frequently informed by vicarious learning, direct learning, or prior experiences, which served as a basis for guiding present actions. A women's wear designer from Tamale reflected on this in the following account:

> You see oh. Someone will just bring a style for you to sew. You will finish sewing it perfectly, neat, there will be no mistake. Maybe the time that person is coming for the dress, he or she has no money. She will come and discourage you. This is not the way I want it. I did not tell you to fold it this way. I did not tell you to sew this style and just because he or she has no money. Maybe the amount you agreed on, he wants to cut the amount. Even someone will just be oh, master let me go. I am in a hurry. I will send you MoMo and that ends it. Customers are very difficult, but I know how to deal with them. **(Interviewee 32)**.

Drawing upon a past negative experience working with customers shares a vivid description of value of experiences on subsequent decisions. The narrative shows that the outcome of an experience be it positive or negative will consequently influence the outcome of future decisions. Similarly, a well-known female fashion entrepreneur based in the heart of Tamale had this to say about the importance of experience in decision-making.

> In a way I have learnt over the years probably the way I dealt with people and my decisions a few years ago. If I am to make the same decision today with the same information, I doubt I will make the same decisions. So, I believe that we learn by experiences. So, with time, actually I did it this way and it was not nice, or I spoke this way to a client, and it was not nice. So, next time I, like improve on myself. **(Interviewee 28).**

This narrative shows that, current and future decisions are a product of past experiences. As current decisions are learned and reinforced through decisions made in the past. Her convictions elucidate the belief that more effective decisions can be made in the future based on the experiences harnessed from the past. In addition to personal experiences, other personal factors including intuition, taste, cultural values and resilience were prevalent in the decision-making processes of these fashion entrepreneurs. Consciously and or unconsciously intuition was found to play a prominent role in the design process, as well as the managerial and operational functions of fashion businesses. Intuition emerged as a factor that influence the decisions of a number of fashion entrepreneurs. As admitted by a Tamale based fashion entrepreneur, she relied upon her gut feelings under unknown circumstances when she is not sure of how to go about her creative design process. This is what she had to say:

> Sometimes I can make an outfit for a client, maybe it is a custom-made outfit. Maybe I am not sure about how to go about the style, then I will say why don't I do it this way? And it always comes out nice. **(Interviewee 37).**

This excerpt suggests that while the creative design process is primarily driven by skill, knowledge, and expertise, moments of uncertainty often lead creative entrepreneurs to rely on instinct to overcome challenges and make quicker decisions. These decisions are often guided by unconscious dispositions, which can be understood as "intuitive" decision-making. Rather than being the result of deliberate, rational analysis, these choices are shaped by internalised norms and practices. In this context, intuition can be seen as an automatic response, influenced by an individual's habitus—an internalised set of dispositions formed through cultural and social experiences. For instance, a fashion entrepreneur's "gut feeling" when making business decisions may be deeply rooted in their past experiences, education, and the social networks they have developed within the industry, all of which contribute to the formation of their habitus. A Kumasi-based fashion designer acknowledged that following one's gut feelings or intuition involves risks, yet she believed it was worth taking the chance. For her, there was no harm in trusting intuition, as instincts can serve as both a reliable guide and a potential source of misjudgment. This suggests that decisions based on intuition come with inherent risks, aligning with the fact that entrepreneurs are, by nature, risk-takers. The designer recognised that while intuition might lead to both success and failure, it is part of the entrepreneurial process, where calculated risk-taking is often necessary to drive innovation and growth. Similarly, in Accra, a female fashion entrepreneur, who is also a lecturer at a vocational school, shared her perspective on the influence of intuition in decision-making.

> Sometimes you will take certain decisions based on your intuition thinking that it is the best, especially if you are a one-man business. So, sometimes it affects us negatively. So, if you have had a second view of another person's opinion and then you weigh and balance the two. Intuition works best when you compare

> what you have in mind with another person. But when you do not have the luxury of time to go over your decisions with someone you do not have a choice than to go with your gut feelings. **(Interviewee 3).**

The interviewee highlighted that intuition can have both positive and negative impacts on decision-making. For this entrepreneur, cross-validating instincts with others is the best approach to making decisions. Her statement reveals that fashion entrepreneurs often seek advice and rely on the opinions of their networks to support intuition-based decision-making. From this, it can be inferred that while entrepreneurs value their intuition, they also acknowledge its fallibility. By consulting others, they are better able to identify potential risks and challenges that might not have been apparent to them on their own.

In entrepreneurial decision-making, especially within creative industries like fashion, taste is intricately tied to experience and intuition. In situations where objective criteria may be absent or unclear, entrepreneurs often rely on their personal tastes as a guiding principle. Insights gathered from the interviews showed that the entrepreneurs' taste, encompassing both their personal preferences and standards, significantly influences their creative processes. In the fashion industry, taste transcends individual preference, functioning as a strategic resource deeply embedded in cultural capital. It represents the entrepreneur's ability to recognize and anticipate what will resonate with target markets, align with evolving consumer demands, and engage with ongoing cultural discourses. In Tamale, a male fashion entrepreneur had this to say about the influence of taste on his creative process.

> Yes, my preferences also affect what I give out to people a lot. You know, most people believe you the designer a lot and most at times they come, and you ask

> them what they want, and they say you are the designer, just do something for me, I believe in you, I trust you. So, it is more like you are putting what you like onto them although you have to consider their personality too and you also consider their structure and a lot of things about the person but in all. **(Interviewee 31).**

In the quote above, the interviewee equates his taste with personal preference and further explains how taste shapes his decision-making during the design process. However, he also recognizes that while personal taste can significantly influence design choices, it is equally important for the designer to consider the individual characteristics and personalities of the end user. As one male fashion entrepreneur in Accra shared:

> I do not like things that are, designs that are too heavy. What do I mean by heavy designs? Maybe you see some people wearing outfits with plenty designs in them. Me personally it puts me off. To a large extent it also influences the kind of people that come to me. When I dress, most of my clients like what am wearing, they love it, I want something like that. So, my personal taste influences the kind of designs we also produce here. **(Interviewee 13).**

This interviewee, therefore, believes that his personal taste influences his creative design process and choice of fabrics in general. He also mentioned that his taste influences his client base and the kind of people who seek his services. A fashion entrepreneur in Accra shared that her personality has a significant impact on her taste, yet she remains conscious of ensuring that this influence does not interfere her professional work. Through this awareness, she is able to keep her focus aligned with her business objectives and sustain success in her field.

> Naturally, I am an introvert. I think my personality has affected my work in a way. I am a perfectionist and I like my things in a particular way. I realized that my workers find it difficult to keep up with that, because my standards and tastes are high. I try to get the very best out of my work. My standard is the top, why be in the middle when you can be at the top? **(Interviewee 17).**

This designer emphasized that her personal taste and preferences play a crucial role in shaping her managerial and operational skills. She noted that her personality influences both her preferences and work style, which subsequently impacts her leadership capabilities. This indicates that patterns of taste are deeply intertwined with the complexities of personality and social status, underscoring how personal attributes influence professional roles and decision-making processes.

Resilience plays an role in decision-making, allowing individuals to recover from setbacks and transform challenges into opportunities for growth. During the interviews, participants shared how they reframed negative experiences in both their professional and personal lives. A male fashion entrepreneur from Accra, for example, discussed how, despite initial discouragement from past challenges, these experiences eventually served as valuable lessons. These lessons, he noted, not only helped him refine his decision-making skills but also contributed to his personal and professional growth. He had this to say:

> There was a certain guy who wanted his clothes on credit for his wedding, but I had to decline. My answer was No!!Though in my heart I feel bad about it but if, it is a decision I have taken and I stand by it. Before you pick anything out, you must have been done with the payment. Why did I do that? Because customers do not fulfil their part of the bargain. That has been my decision to date. **(Interviewee 13).**

The interviewee not only demonstrated resilience but also allowed his past negative experiences with clients to inform his future entrepreneurial decisions. His actions reflected a strong sense of responsibility towards his clients, which was evident in his development of rules designed to safeguard his business. Many other interviewees have similarly adapted positively to the challenges of Accra's fashion industry. A female fashion entrepreneur shared her perspective on this adaptive approach:

> Yes, resilience influences my decisions a lot. When I was new, and the business was in its early stages I made certain decisions that I would not make now. My decisions then are different from right now if I am taking the same decision it is going to be different because I have become a little tougher in business and I have a lot of experience in business, so it affects the decision a lot.
> **(Interviewee 11).**

With this interviewee, resilience does not only involve learning from past experiences and bouncing back in the aftermath of an adversity. However, in her situation resilience involves self-transformation, often taking a pragmatic stance, an action in response to a problem identified. In her case, a comprehensive transformation in her entrepreneurial approach led to a positive impact on her business. For many fashion entrepreneurs, resilience plays a crucial role in shaping their cognitive frameworks, influencing how they interpret adverse experiences and, ultimately, how they make decisions. This capacity to reframe setbacks fosters adaptive strategies that can sustain and enhance business performance.

While individual attributes contribute to the decision-making processes of fashion entrepreneurs, a range of socio-cultural factors—such as social networks, cultural intermediaries, cultural values, and competitive dynamics—also play a significant role. The following section explores each of these factors in detail. Notably, social networks emerge as a critical force, serving as a conduit for social, symbolic, and economic capital that significantly shapes entrepreneurial decisions within the fashion industry. This is exemplified in the perspective shared by a female fashion entrepreneur based in Accra, who remarked:

> All my friends are designers too…. So, more times when we go out and we are sitting down drinking, and we discuss work too. Maybe there are areas that are very difficult. Maybe the person is finding it difficult to handle. You can just bring it up and …… So, you talk about it. If there is a particular design too that is in recently that is not well known. Maybe there is somebody among the clique that has done it or who does it better, we bring it up and they can explain how they get it done. **(Interviewee 13)**.

The insights shared by the interviewee highlights the centrality of networking in the entrepreneurial landscape. Building relationships with peers, businesses, and professionals across various sectors provides access to complementary knowledge and resources that are vital for growth. Such collaborative engagements not only foster the exchange of ideas but also contribute to innovation and more effective product development. This importance of social connectivity and knowledge-sharing is well illustrated in the account of a female fashion designer based in Accra:

> Social networking is very important because through networking you can be recommended by others and to others. This is why I like fashion shows. You get to meet a lot of fashion designers who, once they see your collection on can recommend you to others. Sometimes, they can even contact you and recommend you for another and that is how you get the exposure.
> **(Interviewee 1).**

The interviewee's remarks underscore a strong belief in the transformative potential of networking as a strategic pathway for advancement and deeper industry integration. Her participation in fashion shows is driven by the prospect of forming collaborative relationships with other fashion houses and gaining visibility among top-tier brands. Similarly, another Accra-based female fashion entrepreneur noted that her motivation to engage in networking arises from its capacity to foster continuous learning and inspire higher levels of achievement. As she articulated:

> At least when you go for these fashion shows, I am sure I will be challenged to do more. This will help grow my business and I will be known by the top brands and clients will get to see my work and my worth as well. **(Interviewee 12).**

Another benefit is that it enables fashion entrepreneurs to establish their brand and gain legitimacy within the industry. The interviews revealed that acquiring symbolic capital through social networking was a crucial aspect of the decision-making process for the owner-managers involved. Despite the numerous benefits of leveraging social networks in the fashion industry, the data also revealed that such networks come with their own challenges—most notably, tendencies toward herding and crow behaviours. These dynamics can lead to conformity and a lack of originality (Bourdieu, 1996), as individuals or businesses may feel pressured to align with dominant trends, popular styles, or the decisions of influential figures within the network. Such behaviour can stifle innovation and discourage risk-taking, as fashion entrepreneurs may prioritise social acceptance or visibility over creativity and experimentation. Moreover, herding can result in oversaturated markets where many players offer similar products or services, intensifying competition and reducing the distinctiveness of individual brands.

The data also underscored the influential role of promotional actors—such as cultural intermediaries, bloggers, and gatekeepers—in shaping entrepreneurial decisions. Although the cost-benefit outcomes of engaging with such intermediaries were mixed, their overall significance remained evident. One female fashion entrepreneur based in Kumasi highlighted the strategic importance of collaborating with intermediaries, particularly during the initial stages of establishing a business. As she noted:

> Personally, I think working with them at the initial stages of your business helps a great deal. Because you need to be out there. You need people to know

> you. So, from the start of the business, that is mostly when I think when you need to use them, it is productive because they will help your new brand to be out there. **(Interviewee 38).**

This interviewee shares the relevance of cultural intermediaries in brand identity for business startups. She lay emphasizes on how intermediaries act as promotional actors for emerging brands. This means that cultural intermediaries work at the intersection of culture and economy by adding value through their influence, power and status. Another female fashion entrepreneur in Kumasi, who considers herself as an emerging brand commented that:

> There are those on top and you are also here. You are now also trying to get there so there was those who can help you to come there also. Also, people tend to believe you a lot when they see that. You will get a certain kind of clientele, which helps your business in a lot of ways. If I had the means I would have worked with them. **(Interviewee 39)**.

This entrepreneur's assertion exemplifies the benefits of working with intermediaries for emerging brands. She claims that the symbolic qualification of intermediaries add value to cultural products, its consumption and creates legitimacy for brands and brand owners. It can be derived from the entrepreneur's assertion that well established brands build confidence, trust and influence consumers' perception of the brand. Deciding to work with intermediaries according to some of the interviewees, it comes at a cost. For some, the cost outweighs the benefit. A female Kumasi fashion entrepreneur also had this to say about the challenges of working with intermediaries;

> It reaches a time when you are known, or you have gotten the publicity you need and then there is no need working with them. It is expensive, because you have to pay for them from your own funds. it is not like there is any form of support coming from anywhere. Imagine starting up a business or setting up a fashion house, you do not have a lot of clienteles, you are getting minimal wages, and you are paying a blogger or social media person to advertise for you. All the little money that you are getting, you are also giving out in the name of publicity. **(Interviewee 38).**

The interviewee's remark highlighted the financial burden associated with engaging cultural intermediaries, particularly within the Ghanaian context where formal support mechanisms are largely absent. From her perspective, allocating limited financial resources to bloggers did not represent a worthwhile investment. This view resonates with Bourdieu's (1984) conceptualisation of cultural intermediaries as actors who operate at the intersection of cultural production and consumption, shaping tastes, legitimising meanings, and conferring symbolic value on goods and practices. In the fashion industry, these intermediaries—such as influencers, stylists, and bloggers—possess symbolic capital that enables them to elevate certain brands or styles within the cultural marketplace. However, for entrepreneurs operating with limited financial capital, the influence of these intermediaries may be viewed as both inaccessible and commercially unviable, particularly when the returns on such investments are uncertain. This reveals an underlying tension in the commodification of visibility and legitimacy, where access to symbolic capital becomes contingent on economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

In addition to Bourdieu's perspective, Neo-institutional theory offers a complementary lens for understanding the role of cultural intermediaries within the broader institutional environment of the fashion industry. From a Neo-institutional standpoint, legitimacy is achieved not solely through market performance but by conforming to prevailing norms, values, and expectations within a given institutional field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Cultural intermediaries, in this sense, function as normative agents who help define and disseminate the taken-for-granted standards of style, quality, and innovation. Their endorsement can assist entrepreneurs in aligning with institutionalised notions of fashionability, thereby enhancing their legitimacy in the eyes of consumers and peers.

Moreover, cultural intermediaries may be viewed as engaging in institutional work—the active shaping, maintenance, or disruption of institutional norms (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Through their curatorial practices and cultural commentary, intermediaries not only promote specific aesthetics but also participate in constructing the symbolic and cognitive frameworks that structure the field. In Ghana's fashion sector, where formal institutions are underdeveloped, these actors play a particularly significant role in influencing perceptions of value, professionalism, and brand credibility. However, as the interviewee's comment suggests, their influence is not uniformly accepted, and may be resisted by entrepreneurs who prioritise direct consumer engagement and community-based support over costly forms of mediated legitimacy. Together, Bourdieu's theory of cultural intermediaries and Neo-institutional theory offer a nuanced understanding of the symbolic and institutional dynamics that shape entrepreneurial decision-making. They illuminate how access to visibility and status is mediated by both economic constraints and normative pressures, particularly in environments marked by precarity and institutional informality.

While social support networks and the influence of cultural intermediaries contributed to shaping the decision-making processes of fashion entrepreneurs, interview insights revealed that cultural values—such as upbringing, religious beliefs, personal convictions, and individual ethics—were equally influential. These deeply embedded values served as a guiding framework, informing how entrepreneurs navigated challenges and made strategic choices in their business practices.

> When you are a designer, it is not just about you. It is about what the client wants. But when people leave the choice of what they will wear to me, that is when my cultural values influence it. My values come to play when I am left to design something for a client without any suggestion. The best I can do sometimes is to blend the two backgrounds. It influences my creative decisions. **(Interviewee 14).**

The preceding narrative illustrates that in moments of uncertainty, cultural values play a pivotal role in guiding both the design process and the creative expression of fashion entrepreneurs. These values, deeply embedded through years of socialisation, often emerge as the most viable resource to draw upon when making decisions under pressure. For many entrepreneurs, such values have shaped their worldview and approach to work over a significant portion of their lives, thus naturally informing their business practices. This is particularly evident in the reflections of a female fashion entrepreneur currently based in northern Ghana, but originally raised in Accra. She explains how her personal values shape her approach to training, as captured in the following remark:

> My cultural values influence my decisions a lot. I have certain tenets, and they impact my style of training. I am a Christian, but no matter your religious background, I let you understand that right is right, wrong is wrong. I have been able to influence some people. Some of them the way they relate, I have had to train married women sometimes. I realized that it even affects their relationship with their husbands at home because they change, and their husbands too confess it. They confessed that person has change. It feels so good to hear that. **(Interviewee 29).**

The above narrative highlights how personal values and beliefs shape the decision-making practices of entrepreneurs. Over time, these beliefs evolve into a cultural framework or organisational structure that members must align with to gain acceptance within the organisation. This process resonates with Bourdieu's theory of practice, which emphasises how individuals' habitus—their ingrained dispositions shaped by social, cultural, and personal experiences—guides their practices and decisions. In this case, the entrepreneur's values become part of their habitus, influencing their design process, as well as their interactions with other members of the organisation. Furthermore, Neo-institutional theory provides a broader lens through which to understand how these values transform into organisational norms. According to this theory, organisational practices are shaped by institutional pressures that drive conformity to shared norms and beliefs within a particular field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As entrepreneurs internalise their values, these norms gradually become institutionalised within their businesses, guiding not only decision-making but also defining acceptable practices and behaviour. Over time, such values and beliefs become entrenched as part of the organisation's identity, influencing not only internal practices but also how the organisation is perceived by external actors in the broader institutional environment. A similar perspective was shared by another female fashion entrepreneur based in Tamale, who discussed how her values influence the 'how,' 'where,' and 'what' of her design process. She remarked:

> I am more of an open person but in a way my values affect my creative design process. We actually look at where we are or context when designing for our clients. Not just me. Those are also the principles of our work. Everything counts when your client consults to design something for them. When they come to make a request, you do not just do it for them because they are making a request. You would want to know, where they are taking it to. **(Interviewee 25).**

The narrative reveals that cultural values significantly inform decision-making, shaped by the context of both the designer and the end-user. As explained by one entrepreneur, when a client places an order, she first assesses its functionality, stressing that the 'how, where, and what' are essential components of the creative design process. This consideration remains consistent regardless of the cultural or religious backgrounds of either the client or the entrepreneur, as these factors ultimately determine what is to be worn. It can thus be inferred that the values ingrained during training evolve into a cultural framework, influencing individual practices. However, while some fashion entrepreneurs (e.g., Interviewees 6, 14, 33, 21, and 49) argued that their personal values did not affect their business decisions, a female seamstress shared a contrasting viewpoint, as highlighted in the following comment:

> I have a Christian customer and when she comes, she says she wants it above her knees and tight. I just do whatever, she likes. As for me, I want my money, so I do not allow those religious and cultural values to come in my way. **(Interviewee 22).**

According to this designer, her primary objective is to ensure client satisfaction. Consequently, it was found that, although values are present, personal values and emotions do not exert influence over creative decisions. A comparable viewpoint was articulated by a female designer based in Accra, as illustrated in the following statement:

> The way I am trained, the way I am brought up, my vision and focus in life is different from someone's vision and focus. So, you have to embrace the culture of where you find yourself…So, you learn the cultures of that particular location that you find yourself then you work with that. **(Interviewee 9).**

This interviewee indicated that her values do not influence her decisions, as her upbringing and training differ significantly from her current context. This observation suggests that work culture and ethics can operate independently of personal values. It can be inferred that the integration of personal values with work culture may present challenges, particularly in a highly volatile environment. In such contexts, the client becomes the central figure in the value chain. Fashion entrepreneurs are guided by the principle that "if you don't do it, someone else will," leading to increased isomorphism and herding behaviours. These dynamics highlight the significant role of competition (or strife) in the decision-making processes of Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs. In this regard, a male fashion entrepreneur based in Accra shared his perspective on the influence of strife, as demonstrated in the following comment:

> You do not need to be told to step up. If you do not step up your game, you are not the only designer in the whole of Accra. People will not come to you. You just have to step up. So, there is a whole lot of competition. The fashion industry is competitive. There is a whole lot of competition. For you to stay in business, you must grow your brand and then match up with the competitiveness of the fashion industry. **(Interviewee 4).**

This interviewee perceives competition as a necessary 'evil' for achieving personal and professional objectives. For this Accra-based fashion entrepreneur, the additional efforts and activities required to navigate a highly competitive work environment are integral to realizing one's goals. Many other interviewees shared a similar sentiment, acknowledging that competition serves as a motivating force that drives the harnessing of creative abilities. This aligns with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, wherein individuals' dispositions and practices are shaped by the structured social environments they engage with. In this context, the highly competitive nature of the fashion industry in Ghana appears to influence entrepreneurs' habitus, compelling them to adapt and exert more effort in order to maintain relevance and succeed.

While the positive aspects of competition were often emphasized, there was a clear recognition of the trade-offs it entails. Many interviewees expressed that these challenges sometimes made them question their continued participation in the industry, indicating a sense of field-specific tension. According to Bourdieu, a field is a social space in which individuals or groups struggle for capital and power. In the fashion sector, entrepreneurs are engaged in a constant negotiation of their position within this field, and competition is both an opportunity and a barrier. This is particularly evident in the widespread recognition of the glass-ceiling effect, which many entrepreneurs see as a structural barrier to upward mobility in the industry. The concentration of capital—whether cultural, social, or economic—within a few dominant players reinforces the limited opportunities for others to break through. Thus, the narratives suggest that competition in the fashion industry is not merely a challenge to overcome but a symbolic struggle that shapes the decisions, actions, and future prospects of fashion entrepreneurs. Through Bourdieu's lens, it is evident that competition both influences and is influenced by the entrepreneurs' embodied dispositions (habitus), their position within the competitive field, and the capital they hold. While competition motivates entrepreneurial activity, it simultaneously creates a precarious environment, where the entrepreneurial habitus is constantly recalibrated in response to the shifting dynamics of the industry.

After analyzing the narratives provided above, it can be inferred that entrepreneurs' decision-making practices are influenced by various factors. These factors can be categorized as either personal or socio-cultural and act as possible mechanisms and boundary conditions that could influence the relationship between decision-making and performance. The findings agree with those of Baumeister et al.,'s (2017), indicating that several factors contribute to decision-making. The qualitative study revealed that decision-making often involves drawing on past experiences, intuition, personal preferences, cultural values, and social connections.

The use of past experiences in decision-making partially agrees with Julisson et al.'s (2005) research, which suggests that past decisions can influence future choice and decision practices. It was evident from the findings that negative past experiences often led to a similar avoidance of that behavior. Social actors engage in avoidance behaviors so that they do not endanger their current economic position as they did in the past. However, it is important to note that past experiences are not always successful, though, fashion entrepreneurs value its role in shaping future outcomes.

It appears from the narratives that business owners often rely on intuition when making decisions. However, the use of this approach does not always guarantee successful outcomes, which agrees with findings by Schreiber et al., (2018). The use of intuition in decision-making in this study aligns with Bourdieu's concept of habitus. The relationship between Bourdieu's habitus and intuitive decision-making lies in how an individual's ingrained dispositions, shaped by their social background and experiences, influence their instinctive choices and actions. When faced with decision-making scenarios, individuals draw upon this habitus to guide their intuitive responses, often without conscious deliberation. Thus, Bourdieu's concept of habitus provides a theoretical framework for understanding how intuition influences decision-making. Intuitive decision-making is often based on gut feelings or hunches that allow entrepreneurs to make decisions.

While Bourdieu's theory of practice helps explain how fashion entrepreneurs internalise social conditions and convert them into embodied ways of thinking, doing, and being, it offers limited insight into how actors respond to the structural constraints of precarity in the moment of decision-making. In contexts such as Ghana's fashion industry, where institutional support is limited and competition is intense, entrepreneurs are compelled to make decisions under pressure, with incomplete information, limited resources, and unpredictable futures. These conditions echo Simon's (1957) theory of bounded rationality, which argues that decision-makers often resort to satisficing—selecting the first option that meets an acceptable threshold—rather than pursuing optimal solutions.

The findings reveal that while many decisions appear intuitive or habitual, they are deeply shaped by both structural limitations and learned dispositions. For instance, one Accra-based designer explained that he often makes production and hiring decisions "based on what feels right in the moment," yet also acknowledged the constraints posed by budget, space, and time. Here, habitus provides the orientation, but it is bounded rationality that shapes the actual choice. This suggests that decision-making in precarious environments is neither fully rational nor purely habitual. Instead, it is strategically intuitive—situated at the intersection of embodied dispositions and constrained options. By bridging Bourdieu's concept of habitus with Simon's notion of satisficing, this study contributes to a more contextually grounded understanding of entrepreneurial practice in the global South. It highlights how the aesthetics of decision-making are not just products of socialisation but also adaptive responses to material conditions—what might be called bounded habitus in action.

In addition, the findings partially agrees with studies that have raised concerns about the relevance of intuition in decision-making because of its reliability and operationalization (Khatri et al., 2000; Dane et al., 2007). Also, the findings agree with research (e.g. Schrieber et al., 2014, 2018) that has found that the link between intuition and decision-making is inconclusive. However, this study emphasizes that critics of intuitive decision-making fail to recognize that intuitive decisions occur at the unconscious level of the mind. Therefore, the decision-maker may not be aware of the influence of intuition on their choices and selections.

The narratives above suggest that external factors, specifically the entrepreneurs' socio-cultural, significantly influence decision-making. The findings agree with existing research that establishes a strong connection between social networks and entrepreneurs' decision-making (Franssen et al., 2013; Smits, 2016). However, a notable gap in prior studies is their predominant focus on formal networking mechanisms, often overlooking the nuanced role of informal interactions that occur at the association level. This study addresses that gap by showing how informal meetings—particularly face-to-face communication during association gatherings—enable entrepreneurs to share tacit knowledge, exchange practices, and interpret prevailing market conditions. These interactions do more than just facilitate social bonding; they play a critical role in shaping decision-making by reducing ambiguity and fostering a shared understanding of what constitutes legitimate and effective business behaviour. In doing so, the findings extend the contribution of normative isomorphism by illustrating how professional norms and expectations are not only disseminated through formal education or structured training (as traditionally emphasised in Neo-institutional literature) but are also actively constructed and reinforced through informal peer interactions.

These association-level encounters serve as a space where shared meanings, values, and standards of "how things should be done" are negotiated and internalised—particularly in environments characterised by uncertainty and limited institutional support.

Thus, rather than viewing normative isomorphism as solely stemming from formal institutions or credentialed expertise, this study highlights its embeddedness in local, informal, and culturally grounded social practices, especially within the entrepreneurial spaces of the global South. While previous research (see Smit, 2016; Schreiber et al., 2018) has highlighted the importance of social networks in market access, information sharing, and collaborations, a critical gap remains in examining social network's role in social contagion, herding, and crowd behaviors within specific fields like the fashion industry. Understanding how these phenomena undermine business growth, stifles creativity, and impedes competitive advantage is worth examining in future research.

It can be inferred from the above narratives that all businesses within the fashion industry are influenced in some way by their competitors, and this influence their business decisions. The results revealed that competition influenced entrepreneurial processes and behaviors. This finding agrees with a study conducted by Chang and Tsai (2002) who reported that strife influence the quality of group decisions. Also, the findings agree with Zajonc (1965) who reported that the mere presence of others or competitors increases arousal levels to increase creative outcomes. More so, it was evident from the qualitative analysis that social facilitation influences decisions. Similarly, the findings showed competition increases evaluation and comparisons of performances but strife was not found to increase stress and anxiety levels as reported in a study by Eisenberg and Thompson (2011). Although these studies contribute to knowledge and our understanding of the role of strife in decision-making in experiment and quasi research, a gap remains in the literature on real life studies in exploring the influence of competition in decision-making.

Based on the narratives, it can be inferred that resilient practices have a positive relationship with future decisions. The results agree with findings of Resario et al. (2023), who revealed that resilient individuals are able to adapt to changes and make well-informed and decisive decisions. The findings align with Resario et al.'s (2023) conclusion that resilient individuals are less likely to make counterproductive decisions because negative experiences inform future outcomes. Nonetheless, the findings contribute further to the literature by highlighting the interdependent or inverse relationship between learning from negative experiences and resilient decision-making. This suggests that how individuals make decisions can significantly impact their level of resilience, and vice versa—how resilient they are can affect their decision-making processes.

The narratives above suggest an inconclusive role of entrepreneurs' tastes in the creative design process and aesthetic judgments. The findings agree with studies of Horyn (2008) and Godart et al., (2009) who reported on the importance of taste in driving creativity and aesthetic preferences of cultural producers. While taste is acknowledged as important in driving creativity and establishing brand credibility, conflicting findings exist regarding its emphasis compared to consumer preferences. While some studies prioritize taste (Godart et al., 2009; Franssen et al, 2013), the findings underscore the seemingly importance in satisfying consumer preferences. It is evident from the qualitative analysis that at each junction lies tension and ambivalence between entrepreneurs’ taste, consumer preferences, institutional structures, and the quest for distinction in decision-making. This paradoxical scenario highlights the intricate interplay between designers' preferences and credibility, consumer choice and brand identity, consumer choice and institutional norms, designers' preferences and brand identity, and consumer choice and service delivery.This paradoxical scenario illustrates how entrepreneurs' taste in the fashion industry is not merely an expression of personal style but a strategic and socially conditioned practice shaped by competing demands. Within contexts of economic precarity, such as Ghana's fashion sector, taste becomes a negotiation between designers' creative preferences and the institutional, consumer, and market expectations that influence credibility and commercial success. Designers must often balance their aesthetic vision with the need to maintain credibility, meet consumer preferences, and adhere to broader industry norms. This results in a complex interplay: consumer choices can challenge or reshape brand identity, while institutional expectations constrain the range of acceptable styles. Moreover, the alignment between taste and service delivery—through branding, packaging, or customer experience—adds another layer to these negotiations. Thus, taste operates as a form of "strategic taste-making," reflecting not only individual creativity but also relational decisions driven by the need to navigate power dynamics, market pressures, and social recognition. This highlights the ambivalent role of taste as both a source of entrepreneurial distinction and a site of compromise, reinforcing its value as a critical lens for understanding decision-making in creative work. Existing academic literature has yet to critically examine the dichotomies and ambivalence that characterise entrepreneurs' taste and decision-making within fashion scholarship.

More so, the study's findings suggest that cultural intermediaries, who act as gatekeepers in the process of cultural production, have a certain level of influence on the final outcome of the production process. The findings partially agree with the work of Franssen et al. (2013), who found that intermediaries as gatekeepers are involved in all stages of decision-making process. However, the findings explore specific aspects of intermediaries and decision-making practices that differ from Franssen et al.'s (2013) work. The qualitative analysis goes further to highlight the importance of contextual differences and the role of place in entrepreneurs' perceptions of how cultural intermediaries impact the success of their businesses. By emphasizing "the significance of place," the study suggests that the geographic and cultural context in which an entrepreneur operates can influence their interactions with cultural intermediaries and the value attributed to their work. In other words, previous studies have not thoroughly examined or distinguished the various contextual factors that play a role in how intermediaries contribute to the creation of value in the fashion sector particularly in the global South.

The findings regarding the influence of cultural values on fashion entrepreneurs' decision-making practices were quite diverse, according to the narratives. While some studies partially agree with the idea that designers' cultural values play a significant role in their product development and work approaches (Razzaghi et al., 2009; Song, 2009, Song, 2018), others, align with the notion that many fashion entrepreneurs lack awareness of the impact of cultural values on their decision-making. Hwang, Sanders, and Damhorst (2014) found that cultural values play a crucial role in decision-making, and it is necessary for fashion entrepreneurs to recognize this fact to make informed decisions. It is evident from the findings that cultural values influence human resource practices, organisational culture and structure of the business.

4.2.3 Interviewees' perception of hope in entrepreneurs setting-up fashion business

The drive for success and the ability to conquer industry challenges play crucial roles in shaping the decisions of Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs.

For many of these entrepreneurs, the power of "hope" emerged not only as a vital motivator, inspiring industrial players to tackle the many obstacles they face in pursuit of their business goals. However, hope itself emerges as a strategy increasingly employed by entrepreneurs to navigate the numerous challenges within the industry. Interviews suggest that, rather than succumbing to the uncertainty and volatility that characterize the sector, entrepreneurs actively harness hope as a driving force, enabling them to persevere through turbulent periods. This hope-driven decisions become an adaptive mechanism, enabling fashion entrepreneurs maintain momentum and pursue long-term goals despite the unpredictable nature of the industry. Hope-driven decisions refer to choices made with an optimistic anticipation of favorable future outcomes, despite the presence of uncertainty, challenges, or risks in the current context. This proactive mindset not only fuels their ambition but thrive amidst adversity. In this study, hope functioned primarily as a 'strategic' instrument that provided guidance for their interactions, relationships, adaptations and decisions. For example, a female designer in Accra articulated hope as a driving force, emphasizing its practical impact rather than viewing it purely as an ideal.

> …It all depends on you because nothing comes for free, you have to work towards it. **(Interviewee 17).**

The adaptability of individual fashion entrepreneurs in the face of adversity is evident in her quest to hustle and build a life for herself despite the challenges of the industry. In this narrative hope is not just a driving force but agentic force that pulls and pushes the individual to keep working till they attain their goal. This finding is also highlighted in the following comments by a female designer in Tamale. The interviewee shared this.

> Someone can be selling and a whole month or two months, and nothing has been bought but they still have hope everything will work out. Hope is important. The reason why it is important is because when I started working, for three months no one stepped here to sew but still I did not give up. The few things I was sewing were clothes from customers I already had their stuff while I was in training. **(Interviewee 37).**

She further added that

> You know in Ghana when you set up a new business, people flock to it but I did not get that reception. I did not get any new customers. So, one day I decided to get a dummy and sew my own styles and put it on it. Not long after, people started flocking here. So, people started complimenting my work. So, within the fourth month people started coming. I had the believe it will work and it did. If I had not taken that bold step. It is very difficult to open a business in Ghana. It is not easy like that, that is what I have seen. It is not easy because you already do not have customers and you have to compete with other businesses for the same

> customers. So, if you do not devise strategies you can easily give up. It is the strategies that is the hope. **(Interviewee 37).**

It can be observed from this narrative that, it is hope that helps an individual to craft ways to make their businesses work in dire privations. The practical evaluative element of agency, an aspect of hope (Emirbayer et al., 1998), is evident in this narrative, as the fashion entrepreneur makes both practical and normative judgments in response to the evolving demands and uncertainties within the industry. This highlights how hope is not merely a passive sentiment but an active force that drives decision-making and adaptation to changing circumstances. The designer's actions in the present are aimed at benefiting her business. Like many designers, her decisions were not tentative or unsure; instead, they were opportunistic. She capitalized on available opportunities, recognizing that this was essential for advancing her business. By looking 'beyond the present moment and herself,' she envisioned a future and actively developed evolving images of how she wanted to see herself and her business grow. Another female fashion entrepreneur who works in the confines of her home in Tamale supported this claim. She shared her experience, highlighting hope as a strategic approach.

> I hope by developing strategies because if things do not change, life must still go on. so, if it changes fine, but if it does not change, I re-strategize and push forward till I attain my goals. **(Interviewee 22).**

According to this interviewee, one has to devise strategies to make things work as an entrepreneur. This implies that hope, makes one very strategic in the pursuit of one's goals.

It can be inferred that hope brings about constant improvisation for survival. In Tamale, a male fashion shared his sentiment:

> One just need to be patient and have faith in your creator because nothing is impossible. Your measures and strategies will succeed. But still if you are not succeeding, then you have to call on your Maker because you tried all the measures. Leaving things to luck and say, oh, there's God…No, no it does not work that way, put in the efforts, fashion is a risk. So, you have to just keep on pushing, pursuing and knowing that one day you too may succeed in what you are doing. I keep looking for new opportunities and things because sitting down at one place praying for God to give you breakthrough may not happen. **(Interviewee 23).**

This interviewee shared how he maintains his hope. He believes that actively seeking new opportunities is essential, as he anticipates positive changes in his life. He expressed that merely sitting down and praying without taking action will not lead him to his breakthrough. In a similar vein, a male designer based in Tamale offered his perspective as well:

> So, as for that thought, "hoping and resting or relaxing. I do not think it will be a good idea. Logically it is not a good idea. You hope and hustle. That is the only way to get what you want. **(Interviewee 31).**

For this interviewee, hope without hard work is vain. He mentioned that one cannot hope without working towards it. Across the interviews, it is evident that these entrepreneurs are not just waiting; they continually develop new subjectivities that enable them to navigate the compounded precarity of the industry. However, a few of the interviewees mentioned that hope result in a state of waithood and doom, where one's goals are never realized. One male fashion entrepreneur who double as a lab technician in Tamale hospital had this to say:

> Nothing seems to be changing. people are working hard all right, but they are just at where they started from. When you see them year after year, they will say there is hope. I believe in hard work and connections, and my hope is to find people who can help. **(Interviewee 31).**

This interviewee emphasized that over-reliance on hope has caused some colleagues in the fashion industry to become entrenched in cycles of precarity, unable to escape the instability of their working conditions. He mentioned that, his hope is find the right connection, as relying on one-self can be futile. Similar to this, a male fashion entrepreneur who lives in Kumasi shared his sentiment on hope as follows:

> We the fashion designers do not have other skills, so in a few years to come the industry will collapse. Hope is there for those who invest more. But if you do not have money, connections, and support then hope is not there for you. **(Interviewee 49).**

The interviewee perceives the industry as a place of hopelessness for individuals without connections. This is why reliance on hope for Camus is counterproductive to achieving certainty or purpose, as it risks leaving important decisions up to chance rather than intentional action. Like this interviewee (Interviewee 49), Camu's notion challenges a more traditional view of hope as inherently positive, instead he positions it as a barrier to self-determination. While entrepreneurial possibilities may seem limitless, only some things are achievable. Hope alone, often associated with self-reliance, is insufficient in such contexts. This emphasizes the importance of hope in guiding entrepreneurs' decisions to seek and depend on their relational networks to navigate the vicissitudes of the fashion industry. Thus, hope is not merely about individual aspiration but also about building meaningful relationships that enhance hope and decision-making in the face of precarious situations.

Many fashion entrepreneurs in the industry contend with persistent, seemingly insurmountable challenges that hope may not be enough to deal with the many challenges. This implies that many brands frequently grapple with feelings of despair, a sense of hopelessness about their future prospects in a precarious Ghanaian fashion industry. Another female fashion entrepreneur living and working in Kumasi was contemplating the idea of collaborating with a fellow fashion entrepreneur to create a collection. In an interview, she expressed that her business had struggled to recover after the impact of COVID-19, and as at February 2023, she had lost hope in the possibility of her business improving on its own. Consequently, she decided to actively pursue a collaboration with a colleague. The fashion designer based in Kumasi, who is known for creating designs for children, had the following to say

> I have had a conversation with someone, and we're considering a collaboration to create a collection together. While our fashion houses are distinct, our idea is to periodically unite and work on collaborative collections. If this initial endeavor proves

successful, we may explore the possibility of developing various collections together in the future. That's the plan we're contemplating. **(Interviewee 35).**

The narratives indicate that fashion entrepreneurs approach hope not as a passive or idealized force, but as an active and practical resource. They harness their relational networks to enhance and expand their businesses. In line with academic insights, hope functions both as a constraint and as an enabler, it shapes choices and decisions, occasionally imposing limits, while simultaneously allowing for adaptation and transformation as entrepreneurs engage with their social connections (Back, 2015). Supporting this perspective, Lobato (2014) argue that hope provides essential mechanisms for understanding how individuals navigate uncertain conditions and forge relational ties. Ultimately, hope guides, shapes, and reshapes decision-making, influencing the course of entrepreneurial endeavors.

The interviews revealed that creatives should not place their hope solely in the industry for support or connection, as hope without tangible support will ultimately lead to stagnation. Additionally, the findings highlighted that hope is a complex interplay between internal resilience and external relational support, where both personal strength and collaborative networks are essential for sustaining entrepreneurial efforts in challenging environments. Hope is an innate feeling within us, yet it is also the belief that assistance exists beyond ourselves. It suggests that external circumstances and the presence of supportive individuals or resources can enhance and reinforce one's sense of hope. The emphasis lies on mutual assistance, recognizing and anticipating support, giving help and accepting assistance within the context of leveraging relationships in business while navigating compounded precarity of the industry.

The narratives suggest that many fashion producers demonstrated a proactive form of hopeful thinking, characterized by innovativeness, resourcefulness, and creativity. It was evident from the qualitative analysis that owner-managers who are hopeful tend to be more creative resourceful, innovative and make greater investment decisions. Such owner managers are engaged at work and more persistent in trying to reach their goals. This suggests the agency for change.This finding agrees with Snyder's concept hope on hope which expounds that agency drives goals and pathways in the attainment of one's goals (Snyder, 1990). It was observed from the narratives that hope constitute a source of energy needed to run one's business, overcome obstacles, and devise tactics to tackle challenges that owner-managers encounter daily. It was also evident from the qualitative analysis that hope served as a form of motivation and a pathway that orient and shaped decisions and future outcomes.

The findings agree with research by Zigon (2008) and Webb (2007), who showed that social actors demonstrated resolve despite their challenging situations. Also, the findings agree with Snyder (1991) and Guyer's (2017) research, which revealed that social actors actively engaged in adaptive responses to blocked goals, demonstrating their agency to survive and craft ways for both the present and the future instead of waiting for a brighter tomorrow. The proactive approach described aligns closely with the principles of bricolage theory (Baker & Nelson, 2005).

Bricolage theory posits that individuals in entrepreneurial settings creatively and resourcefully use whatever tools and resources are available to them to address challenges and pursue opportunities. Similarly, the agentic practice of hope in the fashion industry involves entrepreneurs actively leveraging their creativity and resourcefulness to navigate uncertainties and overcome obstacles (Baker et al., 2005). Both concepts emphasize the importance of adaptive and opportunistic behavior, making the most out of existing resources and opportunities to achieve success in dynamic and ever-changing environments. Therefore, the agentic practice of hope in the creative industries can be seen as a manifestation of the principles of bricolage theory.

The findings also concur with Bourdieu's (1990) concept of a field, where social actors harness various forms of capital, transform, and exchange them to navigate the challenges of the field. While many entrepreneurs rely on hope as a last resort, the findings showed that hope alone is not enough to overcome obstacles without the right social network. The qualitative analysis reveals that relying solely on hope without possessing the necessary 'capital' lead to futile outcomes. Hope becomes ineffective in guiding one towards their destination if it relies on illusions, delusions, fiction, or false assumptions.

While the models of hope proposed by Snyder et al., (1991), Lindquist (2006), Zigon (2009), Alacovska et al. (2020) and Alacovska and Gill (2019), provide insights into the actions and subjective characteristics involved in the process of 'hoping/hustling' through challenges, they do not fully address the subtle nuances of symbolic, cultural, and social capital in navigating precarious work situations. The findings underscore that mere hope including hard work, innovativeness, creativity and resourcefulness are insufficient in a precarious context. It is intriguing to note that many entrepreneurs demonstrate self-reliance while also leveraging their relational infrastructure to improve their businesses' fortunes. The study highlights a significant relationship between hope and social relations, showing that these two elements are mutually constitutive. Social infrastructure provides the relational support and resources that sustain hope, while hope motivates individuals to engage with and expand their networks.

According to Anderson (2006, 2017), hope is less about envisioning a better elsewhere or future and more about building relationships that uncover potential within the current moment. In moments of disruption, hope serves as a fleeting but significant opportunity for change arising from the interconnectedness of personal, professional, suppliers, community, spiritual, and governmental relationships. Sharing vulnerabilities allows fashion entrepreneurs to form meaningful bonds while linking emerging opportunities to established norms and conventions. As Raynor (2021) noted, hope is shaped by mechanisms of withdrawal that encourage strategic decision-making, the pursuit of empowering aspirations, and emotional fulfillment. Deferred hope encouraged the development of relationships rooted in collective support and shared optimism. In association gatherings, entrepreneurs frequently addressed practical concerns such as contract procurement, loan applications, and affordable sourcing options, strengthening their professional ties, through these processes, new opportunities for intimacy as well as division emerged. Unrealized hopes gave rise to opportunities for building relationships centered on camaraderie, knowledge-sharing, and collective aspirations (Raynor, 2021). Association meetings became a platform for discussing strategies such as bidding for contracts, navigating loan applications, and sourcing affordable materials.

4.3. Analysis of Entrepreneurs' Performance Measures in the fashion industry

4.3.1 Navigating precarity in the fashion industry

Social relations played an important role in this process by providing the 'relational infrastructure' entrepreneurs rely on for support, resources, and guidance. An infrastructure of peers, family, mentors, customers, and suppliers offer practical and emotional support, creating a feedback loop reinforcing hope. This dynamic aligns with scholars such as Emirbayer and Mische (1998), who describe agency as a temporally embedded process involving past habits, present contexts, and future aspirations. It also resonates with the findings of Lobato et al. 2014, who emphasize how hope, as a powerful tool, operates as a mechanism for navigating precarious environments and relational spaces, instilling a sense of hope and 'faith' in entrepreneurs.

It is established from the interviews that in attempt to manoeuvre the challenges of the fashion industry, Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs effectively employed strategic relationship-building as a potent strategy to establish and build strong businesses. The entrepreneurs actively nurtured profound connections with a diverse array of stakeholders, including family members, friends, customers, suppliers, colleagues, community members, governmental entities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and a higher spiritual presence (God) to mitigate the effects of precarity. This transformative process involved a shift from initially concrete, intimate, and specific relationships towards ones that were more abstract, distant, and general in nature. This deliberate approach yielded a wide spectrum of advantages, spanning from the expansion of their customer base to the acquisition of invaluable resources essential for entrepreneurs within Ghana's fashion sector. In fact, in most cases, fashion entrepreneurs used their experience in cultivating these relationships of possibilities to create successful entrepreneurial ventures that accessed all forms of capital-cultural, social, economic and symbolic.

4.3.1.1 Role of entrepreneurs' personal relationships

Throughout the interviews, a prevailing sentiment emerged, that emphasized the role that relations play in navigating the ambiguities of the industry, where family members may transition into investors, friends evolve into clients, investors become akin to family, and clients often transform into something more advanced in their career trajectory. It emerged that both financial and non-financial support from family members helped in diverse ways to facilitate the growth and success of fashion businesses. For instance, a female entrepreneur based in Tamale referenced the importance of her immediate family in identifying her potentials and supporting her with the relevant materials which enabled her to start her business.

> My aunt, who happens to be my mother's younger sister residing in London, discovered my genuine interest in fashion. So, she would get me magazines, books that I could look and try. Because my parents were not in support the idea, I had to study on my own and these materials was what helped me through. **(Interviewee 25).**

In the above quote, the interviewee's mention of her aunt recognising her interest in fashion and actively supporting that interest by providing magazines and books (non-financial support) is a demonstration of familial investment in personal development. This observation is reflected in the experience of a male fashion entrepreneur who lives in Kumasi. According to this interviewee, as highlighted in the quote below, after completing senior high school, he had no concrete plans for his future, so his aunt pointed him in the direction of fashion entrepreneurship.

> My aunt who was enthusiastic about sewing and used to sew at Anolga market gifted me a small sewing machine, and that is when my interest in sewing was ignited. With her support I was able to work whiles in school and saved to buy an industrial machine. This made the initial start of my business very easy. **(Interviewee 47).**

This interviewee acknowledges the importance of family in his entrepreneurial journey. It is apparent from this excerpt that without the instrumental role of this family member, he might not have been able to realize his potential at the initial stages of his business. In the bustling capital of Ghana, Accra, another aspiring female fashion entrepreneur recounted her journey to success, highlighting the important role of her uncle's financial support. She mentioned that when she found an ideal place for her shop, this uncle provided her financial assistance, as highlighted in the comment below.

> Regarding the rental of my shop, there was a family member, my uncle, who played a crucial role in this aspect of my journey. Sadly, he passed away last October. He was the one who provided the financial support for my shop's rent, a significant form of assistance I received from my family. Remarkably, he

> covered the rent for the ten-year period during which I have been operating my business in this shop. **(Interviewee 9).**

The interviewee conveyed a deep sense of gratitude for the invaluable support provided by her uncle, who had financially assisted her in launching her business venture. Without her uncle's assistance, this interviewee would have faced significant challenges in establishing her business as a startup. A male entrepreneur based in Kumasi also revealed that he received vital financial assistance from his immediate family upon completing his training. He indicated that he came close to abandoning his training if it were not for the unwavering support he received from his brother and mother, as highlighted in the comment below.

> My primary source of support has been my brother and mother. I am not fond of taking loans because I fear that I may struggle to repay them fully. Therefore, I avoid borrowing money. My mother has also been a strong pillar of when I was considering abandoning fashion. **(Interviewee 59).**

A supportive network can offer valuable resources and aid fashion entrepreneurs in successfully navigating challenging periods. In this interviewee's situation, his family offered financial aid and provided various forms of assistance during challenging times when he considered abandoning his passion.

Similarly, the interviews revealed that it was uncommon for emerging brands to initially find customers among friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. These individuals are often part of their immediate network and serve as a valuable point for their business growth. The reality of life is that as start-up businesses, entrepreneurs just want to sell their expertise, as such most of their first set of customers are blood relations and friends. Usually, they are the first because it is easier to convince since they trust that person or at least have an emotional connection with the entrepreneur. For instance, an Accra based interviewee explained how she built her customer base, as highlighted in the comment below.

> I began my business small, small, and I believe it is by the grace of God that I have come this far. When I started sewing for people, it all began with my friends. I informed the salon where I got my hair done that I am also a seamstress, and I asked them to recommend me to their clients. Thankfully, they did, and gradually, my customer base started to grow. **(Interviewee 19).**

The above comment depicts that often, emerging brands capitalize on their close knits and initial clients to build their client base. Another female interviewee, who resides in Accra and boasts five years of experience in the fashion industry, including training fashion students, shared her challenges in finding customers after completing her education at Accra Technical University. as highlighted in the comment below.

> Initially, I was working at home. I started by offering my services to friends, and as they shared their positive experiences with others, the demand for my work increased. It became evident that my passion had the potential to grow into a viable business because of the referrals. **(Interviewee 9).**

This comment shows that relying on relationships in the fashion industry especially in the start of one's business is unavoidable, the reason being that entrepreneurs depend on referrals to build their client base. As a result, owner-managers rely on funneling their clients from one season into the next in the fashion industry, which is often characterized by its competitive and precarious nature. One female fashion entrepreneur based in Tamale shared how she built her client base, as emphasized in the comment below.

> I vividly recall how I began my journey into sewing without charging for my services. That is how it all began. I used to approach my family and friends, pleading with them to provide me with their fabric, allowing me to demonstrate my sewing skills. I was dead serious about it. They were initially hesitant, but I begged persistently, imploring them to let me prove myself. I remember one particular incident when a friend had taken her chiffon fabric to her regular tailor, who refused to work on it. She challenged me to create an outfit from it, promising not to take it to her tailor if I succeeded. I accepted the challenge and used that fabric for a fashion show at the University of Development Studies. I made a pact with her that once she realized my sewing abilities, I would not offer her any discounts. True to my word, I have never given her a discount, even though she has brought me numerous clients. Fortunately, she began working at the Bank of Ghana and helped me expand my customer base. **(Interviewee 21).**

For many entrepreneurs, client loyalty provides a stable customer base that can help buffer entrepreneurs business against the ups and downs of the market. Loyal clients are more inclined to recommend and refer an entrepreneur's business to their friends, family, and social circles which result in organic growth and new customers (e.g. Interviewee 8, 14, 52 and 59). For instance, one female owner-manageress of a fashion business in Kumasi shared:

> Over time, I noticed that more people were approaching me for my services. To build trust and attract customers, I implemented a "sew one, get one free" policy. This meant that if someone brought me two outfits, I would make one for free, and they would only pay for one. It is incredible to think about how I started, all the while working tirelessly to establish trust and credibility in my sewing skills. **(Interviewee 58).**

Nonetheless, all the interviewees stressed that creating a customer base does not come easily; they have to prove their worthiness as customers. The consistent responses from the interviewees showed the importance of personal relations in navigating the challenges of the fashion industry especially for start businesses. Nevertheless, it is important to note that while relations can bring benefits, they also introduce vulnerabilities and challenges to their operations. Owner-managers, such as those interviewed in this study, face numerous challenges associated with the "ties that bind" or the constrictions of familial and friendly connections. A fashion entrepreneur situated in Kumasi, with nearly two decades of experience in the industry, recounted her journey, describing it as a mix of both delightful and challenging moments relying on personal relations.

The narratives suggest that entrepreneurs utilize various relationships to navigate industry challenges, relying notably on social and symbolic capital to progress in their careers and manage precarious work situations. The findings agree with studies that have found that social actors leverage formal and informal networks to navigate their fields (Zelizer, 2012; Alacovska, 2018; Musgrave, 2023). Additionally, the study concurs with Morgan and Wood (2014), emphasizing the significance of personal relations, including those within family, friends, and business colleagues. These networks offer multifaceted support, including material, financial, and emotional assistance, and can also serve as advocates and mediators throughout various business stages. Despite the benefits of leveraging such relationships, the study acknowledges their paradoxical effects, particularly for emerging brand owners, which agrees with the findings of Musgrave (2023) and Zelizer (2012). Furthermore, the study contributes to existing scholarship by elucidating how fashion entrepreneurs strategically terminate such relationships through methods like relocation, re-branding, and acquiring additional cultural capital through career advancement, as well as explore strategies to end the ambivalence of personal relations. While prior studies focus on how entrepreneurs initiate, cultivate and nurture relationships, this study advances the understanding by examining how social actors strategically terminate such relationships in the attempt to reduce the ambivalence.

4.3.1.2 Role of professional relations

As fashion entrepreneurs progress in their careers, they often transition from personal relations to building a professional network. While personal relations may have been instrumental in their initial stages, a professional network becomes vital for business growth and success. Fashion entrepreneurs actively cultivate connections with industry professionals to tap into growth prospects. These relationships encompass a wide spectrum, including forming partnerships with suppliers, colleagues, associations members or engaging in collaborations with influencers, apprentices, and employees to cope with the uncertainties of the industry.

Many entrepreneurs maintain positive relationships with their masters while exploring new opportunities for growth and collaboration in the fashion industry. In Accra, a fashion entrepreneur with a 12-year working experience in the industry reiterated the significant benefits of networking within Ghana's contemporary fashion landscape. The interviewee highlighted that participating in fashion-related events such as shows, workshops, training programs, and seminars provides valuable opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals and discover potential collaborators who can significantly advance one's career. This female designer in Accra noted this:

> At the very least, attending events like fashion shows and exhibitions is essential. It is a chance to connect with people, engage in interactions, and observe what others in the industry are up to. Who knows by attending such events, an opportunity may open for a 'collabo' sometimes that is what one needs for their major breakthrough. **(Interviewee 12).**

The interviewee highlighted that actively participating in fashion-related events such as shows, workshops, training programs, and seminars provides valuable opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals and discover potential collaborators who can significantly advance one's career. Along the same lines, a fashion entrepreneur located in Accra shared insights into the potential advantages of participating in fashion shows. He concluded by expressing his optimism about the future of the fashion industry in Ghana, as highlighted in the comment below.

> The type of showcasing I witnessed at the fashion show truly inspires me, and it reassures me that there is a hope for the Ghanaian fashion scene.
> **(Interviewee 13).**

Beyond the exposure and motivation such shows offer, the interviewees noted that these events also present opportunities for collaborative ventures. In an interview, with a Kumasi based fashion designer she expressed that her business had struggled to recover post-COVID and as at February 2023, she had lost hope in the possibility of her business thriving after the pandemic, as she highlighted in the comment below, this was a time she was considering a possible collaboration with a colleague.

> I have had a conversation with someone, and we are considering a collaboration to create a collection together. While our fashion houses are distinct, our idea is to periodically unite and work on collaborative collections. If this initial endeavor proves successful, we may explore the possibility of developing various collections together in the future. Under the circumstance, it is the best solution. **(Interviewee 36).**

Both approaches entail the establishment of connections and cooperative efforts with others to attain shared objectives especially in moments of uncertainty. Furthermore, several entrepreneurs highlighted the many benefits of being members of unions and associations members. They emphasized that membership with these institutions provide a comprehensive array of benefits, including networking opportunities, resource sharing, advocacy, education, credibility, enhanced access to markets, and government support. A female fashion entrepreneur in Kumasi, specializing in designing clothing for children and women, emphasized the significance of networking through associations, as highlighted in the comment below.

> Personally, I think being a member of an association has benefited me in a number of ways. I am able to access bank loans without any forms of collateral. I also benefit from government support and interventions by being a member of a union. If it were not for this support, I do not know how I would have managed. **(Interviewee 34).**

The interviewee conveyed that her journey with the association has been enriching. As a female fashion entrepreneur in Kumasi, she specializes in creating stylish clothing for children and women. Her insights highlight the immense value of this collaboration:

> Joining an association has been a highly rewarding experience. It has provided me with the chance to exchange ideas and share my knowledge with fellow members. Also, I have had the opportunity to learn from them. Therefore, I consider it an invaluable investment of my time. If you can actively contribute and also gain valuable insights in return, I believe it is a worthwhile **(Interviewee 58)**.

According to this respondent, the experience has been exceptionally positive and beneficial for her business. The reason being that, sharing of knowledge and information during meetings lead to a cross-fertilization of ideas among different fashion houses. Through networking, fashion entrepreneurs can leverage their networks to collect valuable data, stay informed about trends, and access best practices that guide their decision-making in times of uncertainty.

It is, therefore, indicative from the above insights that while leveraging professional networks offer numerous advantages, including access to valuable insights and collaborative opportunities, ultimately it contributes to herding behaviors and phony behaviors. Similarly, partnership and collaboration also has potential dangers for those involved. Several participants who were interviewed described their fair share of negative experiences. A female interviewee in Tamale shared her experience regarding certain colleagues within her social network. These colleagues deliberately withhold information to make themselves appear superior, even though she has no intention of competing with them, as highlighted in the comment below.

> You see, I have a very free-spirited nature, which, I am not sure if it is a good thing, but I genuinely do not view others as my competitors, because I have my sights set on something bigger. Unfortunately, it seems that not everyone perceives me the same way, or sometimes I ponder what makes people uneasy around me. I am pretty sure I do not even understand the full extent of my own potential, but I can sense it in certain people when I am in their presence. You know, I have encountered situations where some acquaintances, maybe they are

> aware of an upcoming fashion show or event, will not even bother to inform me about it. It can be quite baffling. **(Interviewee 25).**

The comments above is indicative that the interviewee was disappointed by the actions of her colleagues in the fashion industry. This sentiment was shared by another interviewee who explained that he suffered a major setback when a partner deliberately sabotaged his efforts, resulting in the loss of a valuable contract, the male designer in Kumasi Pankrono had this to say:

> A while ago, I was in pursuit of a contract from KNUST alongside a friend of mine. My friend and I were both bidding for the contract to promote our business, but I was knowledgeable in that area than him. But the feeling of jealousy and envy began to surface. Despite my efforts to provide ideas and suggestions, my friend decided to step in and attempt to secure the contract under his own name. As a result, I ultimately lost the contract opportunity. **(Interviewee 55).**

After reflecting on his negative experiences, this interviewee stated that he would never collaborate with others or recommend a client to a colleague in the industry. It can be deduced from the narratives the importance of building and maintaining professional relationships to navigate the complexities of the field effectively. Throughout the discussions, interviewees emphasized the significance of maintaining relationships with mentors, forming partnerships with colleague professionals and suppliers, and collaborating with gatekeepers as key strategies to leverage the professional landscape. These findings agree with Ferici's study (2012), which revealed that informal workers prioritize professional relationships for economic gains. This study makes a compelling contribution by examining the paternalistic relationship observed between apprentices and their mentors, akin to a father-child dynamic, underscores the role of mentorship in fostering business growth within a challenging context and informal context. These findings add to knowledge in the field. The relationship between apprentices and their masters results in what is termed a paternalistic relationship, where the master assumes the 'father' role and provides for the needs of the trainee in exchange for commitment after service.

Furthermore, Federici's research (2011) supports these findings, demonstrating that informal economies thrive on principles of mutual responsibility, cooperation, and reciprocity. However, it does not specifically address the nature of paternalistic relationships observed in the context of apprenticeships and mentorship within the fashion industry. Despite focusing on the intimate relations between apprentices and mentors, the findings suggests that the informal nature of the fashion industry stems from the absence of formal institutions, leading to the prevalence of informal and social relations where formal institutions are inactive.

4.3.1.3 Role of digital platforms

Beyond the establishment of professional connections and collaborations within the fashion industry, Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs strategically leverage social media platforms—including Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and TikTok—not only to enhance brand visibility but also to drive customer engagement, expand market reach, and reinforce their business success in a competitive and dynamic environment. By actively networking in these vibrant digital spaces, they effectively promote their businesses and expand their follower base. Some interviewees receive hands-on training through digital platforms, setting themselves up for significant achievement in the competitive fashion landscape. Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs effectively establish and maintain their businesses by harnessing the power of social media platforms.

It emerged from the interviews that they actively engage in networking within these digital spaces to promote their businesses and increase their followers on such platforms. Through digital platforms some entrepreneurs receive hands-on training on current trends, communicate effective with clients despite the distant and receive feedback on personalized training. One female fashion entrepreneur based in Tamale illustrates how she navigates digital platforms to her advantage, as highlighted in the comment below.

> A customer may ask me to tune into a specific TV station to spot a particular style she admires. She wants me to pay close attention because she plan on bringing her own materials for me to create something similar. However, with so much on my mind, I might take a picture to ensure I remember the details. So, in anticipation of such a request, I usually take an old piece of cloth, and, after evening prayers and dinner, I will attempt to replicate the style using pins to secure everything in place. If it closely resembles the desired style, it gives me confidence that I can create it. This is how I benefit from digital platforms. It has improved my services. **(Interviewee 27).**

This interviewee elaborates on how she interacts with her clients using digital platforms. These platforms, according to the interviewees, boost and improve productivity. One female designer in Tamale describes how she spends time watching Nigeria movies to get inspired and draw inspiration from their designs, styles, colour schemes and improve her work practices. This is what she had to say:

> I spend most of my evenings watching Nigerian movies to get inspired and follow new trends. Their industry is far more advanced than ours. I draw inspiration from their designs and colour schemes, which have really improved my work. **(Interviewee 23).**

A female fashion entrepreneur living and working in Kumasi shared her thoughts:

> I am on a number of social media platforms so that I can know what trending is, learn the new styles. There is this Nigerian designer I have decided to follow. So, whatever she does, I always try it out. This kind of networking helps me a great deal with my business. **(Interviewee 33).**

With this interviewee, her online engagement has improved her creative process and aesthetic processes. This other interviewee mentioned these digital platforms are avenues mentorship. A female fashion entrepreneur highlighted the importance of a WhatsApp group dedicated to dressmakers, tailors, seamstresses, and designers that has transformed her business. She emphasized that this group provides invaluable step-by-step guidance on cutting techniques, empowering members to navigate the entire design process with confidence and skill. The Kumasi based female designer shared:

> I was added to an online platform, a WhatsApp group. Yeah, we share ideas and everything there. It is a group created for members of my association. There are days for teaching, and when you have difficulty understanding how to go around a design, someone with knowledge of the design will gladly walk you through the process. **(Interviewee 40).**

From the narrative, it is inferred that digital platforms are avenues for learning and sharing knowledge. Joining this community could be a game-changer for any aspiring designer. In Kumasi, a woman with 20 years of experience shared her insights on how digital platforms have significantly impacted and transformed the fashion industry in Ghana. One other female fashion entrepreneur in Kumasi commented:

> Initially, phones were not readily accessible for our work, but now most styles are available on phones and can be shared easily. However, unlike a calendar that shows both front and back views of a style, phones typically display only the front, requiring you to figure out the rest on your own. **(Interviewee 43).**

This excerpt outlines the advantages and challenges of digital networks in the Ghanaian fashion industry. The Kumasi-based fashion entrepreneur shares her difficulties with social media platforms and digital networks. In Kumasi, near the

Atonsu School Park, a female fashion entrepreneur shared her struggles with navigating these digital tools.

> I use two phones—one is a basic "Yam phone" for calls only, and the other is an Android phone that connects to the internet, allowing me to watch and learn about the latest fashion trends. During work hours, I leave my Android phone at home to avoid distractions and stay focused. But in the evening, when I get home, I use my Android phone to go online and see what fashion designers are doing. I make it a point to stay updated because, if you don't keep learning, you'll fall behind. **(Interviewee 41).**

The interviewee recognizes the advantages of smartphones but remains aware of the challenges that come with digital networking which includes high cost of data and unstable networks.

The fashion industry has been revolutionized by digital platforms, which have made it easier for people to access markets, sell directly to consumers, engage with them, and learn about their competitors, yet, a necessity that many will suffer financially without. This finding aligns with a study that shows digital media has a positive impact on the productivity of Muslim women in the UK television industry (Steedman et al., 2023). The findings agree with Steedman et al.'s (2023) research, which highlights the new opportunities digital platforms offer for networking, support, and community building. However, while such research has predominantly focused on the positive impact of digital platforms on cultural and creative industries, this study shifts the focus to the challenges these platforms present for emerging industries and businesses, particularly in the global South. While digital platforms are undeniably crucial for enhancing productivity and creativity in cultural production, qualitative analysis reveals a paradox: these tools can also be time-consuming and financially demanding, potentially undermining the very productivity they are meant to support.

4.3.1.4 The role of spirituality

In a highly competitive business environment, entrepreneurs' religious and spiritual orientations shape their perceptions and attitudes toward work as they navigate challenges and secure opportunities. In certain contexts, the entrepreneurs believe that success in their endeavour is attainable through consultation and prayer to a higher being. Seeking divine intervention is viewed to touch the hearts of influential individuals, find favour with men and with God or whatever higher being they believe in. Religious beliefs and spirituality continue to play an important role in the lives of precarious workers, contributing significantly to the resilience observed among most participants. Spirituality permeated and fortified the coping mechanisms of the interviewees, giving them a sense of purpose, furnishing them with a sense of empowerment, and bolstering communal ties that served as an informal safety net for fashion entrepreneurs in a context without welfare benefits and social protection (Kilu et al., 2024). Drawing upon a higher being or religious beliefs for support is a prevalent practice in various cultures, particularly in Africa. For example, one women clothing designer in Kumasi shared how God intervened in her dire situation after completion of her apprenticeship, as highlighted below, the female owner-manageress mentioned:

> I had managed to save some money during my training period, and I also had some customers I was working for from my home. I was fortunate to receive occasional freelance work because my skills were well-regarded. Despite this, I continued to pray for someone who could assist me. However, I eventually decided to embark on a one-week fast, earnestly seeking divine assistance from God. It was during this time that I sincerely prayed to God, and remarkably, my prayers were answered. **(Interviewee 37).**

Praying for a helper empowered this individual to remain committed to her aspirations. Despite the lack of robust industrial infrastructure, welfare support, and access to capital, prayer for an improved situation fostered a sense of agency and perseverance. These findings align with Kilu et al. (2024), who argue that in contexts where regulatory, legal, or political support is absent, fashion entrepreneurs often have few viable options. In such circumstances, prayer emerges as a coping mechanism, enabling them to sustain personal resilience and continue navigating precarious business conditions.

She also added that:

> ` Someone told me to go and search for a shop and he will pay for it. And shops in Kumasi are not that cheap, indeed he paid. By God's grace I was able to go through those difficult moments. I could not have made it without that.That is how I got my major breakthrough. **(Interviewee 43).**

The interviewee's comments above showed that by prayer and fasting she was able to navigate a difficult period in her career. While experiencing what seemed like an insurmountable obstacle, she experienced God's miraculous intervention, God made a way where there appeared to be no way by sending forth a helper. These findings showed that religious beliefs enable fashion entrepreneurs to cope with insecure working lives in an environment that offers little or no certainty of any positive economic or life outcomes.

A male fashion entrepreneur in Kumasi shared his life experiences, highlighting how God had consistently been there for him at every critical juncture. One significant moment in his journey was when he had to part ways with a business partnership he had dedicated over five years of his time and resources to. He narrated how he leaned on God's support and guidance to navigate this challenging period in his life after the "fallout.", as highlighted in the comment below.

> In 2018, I found myself back home with some friends, and during that period, I had to work right here, not in this exact spot, but in the corridor of our house. By the grace of God, we were able to establish the current setup and started operating in accordance with His will. Therefore, I can say that the official launch of this fashion house, the house itself, took place on the 20th of January. I returned home, and I must say, God did not let me down. Within just three years, from 2018 onwards, we managed to create something substantial, and this is where we find ourselves now. In a span of four to five months, we were even able to complete the rest of the building. We are truly grateful to God for these blessings. **(Interviewee 55).**

From the above narrative it can be inferred that for most of fashion entrepreneurs, are just dreams, it requires a substantial divine intervention. It is also evident from the excerpt that spirituality aided fashion entrepreneurs to develop better relationships with themselves, the unknown and aided them in choosing the right partners and ending certain relationships that do not serve any purpose. Similarly, instead of succumbing to daily disappointments, fashion entrepreneurs reoriented themselves spiritually and remained prayerful, steadfast, and drew closer to God.

It is evident from the above accounts that religious beliefs and spirituality play a significant role in the business environment in Ghana. The findings agree with the research conducted by Namatovu et al. (2018) and Alacovska et al. (2020), which emphasize the influence of religious beliefs and spirituality on decision-making and coping mechanisms in challenging situations. While prior researchers have delved into the significance of religiosity and spirituality in entrepreneurial endeavors, this study extends upon Zigon's (2009) findings by proposing that, unlike creatives who rely on divine intervention to alter their circumstances, fashion entrepreneurs exhibit a proactive approach. Rather than passively waiting for miracles, they diligently exert effort in their work, hopeful for divine blessings. Moreover, this study contributes to Lindquist's (2007) assertion regarding spirituality's role in fostering a sense of agency and potentiality in shaping the future, even amidst adversity. Thus, the waiting period is not characterized by inactivity but by industrious labor coupled with unwavering spiritual beliefs.

4.3.2.4 Role of governmental and non-governmental support

In the fashion industry, owner-managers struggle to compete in a rapidly changing and dynamic market. As such most owner-managers leverage governmental and non-governmental relations to improve their business performance. Leveraging government support in the fashion industry can offer several advantages for entrepreneurs including financial assistance, infrastructure and facilities, and skills development. A male fashion designer based in Kumasi shared how he benefited from a government led intervention, as highlighted in the comment below:

> There used to be a programme known as the Presidential Special Initiative. During our time in school, they took us there. They provided us with instruction on sewing techniques, including sewing straight lines and curves, emphasizing the importance of precision. **(Interviewee 58).**

The narrative provides an account of the entrepreneur's experience with a government-funded training program and educational initiatives. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also involved in the fashion industry in Ghana because of the informal nature of the fashion industry. NGOs support entrepreneurship in informal sectors because it aligns with their mission to promote social and economic development, and to build more sustainable businesses. A male designer in central Tamale shares valuable insights about the support provided by NGOs.

> In response to the Ghanaian government's initiative to provide free senior high school education, CAMFED has extended its support to young girls interested in pursuing careers in tailoring or dressmaking. CAMFED offered a range of assistance tailored to the specific needs of these young girls, ensuring they receive the support necessary to pursue their aspirations in the field of fashion design. **(Interviewee 23).**

The interviewee further noted that though the goal of CAMFED is to empower young girls in Northern Ghana through educational and entrepreneurship training, they also support some males, as noted in the excerpt below:

> In my experience with CAMFED, I have noticed that they primarily focus on assisting women. Overall, the organisation provides help equally to everyone. **(Interviewee 32).**

This interviewee's comments draws attention to the gender dynamics and their potential impact on underprivileged fashion entrepreneurs of the male gender. Nevertheless, he expressed satisfaction with the existence of a support system for females. In Tamale, a young female fashion entrepreneur who had previously worked as a journalist also recounted her experience of receiving financial support from CAMFED, as highlighted in the comment below.

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> I had support from CAMFED, an NGO supporting young ladies in entrepreneurship and education. They supported me with a sewing machine, and I could take loans from

them from time to time. I think that is just how I have been running the business. **(Interviewee 22).**

This narrative exemplifies the financial advantages that entrepreneurs gain from non-governmental agencies. Micro and small businesses typically operate with limited resources, such as finances and capacity. This necessitates resourceful management strategies to make the most of their available assets. Consequently, governments frequently prioritize supporting small businesses due to their role in stimulating economic growth, generating employment opportunities, and promoting innovation. Yet there prevail practices that impedes entrepreneurial growth, limits access, and diminishes opportunities for emerging businesses. This, therefore, indicates that, even though the government faces resource constraints, it has made efforts to address the challenges facing Ghana's fashion industry. However, it emerged from the interviews that there were situations whereby fashion entrepreneurs who meet the criteria for government assistance do not receive the support they deserve. This underscores the significance of possessing managerial and operational skills when it comes to running businesses within the fashion industry. It also underscores the situation whereby many fashion designers, lack the necessary expertise to competitively bid for contracts and capitalize on opportunities within the fashion sector.

From the above narratives, it can be inferred that fashion entrepreneurs strategically align themselves with both government and non-governmental entities to cultivate enduring business partnerships. The findings indicate that the decisions regarding the formation of these strategic alliances are influenced by the entrepreneur's networking abilities and lobbying skills. Specifically, fashion entrepreneurs with robust social connections, extensive networks, and substantial symbolic capital tend to employ a robust negotiation approach known as 'hard-nosed bargaining' to secure favors and leverage benefits from governmental support. Participants suggest that this approach is vital for thriving in their business ventures.

Whitford (2005) coined the term 'hard-nosed bargaining' to illustrate how determined and shrewd negotiation techniques enable individuals to attain favorable terms and successful outcomes in a competitive field. The findings offer an intriguing discussion on the interplay between institutions and relational work. Regulators, like fashion entrepreneurs, engage in relational work when formulating policies and provisions to support the labor force. By exploring how Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs reshape and commodify 'intimate' relations in exchange for economic benefits, the qualitative findings unveil patterns and processes through which relational work generates social capital through 'gift-giving' and 'gift-receiving.' In essence, relational work becomes the means of creating and sustaining social capital, mitigating the precarity arising from labor conditions in Ghana's fashion industry.

4.3.2 Perceived drivers of success in the fashion industry

4.3.2.1 Perceived business expansion

To determine the performance indicators of fashion entrepreneurship, the researcher examined the pointers of performance based on Chandler and Hank's (1994) success and failure framework. Although success and failure had different connotations for each entrepreneur, there were some convergences on success and failure based on the industry's salient beliefs. For individual fashion entrepreneurs, success is not defined by a single metric; rather, it includes a variety of tangible and intangible factors, each of which holds unique significance. It emerged from the interviews that most fashion entrepreneurs perceive the expansion of their business as a growth spurt and an indicator of success of the industry. For example, in Tamale, a male owner-manager was emphatic on expansion as a performance indicator, as highlighted in the comment below:

> Expansion, yes. For example, I am looking at expanding in a few years and getting at least a shop in Accra, Kumasi, or Takoradi. That is growth. Even though I have a shop here, if I can get one in other places, it will increase my visibility. The shops will sell your work there. **(Interviewee 31).**

For this interviewee, one's success in the fashion industry is determined by the number of shops; a physical entity. She stressed that this kind of expansion should be done within a few years of establishment. Although she was not specific on the time frame it is obvious that time is important in assessing success. Other fashion entrepreneurs also used the number of workers to determine success, in Accra for instance, a female designer who sells bridal wear as a side hustle , shared her success story, as follows:

> Through my role as a trainer, I have seen many apprentices grow and succeed. Some have started families, opened their own businesses, and even taken on the role of a mentor. It is a journey that I'm deeply grateful for, a journey that has enriched my life in ways I could never have imagined. In the world of apprenticeship, I am a 'grandmother' figure. The number of apprentices you have is not just a number, but a testament to the

community you have built and the trust you have earned from your customers. **(Interviewee 3).**

Human resources are a fundamental guise that legitimizes entrepreneurs' social position in the industry, as evident in the above narrative. Another male interviewee based in Tamale re-emphasized that the number of workers was a key determining factor of performance, as highlighted in the comment below.

> Mostly one is measured by the number of apprentices that the person has. At first, I was having about twenty workers. Numbers is a big thing in the fashion industry, especially, in Kumasi. If you do not have many apprentices, you are not regarded. **(Interviewee 30).**

The above illustration highlights that the number of employees determines one's worth and value for industrial players in Ghana's fashion industry. However, some fashion entrepreneurs expressed a preference for expanding their existing shops rather than opening additional branches across the country or within their town. They cited concerns over accountability and the high costs associated with such expansion efforts. A male Kumasi based fashion entrepreneur shared:

> The idea of setting up multiple shops can sometimes be misleading. It's not just about having shops in various locations if they don't generate significant profits or tangible results to justify the effort. **(Interviewee 53).**

Another male fashion entrepreneur in Tamale mentioned:

> Curious about a successful lifestyle? Let me tell you about my master. He operates from home, that is where i was trained.. but the number and type of clients he has will leave you in awe. Some of his colleagues even have multiple shops, but they cannot match his level of success. He owns three houses here in Tamale, his children have graduated from university, and one is a doctor at the Tamale government hospital. He has two wives, two private cars, and a thriving transport business. So, when it comes to a successful lifestyle, forget about the shops…**(Interviewee 30).**

One male Accra-based fashion entrepreneur commented:

> Having multiple shops may mean you are doing better. Some brands fold up quickly because of the loans invested in such expansion without proper management and oversight roles. I would not be quick to judge how successful a business is based on this—not at all. **(Interviewee 15).**

The narrative reflects a critical perspective on the conventional belief that expanding a business by setting up multiple shops automatically leads to success. The interviewees suggest that simply having many shops in different locations does not guarantee profitability or meaningful achievements. Instead, they emphasize that business expansion should be measured by tangible outcomes—such as sustained profits, efficient operations, and visible growth—rather than just the number of outlets. These narratives suggest that there are other ways by which performance is measured in the fashion space.

A comment from this male entrepreneur in Accra showed that there are other caveats for measuring performance, shared his experience as follows:

> Yes, it varies. someone will measure it with the number of workers that he/she has. Someone too will also measure it with the social media hype that he/she has. I have this student that I taught, and he is working in a small space, but his social media influence is very, very big. Someone will even use the kind of materials that you buy and the quality of your work. **(Interviewee 4).**

It can be deduced from the interviewee's comments that there are other pointers of success such as social media presence, hype, viewership and compliments. In contrast to many of the indicators identified by the interviewees across the three regions, one male fashion whose shop is situated in Kumasi Tanoso had this to say:

> It is about your customers. Some people think when you have a lot of apprentices, it means you are doing well...but it is about your customers. And also, where your customers take you, that is when you know yes, you are growing up. Your customers are those bringing the money. If you want, you can take fifty apprentices and there are no customers. If the customers do not come, you are down. **(Interviewee 53).**

The interviewee stated that having a solid client base and referrals and recommendations is essential for business growth. The narratives suggest that assessing performance in the informal economy involves considering various tangible and intangible parameters, which may vary among individuals. The findings align with research indicating that business success transcends financial profitability (Schreiber, 2018).

However, an Accra based female owner-manageress said:

> It is not necessarily about the customer base or sales per se but the profit. Your profit margin will determine whether you are doing well or not. Some customers prefer to avoid paying. They like asking for a reduction too much. **(Interviewee 12).**

This statement clearly shows that their businesses' success depends on the owners' preferences, goals, and measures of success. However, the data highlighted intangible measures such as growth spurts and indicators of success in the fashion industry. Intangible measures of success often serve as valuable benchmarks for business performance. These indicators serve not only as guides for entrepreneurial decision-making but also play a crucial role in the personal development of owner-managers. One interviewee, a male designer based in Accra, offered a compelling perspective on this point:

> Everyone wears clothes, whether they like it or not—it's a necessity. And I must say, the clothing business can be quite lucrative. When it comes to success, I believe my journey speaks for itself. Just look at me; I'm happy. Thinking about the kind of people I have worked for and the network I have

> built in such a short time, I would say I have not done too badly. **(Interviewee 4).**

This quote reflects the interviewees pride and sense of accomplishment in his journey as a fashion entrepreneur. For the entrepreneur, networking is more than just forming connections; it is a means to enhance their reputation ("aggrandizement") and elevate both their individual profile and their business. By building relationships within the industry, the entrepreneur gains influence, credibility, and access to opportunities like high-profile clients or significant projects ("bigger gigs"). A female fashion entrepreneur in Accra shared that receiving compliments from her clients and students gives her a strong sense of accomplishment, highlighting the influential role of networking in her success.

> The sense of success was particularly evident during my time in the education sector. Guiding students through their coursework and seeing them work independently by the end was incredibly rewarding. The finished products and their heartfelt feedback, like "Thank you, Madam; I couldn't have done it without you, were deeply motivating despite the challenges. Some even post about me on their statuses after graduation. Moments like these make me proud and reaffirm the impact I have made.
> **(Interviewee 8).**

This narrative encapsulates the interconnected themes of necessity, personal fulfillment, and relational success within the fashion industry. It highlights how these elements collectively shape the speaker's sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. The account reflects a contented mentor or trainer who perceives success as primarily intangible, valuing non-financial and immaterial rewards over monetary gains. A male fashion entrepreneur in

Kumasi shared how his work in the fashion industry has positively impacted his life, reflecting on the successes he has experienced:

> Compliments from clients are what keep me going. Believe it or not, it was through this work that I met my wife. She admired my craft and the praise I received from others. She told me it was inspiring to see someone sewing and creating. That's one of the amazing benefits of this journey. **(Interviewee 59).**

This narrative emphasizes the personal and organisational benefits of working as an entrepreneur in the fashion industry. The interviewee's explanations indicate that various factors, including financial, non-financial, tangible, intangible, social, cultural, and individual perceptions, shape fashion entrepreneurs' understanding of success in an industry primarily known for its informality.

Failure: A Metric of Performance

The concept of failure among creative business owners is multifaceted, with various indicators serving as measures of perceived setbacks in their entrepreneurial journey. Failure for creative entrepreneurs is often measured not just by financial loss, but by factors such as missed opportunities, stagnation in growth, and difficulty in sustaining relationships with clients, suppliers, or partners. One female fashion entrepreneur based in Kumasi shared her experience:

> I have lost a lot of things coming to Kumasi, but we are hoping that God will replace them. Moving from Accra to Kumasi has resulted in my losing clients; at the moment, only one client has stuck with me since my move. **(Interviewee 40).**

This statement espouses the participant's discontentment with moving to Kumasi. She mentioned how her mobility has contributed to the loss of her clients. This finding suggests why many emerging brands 'flock' or cluster around big cities in the name of making it big. A male designer based at Abokobi, a Suburb of Accra, corroborated this statement. He explained.

> So, with the failures, I have lost some customers based on the change of location. The landlord wanted her land, and I had no option but to move. Life there was better. You know how Haasto is—the bougies and top clients. You cannot charge people in Abokobi like you will charge people in Haatso, East Legon and other prime areas. **(Interviewee 4).**

The participants reflected upon their past decisions concerning their client base and locational decisions more broadly as learning experiences. The circumstances were beyond their control, and they had to move. These excerpts reiterate that an entrepreneur's location can significantly impact the outcome of their business. As the first interviewee admits, the decision was a difficult one, but she had to move. In Kumasi a male fashion entrepreneur described his share of failure. He said:

> I made a decision that really worried me regarding the Menzgold issue. I wanted to buy an embroidery machine that was priced at about 100,000. At that time, I had saved up about 50,000, so I decided to invest it with Menzgold, hoping for a quick return.

> Unfortunately, just a week later, the business collapsed and I lost my investment. Looking back, I realize I made a mistake; my cash is gone, and I still don't have the machine. Now I'm left wondering when I will be able to save enough money to buy that machine. **(Interviewee 52).**

This excerpt vividly illustrates a missed opportunity that caused his business to stagnate, ultimately forcing him to start from scratch. The weight of dashed hopes hung heavy on him as he reflected on the significant financial loss incurred from an ill-fated investment. The promise of growth had turned into a bitter regret, leaving him to grapple with the consequences of his decision. In Prankrono, a female fashion entrepreneur explained how her failure to utilize social media in its early stages has impacted her work. She noted:

> When I look back I should have made certain decisions earlier. I did not use social media well at all. I should have held onto social media as some of my colleagues did in the initial stages. Our manual way of marketing and advertising cannot help now. By the time I realized social media was the way, it was hard for some us to penetrate. They had already penetrated the market, and it is so hard for me to get the audience. **(Interviewee 37).**

The narrative highlights how entrepreneurs leverage virtual mobility, the Internet, and social media to promote and sell their products across local, national, and global markets. This excerpt highlights how a lack of innovation can lead to stagnation in growth and difficulties in sustaining a business. It also empathizes the feelings of personal inadequacy, despair and despondency that arise when goals are unmet or when the entrepreneurial vision remains unfulfilled.

The interviews re-emphasizes the challenges at different stages of their career trajectories, the use of losses elaborates more clearly how the attempts to reconfigure their lives result in failure. Upon critical examination of these interviews, it can be inferred that decisions of these interviewees were all efforts made to defy the odds of their businesses and build meaningful lives. These creatives were not naively exploiting themselves to pursue their dream jobs. But instead, they crafted ways to address the very precarity that they were presented with, though unsuccessful in that regard.

Furthermore, the study aligns with Bourdieu's (1990) theory of capital, highlighting the importance of social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital as relevant resources in cultural production. It is demonstrated in the findings how these forms of capital influence activities such as lobbying, negotiations, and shaping consumer demands. In lobbying efforts, social connections and networks, representing social capital, play a vital role, while cultural and economic capital hold greater sway in negotiations. Success in the fashion industry is gauged by various indicators, encompassing factors like the size of the client base, workforce, and social media presence, alongside the number of establishments and trained apprentices who have ventured into their own businesses.

Personal milestones, such as marriage, car ownership, supporting children's education, and assisting extended family members, are also perceived as key indicators of success. Moreover, the findings underscore the significance of capital in its various forms, symbolic, social, and cultural—as critical performance indicators that can yield substantial financial returns and influence entrepreneurial decision-making. This view aligns with Bourdieu's

(1990) assertion that cultural capital, including knowledge, skills, and education, plays a vital role for social actors operating within cultural markets like Ghana's fashion industry.

In summary, the qualitative phase investigated how fashion entrepreneurs in Accra, Tamale, and Kumasi understand and experience precarity within their local contexts. It also examined the role of hope in shaping and guiding decision-making under precarious working conditions. The findings revealed that perceptions of precarity vary among Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs, shaped by their unique socio-economic and regional circumstances. Tables 1 and 2 below present a summary of the key insights from the qualitative study.

Table 1: Summary of findings from the qualitative findings

No	Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Illustrative Interview Quotes
1.	Lack of Institutional Support	Weak regulatory framework	*..these are all challenges we face with the associations. I have stopped because our leaders cannot be trusted. I'm thinking of joining another association*
2.	Difficult Access to financial support	Bureaucratic processes in accessing loans	*There are a lot… a lot of challenges getting loans. Because sometimes they invite us to entrepreneurship what and what, you will go, they will tell you they are going to give money. At the end of the day, you will realize you don't qualify, there is a long list of requirements.*
3.	No Stable Client Base	Lack of stability	*..my colleagues are leaving the business, they are moving out because of our clients…but myself I don't have any profession apart from this one so I'm doing it small, small…*
4.	Low pay and working for free	Unpaid labour	*I"n Africa, one significant issue is the lack of respect for professions such as hairdressing and dressmaking. For instance, if someone is selling cement, I wouldn't expect to get it for free. However, when people come to me for sewing services, they often assume I will do it without charge."*
5.	Hard/difficult	Limited Human Resources	*"I manage everything by myself and it can be overwhelming."*
6.	Uncertainties	Poaching and customer theft Tenure insecurity/forced evictions	*"I will rather work alone than bring someone onboard"*

Table 4.2 Summary of findings from the qualitative study

No.	Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Illustrative Interview Quotes
1.	Personal Relations	Family as Investors; Friends as Clients; Investors as Family; Investors as Friends; Clients as Friends	*"My maternal uncle's wife had a baby, and I went to serve them for a period of time. After serving them for nearly a year, my uncle purchased a sewing machine for me and that is how I started."*
2.	Professional Relations	Master as Authority; Master apprentices	*"From 2006 to 2012, I dedicated approximately nine to ten years of my life to working in my master's shop. I initially enrolled as an apprentice around 2002 to 2003, and I completed my apprenticeship with my master around 2012.*
3.	Communal Relations	Community as Support; Community Prejudice	*"As I neared the end of my apprenticeship and graduation, those to whom I had shared envelopes, showed their support by giving me money on my day of graduation. It was from this generosity, that I accumulated as funds to acquire the container for my business."*
4.	Digital Relations	Social Media as Mediators; Social Media as a Means	*"Absolutely, I'll be there, and a customer may ask me to tune into a specific TV station to spot a particular style they admire. They'll want me to pay close attention because they plan to bring their own materials for me to create something similar. However, with so much on my mind, I might take a picture to ensure I remember the details. When the customer arrives, we discuss the style."*
5.	Government and Non-governmental Relations	Government Support; Clientelism; Nepotism	*"During President Kuffour's tenure, there was a company known as PSI, the Presidential Special Initiative. They brought us to Accra, and I believe the company has undergone changes and is now called CCT."*

4.4 Postscript of Analytic Findings and Discussions

In this chapter, practitioners' perceptions of the fashion landscape were explored through fieldwork examples, shedding insight on their experiences and perspectives. Additionally, the qualitative analysis also discusses factors contributing to precarious work conditions within Ghana's fashion industry, including limited institutional support, challenges in accessing loans, unstable client base, and instances of low or unpaid work, especially for startup businesses. Furthermore, the findings highlight the diverse range of personal and socio-cultural factors influencing entrepreneurs' decision-making. Building on the Neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio et al., 1991; Scott & Meyer, 1992; Pederesen et al., 2006; Hotho et al., 2012; Hwang, 2015) and the theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977; Lizardo, 2004; Sieweke, 2011; Robbins, 2014; Grenfell, 2018) the findings advance our understanding of decision-making and performance in the field of fashion entrepreneurship. Through the integration of multiple perspectives, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how entrepreneurs function in institutional environments. They rely on different forms of capital, as described by Bourdieu (1990), engage in creative problem-solving methods such as bricolage (Baker et al., 2005), and utilise their existing networks, resources, and expertise to generate value (Saravasthy, 2001).

The findings regarding entrepreneurs' perceptions of the fashion landscape point to a high degree of uncertainty, hardships, and lack of social support. With regards to entrepreneurs' experiences of hardships most of them pointed to muddling through minute responsibilities, the difficulty in finding committed workers, high cost of utility, and high degree of institutional uncertainty. This suggests that entrepreneurs must muddle through the "dual role" of overseeing a business, serving as the creative force, and fulfilling other managerial and functional duties. This dynamic often impacts their work-life balance, particularly for women, because women in the fashion industry frequently juggle multiple roles, including running a business, managing household responsibilities, and providing care for children or extended family. The intense demands of entrepreneurship such as irregular working hours, client deadlines, and travel can conflict with societal expectations around women's domestic and caregiving duties, leading to heightened stress and reduced personal time.

Similarly, emerging brand owners struggle with delineating boundaries between their personal and professional lives. Many entrepreneurs acknowledge that neglecting personal boundaries for the sake of clients can lead to negative repercussions. Entrepreneurs who fail to prioritize their clients' needs risk losing customer loyalty, as maintaining constant availability and attentiveness is often essential for client satisfaction. This emphasizes the importance of consistent dedication to customer service in retaining clientele and sustaining business success.

Moreover, many fashion entrepreneurs mentioned societal undervaluation of their work, stereotypes, and limited patronage of Ghanaian designs as significant challenges within the industry. These factors impact their confident levels and the perceived success of their businesses. Some entrepreneurs also experienced mental health distress, including anxiety and impostor syndrome, due to a lack of community support. Regarding the uncertainty aspect, many mentioned tenure insecurity/land ownership issues, abrupt exit of workers, and the continued dominance of informal institutions as shared understanding of uncertainty in the fashion landscape. While Godart et al. (2009) and Langevang et al. (2017) acknowledge the uncertainty inherent in the industry, the findings in this chapter offer additional insights beyond the conventional causes of uncertainty in the fashion industry.

This chapter reveals that while the institutional environment influences the fashion field, the informal and precarious nature of the industry significantly shapes the perceptions of business owners. By highlighting these nuances, the findings contribute to both entrepreneurship literature on micro-enterprises and fashion industry theorists and practitioners. In addition to delving into individual perceptions of the fashion industry, the chapter also examined how the field, according to Bourdieu (1990), contributes to industrial challenges. The findings revealed that business owners encounter several barriers to sustaining, growing, and formalizing their businesses within institutional settings.

The principal argument advanced here is that, in contrast to earlier studies that place heavy emphasis on the economic dimensions of institutional factors (e.g., Sarpong et al. 2012; Danso et al., 2018; Eckert et al., 2022), the findings of this study highlight the critical role of non-economic factors—particularly the lack of cultural capital—in shaping outcomes in the fashion industry. Specifically, the absence of managerial, operational, and functional knowledge emerged as a key constraint, exacerbating precarity within Ghana's fashion sector. Entrepreneurs with limited cultural capital faced significant barriers in accessing financial support, influenced by prevailing beliefs, superstitions, and low levels of financial literacy. These challenges are evident in their difficulties securing loans and managing funds effectively. Gyapong and Afrifa (2021) similarly observed that cultural perceptions and limited financial knowledge shape financial decision-making. Overall, the findings illuminate the relationship between habitus and capital in resource-constrained environments, underlining their relevance in navigating the complexities of entrepreneurial life.

The fashion industry's dependence on business models poses a significant challenge to its ability to sustain competitiveness and retain loyal customers year-round. Customer retention remains particularly unstable in Ghana's fashion industry, where micro-businesses often rely on seasonal consumer demand. Rather than limiting the discussion to theoretical measurement, the findings explore how entrepreneurs practically respond to institutional pressures by adapting to informal norms and structures. These responses reflect the ways in which social actors navigate uncertainty, often by aligning with informal institutions that shape everyday business practices. However, critics of Neo-institutional theory contend that organisational memberships and affiliations are often largely symbolic rather than functional. Rather than signaling genuine adherence to the formal rules and norms of a task environment, such affiliations may serve ceremonial purposes—used strategically to gain legitimacy, recognition, or access to resources without necessarily influencing day-to-day practices. This perspective challenges the assumption that conformity to institutional norms always reflects substantive alignment with operational goals or standards. For instance, entrepreneurs joined associations in response to external pressures exerted by associations to fulfill ''all righteousness''. To be recognized as legitimate participants within a field, social actors must possess a specific level of credentials or what can be termed as "legitimation." The credibility of fashion entrepreneurs often hinged on their membership status and the certification of their trainees within industry associations. Additionally, government and non-government agencies were more inclined to offer support to individuals who were members of these associations. However, not all entrepreneurs perceived association membership as directly beneficial to their business outcomes, reflecting divergent perspectives on the utility and effectiveness of such affiliations.

The findings significantly contribute to the extant literature on cultural entrepreneurship, precarious labour, strategy, and management studies on institutionalism, highlighting the connection between decision-making and performance by conforming to institutional practices among actors in the fashion industry. The findings illustrate how social actors strategically position themselves to acquire additional capital and enhance their influence within the field, aligning with Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) theoretical framework of practice strategy. More so, the research reveals how actors conform to established norms and practices in competitive environments to reinforce their position within the industry and align themselves with other industry actors. These insights provide a deeper understanding of the adaptive behaviors and strategies employed by industry participants to navigate challenges and achieve success within the fashion sector.

The qualitative analysis again delves into decision-making practices within the fashion industry, particularly emphasizing the prevalence of micro and small enterprises. Due to resource constraints, these businesses often resort to informal and less structured decision-making processes. A wide range of factors—ranging from past experiences and intuition to cultural norms and social networks—were found to influence decision-making. Yet, their effects were neither consistent nor predictable. Given the subjective and context-specific character of participants' narratives, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Future studies with larger, more representative samples are needed to validate these patterns and increase the robustness of conclusions drawn.

The findings highlight the substantial influence of past experiences on both intuitive decision-making and resilience-driven decisions. This implies that if a similar decision yielded positive results in the past, the likelihood of making a gut instinct decision in the same direction increased. Moreover, the fashion industry's trend-driven and ever-evolving nature renders traditional planning methods, as observed in other sectors, ineffective. Consequently, many owner-managers resort to routines, imitation, and reliance on informal meetings and information exchange to inform their decision-making processes.

This chapter demonstrates that reliance on social networks fosters social contagion and herd behaviour, which can ultimately inhibit creativity and stall business growth. Although taste significantly shaped entrepreneurs' creative decisions and judgments concerning aesthetics and value creation, the findings reveal a paradox. On one hand, taste serves as a critical tool for differentiation and self-expression, allowing entrepreneurs to create distinctive products and build brand identity. On the other hand, it can become restrictive when overly shaped by peer influence or dominant trends within the network, leading to conformity rather than innovation. This double-edged effect of taste—both enabling and constraining creative decision-making—contrasts with the more unidimensional roles proposed in studies such as Godart et al. (2009) and Smit (2016), which tend to highlight taste as a driver of innovation and market distinction.

Social networks significantly shape decision-making, opportunity recognition, and visibility in Ghana's fashion industry. Yet, these connections can also foster herd behaviour and the unauthorised replication of original designs—often without proper attribution.

In a context where enforcement of intellectual property rights is weak, such practices frequently go unpunished, posing serious threats to creativity, reputation, and innovation. Amid these challenges, collaboration and partnerships have become increasingly important strategies for navigating uncertainty. Beyond their practical benefits—such as sharing financial burdens, reducing start-up costs, and spreading risk—these alliances also offer emotional support and encouragement. They help entrepreneurs build a sense of community with peers who face similar struggles. However, the decision to collaborate is not always straightforward. Despite the growing prevalence of partnerships, particularly in the post-COVID era, some entrepreneurs remain cautious. Their reluctance is often shaped by negative past experiences, mistrust, and cultural norms that discourage openness in highly competitive environments. As a result, collaboration becomes a complex and paradoxical strategy—simultaneously offering support and exposing entrepreneurs to potential vulnerabilities.

The evolving landscape of the fashion industry over recent decades have intensified competition, leaving many entrepreneurs navigating a crowded marketplace. Despite acknowledging the surplus of supply relative to demand, these entrepreneurs remain steadfast in their belief in their brand's potential for future growth and higher returns. This heightened competition extends beyond mere rivalry amongst industry peers; it encompasses the pursuit of symbolic recognition, lobbying for governmental support, and gaining approval from cultural gatekeepers and industry associations. Many entrepreneurs perceive this tension as both necessary and sustainable, given the vested interests at play. Although owner-managers chase ‘clout’ or dilute their unique identity to stay relevant and competitive.

Nevertheless, the competitive environment serves as a catalyst for brands to enhance the quality of their offerings, aiming to both attract and retain custom

The findings unequivocally highlight the significance of cultural intermediaries in the decision-making of fashion entrepreneurs, particularly concerning fashion collections and the assessment of value creation for creative products, such as devising marketing strategies and managing social media presence. However, their impact within the Ghanaian fashion industry displayed a mixed pattern. Established brands generally found them unnecessary, whereas emerging brands viewed their involvement as potentially beneficial for promoting their work. However, for many entrepreneurs, the perceived high costs of their services served as a deterrent, while others questioned the effectiveness of their offerings, considering them to be overly hyped. As a result, the findings underscores the significance of contextual differences and the role of place in shaping entrepreneurs' perceptions of the impact of cultural intermediaries on their business success. Highlighting "the significance of place" implies that the geographical and cultural context in which an entrepreneur operates can heavily influence their interactions with cultural intermediaries and the perceived value of their services.

In the decision-making processes of owner-managers within the fashion industry, cultural values exerted influence, yet their precise impact remains uncertain in the findings. While some entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of their values in shaping functional responsibilities like human resource practices, others played down their significance. Entrepreneurs’ cultural values play a critical role in shaping human resource (HR) practices within the fashion industry, particularly in informal and resource-constrained contexts like

Ghana. These values often prioritise trust, loyalty, communal support, respect for hierarchy, and moral conduct—principles that influence how individuals are recruited, trained, and managed. For example, hiring is frequently based on personal relationships, kinship ties, or community recommendations rather than formal qualifications. This reflects a preference for trusted and morally upright individuals, even when they lack technical expertise. Training is also often delivered through informal apprenticeship systems, where learning is embedded in everyday practice and guided by values such as patience, humility, and deference to authority. In terms of employee management, entrepreneurs may avoid formal contracts or disciplinary procedures, favouring dialogue and interpersonal negotiation rooted in communal norms. While such approaches can build strong interpersonal bonds and foster loyalty, they may also present challenges for scaling businesses, ensuring consistency, and integrating formal HR systems. Nonetheless, the findings showed a widespread lack of awareness among fashion entrepreneurs regarding the role of cultural values in their decision-making.

In every narrative, whether driven by personal or sociocultural factors, decisions were imbued with an inherent hope for positive outcomes - endless possibilities. Essentially, decision-makers were guided by hopefulness regarding the potential results of their actions, indicating the significant role of hope in shaping decision-making processes. Hope, whether perceived as a form of strategy or not, it is the engine that drives decisions in a competitive context. In this context, social actors actively exhibit hopeful behaviors, where hope is applied as a survival strategy—a means by which entrepreneurs formulate strategies and engage in informal labour practices. Hope remains a fundamental category for the decision-maker to navigate and cope with the uncertainties of the industry. The decision to take risks and venture into new business is more desirable than staying in certainty and not exploring new opportunities. Thereby, hope becomes the ground practice in decision-making, as it shapes and orients decisions in risk averse situations.

The linkage between hope as an agentic force and the principles of bricolage theory represents a valuable contribution to the research, providing a theoretical framework for understanding and analyzing the role of hope in entrepreneurial contexts. Many interviewees expressed hope as a dynamic survival tactic rooted in innovation, resourcefulness, and creativity. They adeptly utilized various forms of capital, adapting and exchanging them to address the industry's challenges. The findings illuminated how informal labour practices and reliance on social networks helped individuals navigate their professional landscapes. It underscores that in a capitalist economy, self-reliance and hope are often insufficient without leveraging relational networks and innovative strategies.

Given that, the fashion industry is informal and unprotected, entrepreneurs rely on a diverse array of informal, alternative non-market labour activities and transactions to navigate the challenges of the industry. Informal labour practices embedded in personal relationships such as families, friends and clients were resorted to, to procure raw materials, access to loans and non-material support such as providing emotional support and lobbying for favours. In circumstances where personal relationships are constrained, fashion entrepreneurs rely on professional connections to access assistance unavailable through personal networks. This hopeful engagement in professional relations is evident in alternative non-market economic activities, where fashion entrepreneurs exchange professional relationships for favours and economic benefits. For instance, mentors take on paternalistic roles, offering provisions and lobbying for support from associations and government entities in return for support from their apprentices upon completion of their training.

In the context of measuring performance, the exchange of non-monetary goods and favours reflects entrepreneurs' strategic efforts to enhance their effectiveness and productivity. This approach allows them to leverage alternative forms of value exchange to acquire the resources and support necessary for success, ultimately contributing to their overall performance and success in the fashion industry. In an informal labour context, both monetary and non-monetary pointers underline business performance. It was evident from the findings that all forms of capital have the power to maintain or escalate industry class position, increase consumer demands and ultimately results in greater success for the business.

The emergence of digital platforms have significantly reshaped the fashion industry's value and supply chains, enhancing accessibility and creating more favourable conditions for both consumers and entrepreneurs.These platforms facilitate easy access to fashion products, enable consumer engagement in co-creation, and offer entrepreneurs opportunities for skill enhancement through training programs within their own spaces. The growing trend of digital platforms holds significant relevance in the fashion landscape, especially in developing countries, where it presents both challenges and opportunities for businesses. This is because digitisation is an innate form of capitalist norm that inherently favours developed and technologically advanced economies, thereby accentuating disparities in the global fashion landscape.

As these systems fail, social actors then turn to distant or abstract sources for help. In Ghana, the spirituality and religiosity of fashion entrepreneurs play a significant role in their work. They do not leave their work to chance, hoping that God or a higher being will change their misfortunes without working hard, persevering, devising strategies to make it against all odds. It was evident from the qualitative analysis that spirituality gives precarity a renewed sense of possibilities for manipulating the present for a better future. As one waits on God to change their misfortunes in a context where formal institutions exist but are inactive, entrepreneurs strategically nurture and cultivate enduring relationships and connections in hope of gaining support from government and non-governmental agencies. Since a field's resources are scarce, actors with 'hard-nosed bargaining', lobbying skills, and the right capital can secure favours and leverage benefits. Moreover, brands with established credibility and legitimacy, as well as longstanding affiliations at the association level, stand a greater chance of benefits.

These findings demonstrated how support systems and entrepreneurial goals differed across regions, influenced by socio-political contexts and levels of global engagement. In regions such as Northern Ghana, support from government and non-governmental agencies reportedly favoured women over men, revealing regional and gender-based disparities in the allocation of assistance within Ghana's fashion industry. This prioritisation of women was often rooted in development narratives that framed women as more vulnerable or in need of empowerment, particularly in economically marginalised areas. While such interventions aimed to promote gender equity and social inclusion, they sometimes sidelined male entrepreneurs, leading to perceptions of unequal opportunity and competition for limited resources. In Kumasi, entrepreneurs pointed out that support was frequently determined by factors like social status, affiliations, and political connections. In Accra, however, many interviewees shared a keen interest in collaborating with international brands, participating in global fashion events, and capitalising on networking opportunities to increase their visibility and learning. These findings highlighted the varying support structures and entrepreneurial aspirations across regions, shaped by differing socio-political contexts and global connections.

The qualitative study laid the groundwork for developing constructs used in the subsequent quantitative phase. It identified a variety of factors influencing entrepreneurs' decision-making, though the relationships among these factors were not definitive. As a result, it became necessary to test these dynamics within a larger sample to better understand their impact. Specifically, the analysis sought to examine how these variables influenced the relationship between decision-making (independent variable) and performance (dependent variable). The next chapter presents a detailed account of the quantitative findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

In the previous chapter, an analysis was conducted on the perceptions of fashion entrepreneurs regarding the fashion industry, as well as how entrepreneurs' hope orient and shape entrepreneurs' decision-making (see Figure 1) in Chapter Two. The implications of these elements are important as they directly impact the relationship between decision-making and performance of fashion entrepreneurs, as outlined in objectives three, four, and five (see Section 1.5, page 35). Objective three aimed to examine the impact of entrepreneurs' decision-making on entrepreneurs' performance within Ghana's fashion industry. Objective four sought to examine the mechanisms through which decision-making processes influence performance in Ghana's fashion industry. Objective five, on the other hand, aimed to explore the boundary conditions that constrain the link between decision-making and performance within Ghana's fashion landscape. To achieve these objectives, a quantitative analysis was conducted to derive an understanding of the influence of taste, intuition, social networks, cultural intermediaries, experience, resilience, and strife on the relationship between decision-making and performance, as highlighted in the conceptual framework referenced above. This chapter proceeds by presenting descriptive statistics of the respondents, followed by an analysis of their demographic characteristics. Subsequently, a principal component analysis (PCA) were conducted to identify factors predictive of the variables. The correlation matrix further analyses the data to determine the relationships among the constructs under investigation.

5.1 Analysis of the Robustness of the Study Variables

The statistical estimates of mean (M), standard deviation (SD), skewness, kurtosis, reliability (α), and validity (V) of the study variables are shown in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Analysis of the statistical output from the descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Reliability	Validity
Perceived Uncertainty (PU)	3.45	.47	-.04	.35	.71	.66**
Decision-Making (DM)	3.35	.55	-.56	-.53	.71	.72**
Entrepreneurs' Taste (ET)	4.01	.98	1.28	23.37	.73	.35**
Entrepreneurs' Intuition (EI)	3.98	.60	-.87	.65	.80	.35**
Personal Experience (PE)	3.73	.66	-.96	.74	.71	.50**
Resilience (RI)	4.38	.52	-1.62	.09	.83	.24**
Cultural Intermediaries (CI)	2.68	.69	-.05	-1.30	.81	.46**
Cultural Values (CV)	3.08	.83	-.12	.44	.86	.60**
Social Network (SN)	4.09	.49	-1.02	1.33	.80	.37**
Strife/Competition (SC)	3.25	.54	-.09	-.08	.71	.59**
Entrepreneurs' Performance (EP)	4.17	.64	-.57	6.36	.77	.46**

*p = probability, * = $p < .05$, **$p = .01$; *** = $p < .001$*

As can be inferred from Table 5.1, the mean score of the perceived uncertainty (PU) variable was 3.49, suggesting an average level of perceived uncertainty among the respondents. The SD score of the PU variable was .47, indicating a moderate level of variability across respondents. The kurtosis value for the PU variable was .35, indicating a mild level of peakedness in the distribution. The PU variable had a skewness value of -.004, indicating that the distribution was right-skewed. Both skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable thresholds (+2 to -2 and +3 to -3, respectively), meeting the assumption of normal distribution of the data. The reliability of the PU variable was at .71, indicating an acceptable internal consistency among the scale items. This implies that items on the PU scale are reliable and can easily be replicated in similar contexts. The PU variable was .66, indicating that the PU variable is very significant and valid in measuring the intended purpose.

As shown in Table 5.1 above, the mean score for the decision-making (DM) variable was 3.35, indicating an average level of decision-making practices among the respondents. The SD score of the DM variable was .55, indicating dispersion of DM scores around the mean. The skewness value for the DM variable was -.56, this implies that the distribution is skewed to the right. The kurtosis value for the DM variable was -.53, indicating a mild level of peakedness in the distribution. The DM variable has a high internal consistency, with a Cronbach of .71. This implies that items on the DM scale are reliable and can easily be replicated under similar circumstances. In addition, the validity score of the DM variable was .71, this suggests that the DM variable is very significant and valid. This implies that the DM variable measures what it is intended to measure.

As shown in the output in Table 5.1 above, the mean score for the entrepreneurs' intuition (EI) variable was 3.98 across the respondents. The SD score of the EI variable was .62, indicating dispersion of scores of the EI variable around the mean. The skewness value for the EI variable was -.86, it implies that the distribution is skewed to the right. The kurtosis value for the EI variable was .65, indicating a moderately level of peakiness in the distribution. The EI variable has a high internal consistency, with a Cronbach of .79. This implies that items on the EI scale are reliable and can easily be replicated in similar contexts. In addition, the validity score of the EI variable was .35, this suggests that the EI variable is very significant and valid, indicating that the EI variable measures what it is intended to measure.

As shown in the output in Table 5.1 above, the mean score for the entrepreneurs' taste (ET) variable was 4.01, showing an average level of ET across the respondents. The SD score of the ET variable was .98, indicating dispersion of ET scores around the mean. The skewness value for the ET variable was 1.28, it implies that the distribution is skewed to the left. The kurtosis value for the ET variable was 23.37, indicating an extremely peaked distribution with heavy and long tails. This implies that the kurtosis scores of the ET variable is very concentrated around the mean. Despite exceeding the recommended threshold, the ET variable was retained in the analysis based on the recommendation by Field (2013), who asserts that exceptions can be made when the sample size exceeds 200; in this study, the sample size is above 200. The ET variable has an internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .73, suggesting internal consistency among the items of ET variable. This implies that items on the ET scale are reliable and can easily be replicated under similar circumstances. Additionally, the validity score of the

ET variable was .35, this suggests that the ET variable is very significant and valid, indicating that the ET variable measures what it is intended to measure.

As shown in the output in Table 5.1 above, the mean score for the personal experience (PE) variable was 3.73, showing an average level of personal experience across the respondents. The SD score of the PE variable was .66, indicating a considerable degree of variability in the scores of the PE variable around the mean. The skewness value for the PE variable was -.96, this implies that the distribution is skewed to the right. The kurtosis value for the PE variable was .74, indicating a moderate level of peakiness in the distribution. The PE variable has a good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha of .71, suggesting a high internal consistency among the items of the PE variable. This implies that items on the PE scale are reliable and can easily be replicated under similar circumstances. More so, the validity score of the PE variable was .50, this suggests that the PE variable is very significant and valid, indicating that the PE variable measures what it is intended to measure.

As shown in the output in Table 5.1 above, the mean score for the resilience (RI) variable was 4.39, showing an average level of resilience across the respondents. The SD score of the RI variable was .52, indicating a considerable degree of variability in the scores of the RI variable across the respondents. The skewness value for the RI variable was -1.62, indicating a positive skewness. The kurtosis value for the RI variable was .90, indicating a slight level of peakiness in the distribution. The RI variable had a good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha of .83, suggesting a very high internal consistency among the items of the RI variable. This implies that items on the RI scale are reliable and can easily be replicated in similar contexts. In addition, the validity score of the RI variable was .24, indicating that the RI variable is very significant and valid. This implies that the RI variable measures what it is supposed to measure.

As can be inferred from the output in Table 5.1 above, the mean score for the cultural intermediaries (CI) variable was 2.68, showing an average level of resilience across the respondents. The SD score of the CI variable was .69, indicating a considerable degree of variability in the scores of the CI variable across the respondents. The skewness value for the CI variable was -.05, indicating a negative skewness. The kurtosis value for the CI variable was -1.30, indicating a slight level of peakiness in the distribution. The CI variable had a good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha of .81, suggesting a very high internal consistency among the items of the CI variable. This implies that items on the CI scale are reliable and can easily be replicated under similar circumstances. Additionally, the validity score of the CI variable was .60, indicating that the CI variable is very significant and valid. This implies that the CI variable measures what it is intended to measure.

As can be inferred from the output in Table 5.1 above, the mean score for the cultural values (CV) variable was 3.08 across the respondents. The SD score of the CV variable was .83, indicating a considerable degree of variability in the scores of the CI variable. The skewness value for the CV variable was -.12, indicating a negative skewness. The kurtosis value for the CV variable was .44, indicating a slight level of peakiness in the distribution. The CV variable had a good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha of .86, suggesting a very high internal consistency among the items of the CV variable. This implies that items on the CV scale are reliable and easily replicated in similar situations. In addition, the validity score of the CV variable was .001, indicating that the CV variable is very significant and valid. This implies that the CV variable measures what it is intended to measure.

As can be inferred from the output in Table 5.1 above, the mean score for the social network (SN) variable was 4.09, indicating an average level of social networking across the respondents. The SD score of the SN variable was .49, indicating a considerable degree of variability in the scores of the SN variable. The skewness value for the SN variable was -1.02, indicating a negative distribution of scores of the SN variable. The kurtosis value for the SN variable was 1.33, indicating a slight level of peakiness in the distribution. The SN variable had a good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .79, suggesting a high internal consistency among the items of the SN variable. This implies that items on the SN scale are reliable and may be easily replicated in similar situations. In addition, the validity score of the SN variable was .37, indicating that the SN variable is very significant and valid. This implies that the SN variable measures what it is intended to measure.

As can be inferred from Table 5.1 above, the mean score for the strife/competition (SC) variable was 3.25, indicating an average level of strife across the respondents. The SD score of the SC variable was .54, indicating a considerable degree of variability in the scores of the SC variable. The skewness value for the SC variable was -.09, indicating a negative distribution of scores of the SC variable. The kurtosis value for the SC variable was 1.33, indicating a slight level of peakiness in the distribution. The SC variable had a good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .71, suggesting a high internal consistency among the items of the SC variable. This implies that items on the SN scale are reliable and can be replicated in similar situations. In addition, the validity score of the SC variable was .58, indicating that the SC variable is very significant and valid. This implies that the SC variable measures what it is intended to measure.

As can be inferred from the output in Table 5.1 above, the mean score for the entrepreneurs' performance (EP) variable was 4.17, indicating an average level of performance across the respondents. The SD score of the EP variable was 0.64, indicating a considerable degree of variability in the scores of the EP variable. The skewness value for the EP variable was -.57, indicating a negative distribution of scores of the EP variable. The kurtosis value for the EP variable was 6.36, exceeding the recommended threshold. However, based on Field's (2013) recommendation, exceptions can be made when the sample size exceeds 200, allowing for some flexibility in tolerating deviations from kurtosis limits. The EP variable had a good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .77, suggesting a high internal consistency among the items of the EP variable. This implies that items on the EP scale are reliable and can be replicated in similar situations. In addition, the validity score of the EP variable was .46, indicating that the EP variable is very significant and valid. This implies that the EP variable measures what it is intended to measure.

5.2 Analysis of Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

The analysis of respondents' demographic characteristics including gender, age, educational level, and years of experience are shown in the sub-sections below.

5.2.1 Analysis of respondents' gender

The distribution of respondents' gender is shown in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2 Distribution of respondents' gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	% Respondents
Male	285	38.9
Female	447	61.1
Total	732	100

The gender distribution reveals that there were 162 more females than males, indicating a notably stronger representation of female voices among fashion entrepreneurs compared to male voices in the study. The predominance of female fashion entrepreneurs reflects broader trends in the fashion industry, where women have historically played influential roles as dressmakers, seamstresses, designers and entrepreneurs. Also, the higher representation of females in fashion entrepreneurship may be attributed to factors such as the industry's emphasis on creativity, aesthetics, and fashion design, which have traditionally attracted women. However, the presence of male fashion entrepreneurs, although smaller in proportion, stresses the diversity of perspectives and contributions within the industry, contributing to a dynamic and multifaceted entrepreneurial ecosystem.

5.2.2 Analysis of respondents' age

The distribution of respondents' age is shown in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3 Distribution of respondents' age

Age	Number of Respondents	% Respondents
18-24 years	72	9.8
25-34 years	284	38.8
35-44 years	198	27
45-55 years	144	19.7
56 years and above	34	4.6
Total	732	100

From Table 5.3 above, the largest proportion of respondents 284 (38%) were within the 25 and 34 age range. The concentration of fashion entrepreneurs within the 25-34 age range aligns with broader trends indicating a youthful demographic in entrepreneurial endeavors, particularly in creative and innovative sectors such as fashion. Following this, individuals aged 35-44 years represent 27% of the respondents, indicating a substantial presence of mid-career entrepreneurs in the fashion industry. The substantial presence of mid-career entrepreneurs aged 35-44 years suggest a mix of experienced professionals and individuals seeking new opportunities or career transitions within the fashion industry. The smaller yet notable representation of younger entrepreneurs aged 18-24 years nearly 10% of the respondents, suggesting a notable presence of emerging talent and early-stage entrepreneurs in the fashion industry.

Respondents aged 45 years and above collectively constitute 24% of the total respondents, indicating a significant representation of older entrepreneurs in the industry. The presence of older entrepreneurs aged 45 years and older emphasizes the diverse perspectives and experiences contributing to the entrepreneurial landscape, although their numbers are relatively smaller compared to the younger age group. Based on the demographic distribution, it is evident that most of the fashion entrepreneurs were within youthful age groups. Specifically, out of the total respondents surveyed, 554 individuals, constituting nearly 76% of the sample, belong to age categories typically associated with youthfulness. While 178 (24%) are categorize as belonging to older age groups, typically aged 45 years and above.

5.2.3 Analysis of respondents' educational level

The distribution of respondents' level of education is shown in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4 Distribution of respondents' educational level

Educational Level	Number of Respondents	% Respondents
Basic Education	193	26.4
SHS/WASSCE	135	18.4
Vocational Training	176	24
Diploma	94	12.8
First Degree	123	16.8
Master Degree	8	1.1
PhD Level	3	0.4
Total	732	100

As shown in Table 5.4, the educational backgrounds of the participants ranged widely, encompassing levels from basic education to the PhD level. Among the respondents, 193 individuals (26%) had completed basic education, covering primary to junior high school or middle school. Additionally, 176 respondents (24%) had received vocational skills training in fashion, while 135 individuals (18%) had pursued post-basic education. The prevalence of respondents with basic education, SHS/WASSCE, and vocational training suggests that a significant portion of fashion entrepreneurs may have acquired practical skills and industry knowledge through non-traditional educational pathways or hands-on experience.

Furthermore, 123 respondents (16%) held a First degree, 8 respondents (1%) had obtained a master's degree, and 3 respondents (1%) had achieved a PhD in business management programs. However, the presence of respondents with advanced degrees underscore the importance of formal education and specialized training in equipping entrepreneurs with the requisite skills for entrepreneurial success within the fashion industry. This diverse educational backgrounds among the respondents suggests that most fashion entrepreneurs possessed qualifications beyond senior high education, indicating a solid understanding of the core issues addressed in the study.

5.2.4 Analysis of respondents' years of experience in creative business

The distribution of respondents' years of experience in creative business is shown in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5 Distribution of respondents' years of experience in creative business

Years in Business	Number of Respondents	% Respondents
Less than a year	51	7
1-3 years	135	18.4
4-6 years	179	24.5
7-9 years	118	16.1
10 years and above	249	34
Total	732	100

As shown in Table 5.5 the largest proportion of respondents, comprising 250 (34%) of the total respondents, have been in creative business for 10 years or more, suggesting a substantial presence of established businesses within the fashion landscape. The significant presence of entrepreneurs with 10 years or more of years in creative business may imply experience, resilience, and longevity of fashion entrepreneurs. Fashion entrepreneurs with 4-6 years of business experience represent the next largest group, accounting for 24% of respondents followed by those with 7-9 years of experience, constituting 16% of the sample. Fashion entrepreneurs with 4-6 years and 7-9 years of creative business experience occupy intermediate stages of creative business development, likely characterised by efforts to scale operations, expand market reach, and solidify brand position in the fashion industry.

Additionally, respondents with 1-3 years in creative business comprise 18% of respondents, while entrepreneurs who have been in creative business for less than a year make up 7% of the total respondents. Generally, individuals who have operated in the fashion industry for four years or more are commonly regarded as experienced. In this study, a total of 546 respondents, representing approximately 74% of the total sample are experienced fashion entrepreneurs. This determination is grounded in their demonstrated resilience and proficiency accumulated over the years of operation. Conversely, there were 186 respondents, comprising 25% of the total, who reported having less than four years of experience in the fashion industry. This category represents respondents who are relatively new to the entrepreneurial landscape within fashion, yet despite their shorter tenure, they may bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and enthusiasm to the industry.

5.3 Factor Analysis

To ascertain whether the factors are predictive of the scale items, principal component analysis was conducted. Principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to reduce extraneous dimensions and obtain robust measures that sufficiently measure the variables of study (Pallant, 2016). To determine whether the data was indeed factorable, two measures were assessed, namely the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity as well as degree of freedom (df) and the Cronbach alpha values (Williams et al., 2010; Napitupulu et al., 2017).

The estimated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value obtained for perceived uncertainty (PU) was .712 which exceeded the minimum required threshold of 0.6 (Kaiser & Meyer, 1974; Sanda, 2019). The results from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also achieved statistical significance of a (χ^2

= 1670.886, df = 78, $p = .001$), suggesting a strong correlation pattern among the variables and supporting the use of factor analysis for the tested indicators.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value for decision-making (DM) was .825, which is above the recommended threshold of 0.6, indicating that the data is suitable for factor analysis (Kaiser et al., 1974). Similarly, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded statistically results ($\chi 2$ = 1948.908, df = 45, $p = .001$), suggesting a strong correlation pattern among the variables and therefore appropriate to factor analyse the tested indicators.

The estimated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value obtained for entrepreneurs' taste (ET) was .730 which exceeded the minimum required threshold of 0.6 (Kaiser et al., 1974; Sanda, 2019), this suggests that the data is suitable for factor analysis. The results from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also achieved statistical significance of a ($\chi 2$ = 617.887, df = 10, p = .001). The findings showed that the correlation pattern is very good and therefore appropriate to factor analyse the tested indicators.

The estimated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value obtained for entrepreneurs' intuition (EI) was .840 which exceeded the minimum required threshold of 0.6 (Kaiser et al., 1974; Sanda, 2019), this suggests that the data is suitable for factor analysis. The results from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also achieved statistical significance of a ($\chi 2$ = 1500.828, df = 21, $p = .001$). The values indicate that the correlation pattern is very good and therefore appropriate to factor analyze the tested indicators.

The estimated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value obtained for personal experience (PE) was .710 which exceeded the minimum required threshold of 0.6 (Kaiser et al., 1974; Sanda, 2019). The results from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also achieved statistical significance of a ($\chi 2$ = 458.069, df = 6, *p = .001*), suggesting a strong correlation pattern among the variables and supporting the use of factor analysis for the tested indicators.

The estimated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value obtained for resilience (RI) was .833 which exceeded the minimum required threshold of 0.6 (Sanda, 2019). The results from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also achieved statistical significance of a (χ^2 = 1262.662, df = 10, *p = .001*), suggesting a strong correlation pattern among the variables and supporting the use of factor analysis for the tested indicators.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value for cultural intermediaries (CI) was .807, which is above the recommended threshold of 0.6, indicating that the data is suitable for factor analysis. Similarly, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded statistically results ($\chi 2$ = 1204.276, df = 6, *p = .001*), suggesting a strong correlation pattern among the variables and therefore appropriate to factor analyze the tested indicators.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value for cultural values (CV) was .728, which is above the recommended threshold of 0.6, indicating that the data is suitable for factor analysis (Sanda, 2019; Forsell, 2020). Similarly, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded statistically results ($\chi 2$ = 1529.710, df = 10, *p = .001*), suggesting a strong correlation pattern among the variables and therefore appropriate to factor analyze the tested indicators.

The estimated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value obtained for social networks (SN) was .795 which exceeded the minimum required threshold of 0.6 (Sanda, 2019). The results from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also achieved statistical significance of a ($\chi 2$ = 733.517, df = 15, *p = .001)*, suggesting a strong correlation pattern among the variables and supporting the use of factor analysis for the tested indicators.

The estimated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value obtained for strife/competition (SC) was .646 which exceeded the minimum required threshold of 0.6 (Kaiser et al., 1974; Sanda, 2019). The results from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also achieved statistical significance of a (χ^2 = 1262.662, df = 10, *p = .001*), suggesting a good correlation pattern among the variables and supporting the use of factor analysis for the tested indicators.

The estimated Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value obtained for entrepreneurs' performance (EP) was .848 which exceeded the minimum required threshold of 0.6 (Kaiser et al., 1974; Sanda, 2019). The results from Bartlett's Test of Sphericity also achieved statistical significance of a (χ^2 = 1262.662, df = 10, *p = .001*), suggesting a strong correlation pattern among the variables and supporting the use of factor analysis for the tested indicators.

To identify and group the factors perceived by respondents as predictive of key study variables, such as perceived uncertainty, decision-making, intuition, taste, personal experience, resilience, strife, cultural values, cultural intermediaries, and performance, factor analysis was conducted.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used as the extraction method to determine the key indicators associated with each factor, as elaborated in the sections that follow.

5.4 Principal Component Analysis

In this analysis, Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalisation was performed as the method of rotation. All the individual items had factor loadings equal to or greater than 0.60 (KMO > 0.60) (Shelns, 2014; Sanda, 2019), indicating that each component has factors with predictive strengths to inform the decision-making and performance of entrepreneurs in the fashion industry. After conducting these two checks, the results obtained indicated that both yardsticks were achieved, confirming that the data was factorable. It must however be noted that after the principal component analysis, twenty-four (24) items out of the eighty (80) dropped from the data set as their factor loadings fell below the 0.6 threshold. The tables in the following sub-sections show all the items that were retained after the principal component analysis were conducted for each factor.

5.4.1 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' perceived uncertainty

In this analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation was used as the method of rotation, which converged in four (4) iterations, as shown in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6 Principal component analysis and factor loadings of perceived uncertainty

Factors	**Factor Label**	**Factor Loadings (r)**			
		C1	**C2**	**C3**	**C4**
As a manager I am able to determine my target population	PU1			.889	
As a manager I am able to determine my supply outlet	PU2		.867		
The thought that my designs can be easily be copied by competitors affect my design process	PU3	.756			.803
Consumer demands and preferences are not easy to predict	PU6	.735			
The rate at which fashion products are getting out-of-date in the industry is very fast	PU8	.756			
The mode of production of fashion product is subject to much change	PU9	.775			
The mode of marketing and distribution of fashion products often change	PU12		.711		
There is always fear of losing my workers to my competitors in the fashion industry	PU13	.733			

From the findings of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1) were identified as predictors of perceived uncertainty: (i) the rate at which fashion products are getting out-of-date in the industry is very fast (r = .76); the mode of marketing and distribution of fashion products often change (r = .78); the mode of marketing and distribution of fashion products often change (r = .71). The factors in the first component reflects the dynamics of change and the rapid change in consumer preferences, and trends in the fashion industry.

The factors in the second component (C2), were also identified as predictors of entrepreneurs' fear of missing out (FOMO) or fear of ferocious competition: (i) the thought that my designs can be easily copied by competitors affect my design process (r = .74); there is always fear of losing my workers to my competitors. The factors in the third component (C3) primarily reflects opportunity identification (i) as a manager I am able to determine my target population (r = .89); (ii) as a manager I am to determine my supply outlet (r = .87). The factors in fourth component (C4) highlights a sense that consumer decisions are fundamentally unknown (iii) consumer demands and preferences are not easy to predict (r =.80).

5.4.2 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' decision-making

In this analysis, the Varimax rotation method with Kaiser Normalisation converged in two iterations, as shown in Table 5.7 below.

Table 5.7 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' decision-making

Factors	**Factor Label**	**Factor Loadings (r)**	
		C1	**C2**
In the past two years I have considered changing my style of production	DM1	.799	
In the past two years I have considered relocating my business	DM2	.743	
In the past two I have made decisions about talent selection/hiring and recruiting decisions	DM3	.688	
In the past two years, I have made decisions about social media strategies (Tiktok, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp etc) for visibility	DM6		.697
In the past two years I have considered expanding my business	DM7	.778	
In the past two years, I have made decisions about purchasing new machines for my business	DM8	.757	
Over the past few years, I have made decisions about collaborating with other designers	DM9		.693

Based on the outcome of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1), were identified as predictors of entrepreneurs' decision-making in the fashion industry: (i) in the past two years I have considered changing my style of production (r = .80); (ii) in the past two years I have considered expanding my business (r = .78); (iii) in the past two years, I have made decisions about purchasing new machines for my business (r =. 76); (iv) in the past two years, I have considered relocating my business (r = .74); (v) in the past two years, I have made talent selection/hiring and rec recruiting decisions (r = .69).

The factor loadings of the first component highlights adaptation to changing circumstances and decisions frequently made by fashion entrepreneurs in this study. Much of the factors identified in this component portrayed 'strategic' initiatives and decisions made by owner-managers of fashion businesses.

Similarly, the following factors in the second component (C2), were identified as predictive factors of pertaining to entrepreneurs adaptation decisions to uncertain circumstances; (i) in the past two years, I have made decisions about social media strategies (Tiktok, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) for visibility ($r = .70$); (ii) over the past few years, I have made decisions about collaborating with other designers ($r = .69$). The factors in the first and second components were found to significantly improve performance and survival of fashion businesses under precarious context.

5.4.3 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' taste

In this analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation was used as the method of rotation, which converged in one (1) iteration, as shown in Table 5.8 below.

Table 5.8 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' taste

Factors	Factor Label	Factor Loadings (r)
I am aware that my personal taste influence my creative design process	ET1	.676
My taste affects my aesthetic judgments and decisions as a fashion entrepreneur	ET2	.749
I am aware that my social network has a role to play in my personal standards and preferences which affects my decisions as a fashion entrepreneur	ET3	.757
I am aware that my quest for distinction or to be different influence my decision-making as a fashion entrepreneur	ET4	.711

Based on the outcome of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1), were identified as predictors of entrepreneurs' taste in the fashion industry: (i) I am aware that my social network influence my personal standards and decisions as a fashion entrepreneur (r = .76); (ii) my taste affects my aesthetic judgment as a fashion entrepreneur (r = .75); (iii) I am aware that my quest for distinction influence my decision as a fashion entrepreneur (r = .71); (iv) I am aware that my personal taste influence my creative design process (r = .67). On one hand, these predictive factors influence entrepreneurs' distinct patterns, that differentiate and distinguish a particular entrepreneur's brand from other brands. On the other hand, taste inform entrepreneurs decisions to align with with similar or higher status or reputation in the industry.

5.4.4 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' intuition

In this analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation was employed as the method of rotation, which converged in two (2) iterations, as shown in Table 5.9 below.

Table 5.9 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' intuition

Factors	**Factor Label**	**Factor Loadings (r)**	
		C1	**C2**
My intuition comes to me quickly and it drives my decisions as an entrepreneur.	EI1	.714	
I am aware my gut feelings influence my choice and decisions as an entrepreneur.	EI2	.708	.352
I trust my intuition especially in unfamiliar situations.	EI3	.817	
My approach to problem solving relies heavily on my intuition.	EI4	.301	.719
My intuition shapes my decisions in uncertain contexts.	EI5	.632	.392
My gut feelings influence my design process such as choice of fabrics, style and design.	EI6	.737	
My intuition affects my marketing and advertising decisions.	EI7		.850

Based on the outcome of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1), were identified as predictors of entrepreneurs' intuition in the fashion industry: (i) I trust my intuition especially in unfamiliar situations (r = .82); (ii) my intuition comes to me quickly and it drives my decisions as an entrepreneur (r = .71); (iii) my gut feelings influence my design process such as choice of fabrics, style and design (r = .74); (iv) I am aware my gut feelings influence my choice and decisions as an entrepreneur (r = .71); (v) my intuition shapes my decisions in uncertain contexts (r = .63). The factors in the first component inform entrepreneurs' ability to identify and predict patterns in uncertain situations. More so, the second component (C2) are predictors that influence expert-based decisions; (vi) my intuition affects my marketing and advertising decisions (r = .85); (ii) my approach to problem solving relies heavily on my intuition (r = .72). Entrepreneurs with expertise are able to demonstrate the use of 'intuitive' decision-making particularly in unfamiliar context.

5.4.5 Principal component analysis for personal experience

In this analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation was employed as the method of rotation, which converged in one (1) iteration, as shown in Table 5.10 below.

Table 5.10 Principal component analysis for personal experience

Factors	Factor Label	Factor Loadings (r)
My experiences influence my inspiration and design process as a fashion designer	PE1	.704
My past experiences inform my creative decisions as an entrepreneur in the fashion industry.	PE2	.759
I am aware that my old styles are the bases for the new variations in my production.	PE3	.681
My designs communicate my personal experiences as a designer	PE4	.726

Based on the outcome of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1), were identified as predictive factors of personal experience that inform entrepreneurs decision-making in the fashion industry: (i) my past experiences inform my creative decisions as a fashion entrepreneur (r = .76); (ii) my designs communicate my personal experiences as a designer (r = .73); (iii) my experiences influence my inspiration and design process as a fashion designer (r = .70); (iv) I am aware that my old styles are the bases for the new variations in my production (r = .68). The predictive factors showed that the use of personal and industry experiences result in successful decision-making for most fashion entrepreneurs.

5.4.6 Principal component analysis for resilience

In this analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation was employed as the method of rotation, which converged in one (1) iteration, as shown in Table 5.11 below.

Table 5.11 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' resilience

Factors	**Factor Label**	**Factor Loadings (r)**
		C1
I feel I can handle many things (e.g. taking a lot of orders during the peak seasons)	RI1	.806
I can get through difficult times because I have experienced difficulty before in my career	RI2	.811
When I am in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it.	RI3	.762
My belief in myself gets me through hard times as an entrepreneur	RI4	.798
I usually manage to make decisions in difficult situations	RI5	.667

Based on the outcome of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1) were identified as predictive factors of resilience that inform entrepreneurs' decision-making in the fashion industry: (i) I can get through difficult times because I have experienced difficulty before in my career (r = .81); (ii) I feel I can handle many things (e.g. taking a lot of orders during the peak seasons) (r = .81); (iii) my belief in myself gets me through hard times as an entrepreneur (r = .80); (iv) when I am in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it (r = .76); (v) I usually manage to make decisions in difficult situations (r = .67). The predictive factors highlight hardiness, resourcefulness, positivism and optimism associated with success in unsettling and turbulent conditions.

5.4.7 Principal component analysis for cultural intermediaries

In this analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation was employed as the method of rotation, this generated one factor with all the four (4) items, as shown in Table 5.12 below.

Table 5.12 Principal component analysis for cultural intermediaries

Factors	**Factor Label**	**Factor Loadings (r)**
My decisions are influenced by bloggers/gatekeepers in the fashion space	CI1	.838
I benefit from sponsoring influencers	CI2	.838
My decision to sponsor a celebrity is influenced by cost-benefit analysis	CI3	.761
In moments of uncertainty I rely on influencers in my decision-making	CI4	.866

Based on the outcome of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1) were identified as predictors of cultural intermediaries, these factors are deemed to inform entrepreneurs' decision-making: (i) in moments of uncertainty I rely on influencers in my decision-making ($r = .87$); (ii) my decisions are influenced by bloggers/gatekeepers in the fashion space ($r = .84$); (iii) I benefit from sponsoring influencers ($r = .84$); (iv) my decision to sponsor a celebrity is influenced by cost-benefit analysis ($r = .76$). These factors highlight the economic role of cultural intermediaries in promoting consumption. As their role as 'mediators' increase consumers buying behaviors.

5.4.9 Principal component analysis for cultural values

In this analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation was employed as the method of rotation, this generated two (2) factors with all the five (5) items, as shown in Table 5.13 below.

Table 5.13 Principal component analysis for cultural values

Factors	**Factor Label**	**Factor Loadings (r)**	
		C1	**C2**
I leverage on my heritage and background in my decision-making	CV1		.893
My creative designs are influenced by my religious and cultural values	CV2	.818	
I tell stories about my culture and context in my design process	CV3	.789	
My decisions to design for a particular person is based on your cultural values	CV4	.772	.305
My decisions on what to design are based on my cultural values	CV5		.919

Based on the outcome of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1) were identified as predictors of cultural intermediaries, these factors influence entrepreneurs' decision-making: (i) my creative designs are influenced by my religious or cultural values (r = .82); (ii) I tell stories about my culture and context in my design process (r = .79); my decisions to design for a particular person is based on my cultural values (r = .77). These factors highlight the subtle cultural mechanisms underpinning decisions of entrepreneurs.

The following factors in the second component (C2), also predicted the role of cultural values in the decision-making of entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry: (i) my decisions on what to design are based on my cultural values (r = .92); (ii) I leverage on my heritage and background in my decision-making (r = .89).

5.4.9 Principal component analysis for social network

In this analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation was employed as the method of rotation, this generated one (1) factor iterations with all the five (5) items, as shown in Table 5.14 below.

Table 5.14 Principal component analysis for social networks

Factors	**Factor Label**	**Factor Loadings (r)**
I keep a relationship with other entrepreneurs in the fashion landscape	SN2	.682
I consult/seek other entrepreneurs in my decision-making	SN3	.675
Consumers influence my decision-making as a fashion entrepreneur	SN4	.624
I seek advice and rely on the opinions of my networks in my decision-making	SN5	.743
I collaborate with other fashion entrepreneurs in my line of work or on a project.	SN6	.649

Based on the outcome of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1) were identified as predictors of social networks, these factors influence entrepreneurs' decision-making: (i) I seek advice and rely on the opinions of my networks in my decision-making (r = .74); (ii) I keep a relationship with other entrepreneurs in the fashion landscape (r = .68); (iii) I consult/seek other entrepreneurs in my decision-making (r = .68); (iv) I collaborate with other fashion entrepreneurs in my line of work or on a project (r = .65); (v) consumers influence my decision-making as a fashion entrepreneur (r = .62). These factor loadings show that at one extreme end, are fashion entrepreneurs who rely purely on the decisions of others in making their choices, so social network effects decisions. At the other extreme, are entrepreneurs who act like the autonomous rational agent in their decision-making.

5.4.10 Principal component analysis for strife and competition

In this analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation was used as the method of rotation, this generated two (2) factor iterations, as shown in Table 5.15 below.

Table 5.15 Principal component analysis for strife/competition

Factors	**Factor Label**	**Factor Loadings (r)**	
		C1	**C2**
I see other fashion entrepreneurs as a threat to my business	SC2	.718	
I think my competitors are at an advantage than me in the fashion industry	SC4	.730	
The fashion industry causes a great deal or threat to the survival of my fashion business	SC5	.790	
I am aware of tough price competition in the industry	SC6		.790
I am aware that there is more supply than there is demand for fashion products	SC7		.763

Based on the outcome of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1) were identified as predictors of strife/competition, these factors influence entrepreneurs' decision-making: (i) the fashion industry causes a great deal or threat to the survival of my fashion business (r = .79); (ii) I think my competitors are at an advantage than me in the fashion industry (r = .73); (iii) I see other fashion entrepreneurs as a threat to my business (r = .72). The factor loadings in the first component highlight perceived perception of competition.

Also, the following factors in the second component (C2), were identified as predictors of decision adjustments in response to strife (i) I am aware of tough price competition in the industry (r = .79); (ii) I am aware that there is more supply than there is demand for fashion products (r = .76).

5.4.11 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' performance

In this analysis, Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation was employed as the method of rotation, this generated three (3) iterations, as shown in Table 5.16 below.

Table 5.16 Principal component analysis for entrepreneurs' performance

Factors	**Factor Label**	**Factor Loadings (r)**		
		C1	**C2**	**C3**
My business sales have grown significantly over the years	EP1		.840	
I am aware of compliments of my customers of my business	EP3	.612	.307	
I am focusing on improving the performance of my current business rather than entering new domains	EP5	.655		
Timelines for order completion has improved	EP7	.688		
My customers are satisfied with the order delivery accuracy rate of the business	EP9	.757		
Customers are satisfied with the quality of the products	EP10	.709		
There is a high need to purchase additional equipment to improve the quality-of-service delivery and production	EP11			.823

Based on the outcome of the factor analysis, the following factors in the first component (C1) were identified as predictors of social network, these factors influence entrepreneurs' decision-making: (i) my customers are satisfied with the order delivery accuracy rate of the business (r = .76); (ii) customers are satisfied with the quality of the products (r = .71); (iii) timelines for order completion has improved (r = .69); (iv) i am focusing on improving the performance of my current (r = .66); (v) i am aware of compliments of my customers of my business (r = .61). These factors highlight operational efficiency of fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry.

Also, the factor (i) my business sales have grown significantly over the years (r = .84) in the second component (C2), predicted entrepreneurs' performance. This factor reflects market share and growth in Ghana's fashion industry post-COVID-19. More so, the the factor (i) there is a high need to purchase additional equipment to improve the quality-of-service delivery and production (r =.82) in the third component (C3) reflects the need for product and service innovation to increase and improve entrepreneurial performance in Ghana's fashion industry.

5.5 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To develop appropriate scales for assessing decision-making and entrepreneurial performance, it was important to examine patterns or groupings, referred to as 'clumps' within the inter-correlations of the variables measuring these constructs (Pallant, 2011). Researchers frequently use factor analytic techniques to develop and validate measurement tools. The literature identifies two primary forms of factor analysis: exploratory and confirmatory. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is typically employed in the initial stages of scale development to uncover underlying structures among a set of observed variables (see Section 3.8.5). CFA is a more sophisticated analytical approach typically employed after initial analyses. It is used to test whether the data support a specific theoretical structure or model involving a set of variables (Tabachnick et al., 2007; Pallant, 2011).

The CFA model included eleven key constructs: one independent variable, one dependent variable, and nine variables hypothesised to influence the relationship between decision-making and performance. The analysis was conducted in AMOS version 21 using maximum likelihood estimation, with several iterations undertaken to achieve an optimal model fit. Observed variables that did not meet the recommended factor loading thresholds were removed in line with established criteria (Hair et al., 2010; Brown, 2015). A total of ten items were excluded, resulting in a more parsimonious model with improved construct validity. The final model demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties, supporting its use in subsequent analyses (see Appendix E).

The CFA model comprised eleven key constructs: one independent variable, one dependent variable, and nine variables hypothesised to influence the relationship between decision-making and performance. The analysis was conducted in AMOS version 21 using maximum likelihood estimation, with several iterations performed to optimise model fit. Figure 5.2 (see Appendix) presents the initial model, which included seventy-five items across the eleven factors. However, the initial fit indices indicated a poor model fit. As a result, observed variables that did not meet the recommended factor loading thresholds were removed in line with established guidelines (Hair et al., 2010; Brown, 2015). Through this iterative refinement process, ten items were excluded, resulting in a more parsimonious model with improved construct validity. The relatively high number of excluded items likely reflects the context-specific dynamics of precarious employment in Ghana's fashion sector, which may not align neatly with conventional constructs found in the literature (McShane et al., 2019). The final model demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties, supporting its use in subsequent analyses (see Appendix E).

Precarity, often discussed in the literature, is not a universally consistent concept, and its application in the Ghanaian context may differ from the typical theoretical frameworks (Harris et al., 2019). This necessitates a contextual adaptation of measurement tools to capture the specific realities of the fashion industry in Ghana. Thus, the adjustments made to the model reflect the need to account for local socio-economic dynamics, ensuring that the measurement scale accurately reflects the nuanced characteristics of precarious employment in the region.

Following recommended practices, items with low factor loadings were systematically removed to refine the scale and improve the model's fit to the data, while ensuring the construct adequately captured the phenomenon under study. After multiple screenings and iterations, the final model was established, as illustrated in Figure 5.3 (see Appendix F). This figure reveals that several items particularly those related to decision-making, perceived uncertainty, social networks, and entrepreneurial performance were excluded. In contrast, the constructs representing cultural values, resilience, intuition, taste, and strife remained intact in the final standardised model. The reliability and validity statistics for these retained constructs are detailed in Table 5.18 below.

Table 5.17 Results from the confirmatory factor analysis

	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	5	7	8	9	10	11
1.SC	.907	.625	**0.791**										
2.CV	.864	.561	.41***	**0.749**									
3.PU	.759	.514	-.11*	-.07	**0.717**								
4.DM	.850	.534	.638***	.61***	-.12**	**0.731**							
5.EI	.805	.508	-.03	-.01	.04	-.01	**0.712**						
6.ET	.823	.501	.10*	-.01	-.06	.04	-.28***	**0.708**					
7.CI	.810	.517	.02	.02	.04	.04	.06	.02	**0.719**				
8.SN	.784	.549	-.08	-.03	.12*	-.04	.61***	-.33***	.01	**0.741**			
9.PE	.768	.525	.02	.13**	.02	.08	.17***	-.13**	.00	.18***	**0.724**		
10.EP	.798	.502	-.20***	-.23***	.24***	-.29***	.14**	-.06	.03	.21***	.04	**0.708**	
11.RI	.875	.778	.47***	.64***	-.06	.72***	-.09	.10*	.04	-.16**	.11*	.43***	**0.882**

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. **NB**: Figures in bold on the diagonal line are the square root of the AVEs. RI= Resilience; DM = Decision-Making; CV = Cultural Values; PU = Perceived Uncertainty; EI = Entrepreneur Intuition; ET = Entrepreneur Taste; SN = Social Network; EP = Entrepreneur Performance; PE = Personal Experience; SC = Strife/Competition

5.5.1 Assessment of the Model Fitness

Table 5.18 Fit indices for measurement model of confirmatory factor analysis

Fit Indices	Recommended Value	Author	Initial Model	Final Model
CMIN/DF	< 3.0 good < 5.0 permissible	Hair et al 2009	2.638	2.300
RMSEA	<.08 good fit <.08 to 1.0 moderate	Meyers, et al., 2005	0.048	0.043
CFI	>.90	Hatcher, 1994	0.871	0.928
SRMR	< .09	Hair et al 2009	0.060	0.050

Table 5.18 shows the fit indices used to check how well the CFA model matches the data. The final model performed better than the initial one. The CMIN/DF dropped from 2.638 to 2.300, which is within the acceptable range. The RMSEA also improved from 0.048 to 0.043, indicating an excellent fit since values below 0.05 are ideal. The CFI rose from 0.871 to 0.928, exceeding the recommended 0.90, showing a good fit. Lastly, the SRMR improved from 0.060 to 0.050, both below the acceptable cutoff of 0.09. These improvements together show that the model adjustments made it more reliable and better suited to the data. The table shows that the final model fits the data better than the initial model. Improvements in key model fit indices—specifically the (CFI), RMSEA, and SRMR suggest that the model re-specification, including the removal of items with weak factor loadings, resulted in a more parsimonious and psychometrically sound measurement model suitable for subsequent structural analysis. The final measurement model shows strong reliability and satisfactory levels of convergent and discriminant validity across all constructs.

5.5.2 Common Method Bias

Recognising the potential for common method bias (CMB) in self-report survey research, several measures were implemented to mitigate its impact. The adoption of a mixed-methods exploratory sequential design enabled methodological triangulation, helping to prevent mono-method bias (Kline et al., 2005). In the survey phase, temporal separation between key constructs—decision-making and performance—was introduced to reduce context effects. Anonymity and confidentiality protocols were strictly observed to minimise social desirability influences. Additionally, the randomisation of item sequences helped reduce consistency motifs in responses. Harman's single-factor test was conducted as a post-hoc diagnostic, with results confirming that no single factor accounted for a majority of the variance, suggesting that CMB was not a major concern.

5.6 Structural Model Analysis

The AMOS graphics show a standardised path diagram of the factor loadings/regression weights (r) of existing connections among the study variables, as shown in Figure 5.1 below.

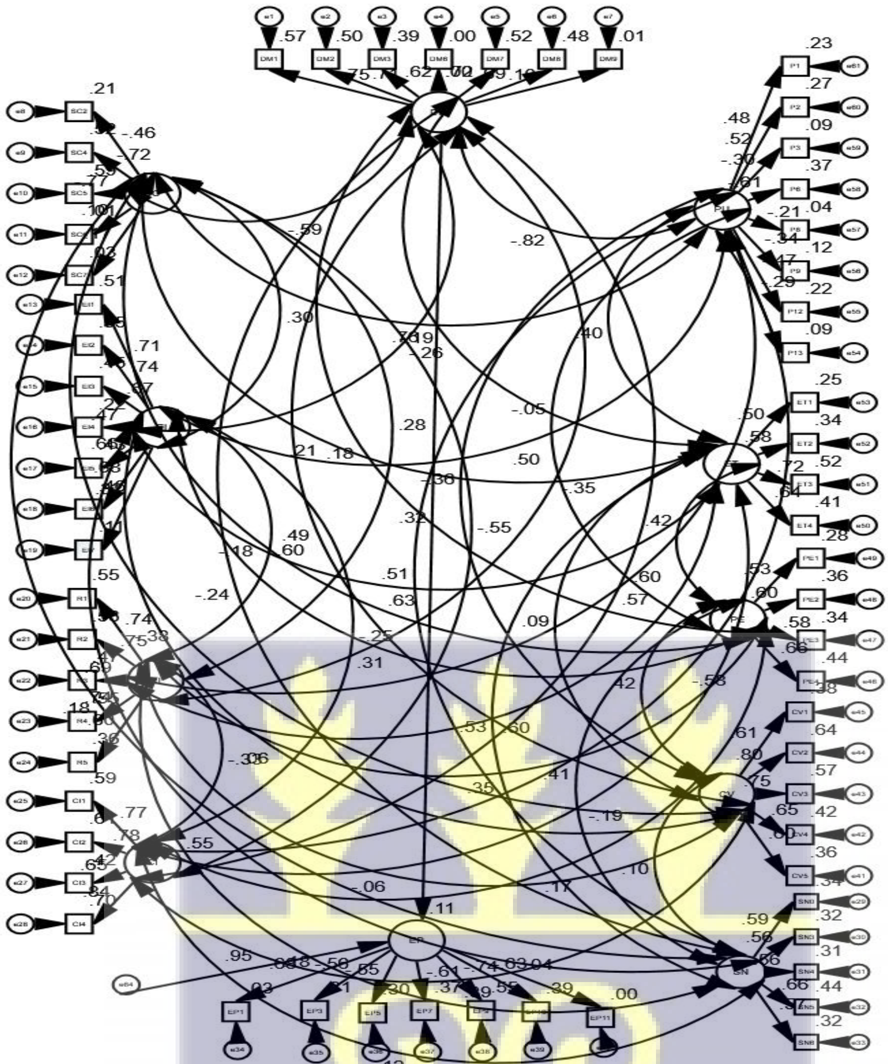

Figure 5.1 Measurement model showing factor loadings

Table 5.19 Analysis of direct paths

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
DM	<-->	PU	.264	.027	.027	***
DM	<-->	EI	-.033	.030	.030	.276
DM	<-->	SC	.249	.029	.852	***
DM	<-->	PE	.194	.035	5.60	***
DM	<-->	SN	-.031	.026	-1.18	.237
DM	<-->	CV	.530	.048	10.99	***
DM	<-->	CI	.560	.050	11.13	***
DM	<-->	RI	-.211	.025	-.8.31	***
DM	<-->	ET	.001	.071	-1.01	***

As shown in Table 5.19, the analysis of direct paths in the structural model indicates that all parameter estimates are both high and statistically significant, suggesting that each variable contributes meaningfully to the model and significantly differs from zero. The interpretation of these estimates is straightforward. For instance, the relationship between decision-making (DM) and strife/competition (SC) reveals that for every one standard deviation increase in strife and competition, decision-making decreases by approximately 0.25 ($\beta = -0.249$). This implies that when entrepreneurs perceive heightened levels of strife or competition, they are less inclined to make decisions, particularly under resource-constrained conditions. The standard error (SE = 0.029), critical ratio (C.R. = 8.59), and p-value ($p < 0.001$) for this path further confirm the statistical significance of this negative relationship, as estimated by AMOS.

Additionally, the direct path analysis presented in Table 5.19 shows that decision-making (DM) decreases by 0.033 for each one standard deviation increase in entrepreneurs' intuition (EI), indicating a weak negative association ($\beta = -0.033$). This suggests a potential trade-off between structured decision-making and intuitive judgement among fashion entrepreneurs. As decision-making processes become more deliberate or systematic, reliance on intuition may decline. However, this relationship was not statistically significant, as indicated by the standard error (SE = 0.030), critical ratio (C.R. = –1.08), and p-value ($p > 0.001$), as estimated by AMOS.

From Table 5.19 it is evident that decision-making decreases at -.211 for each 1.00 increase in resilience (RI). This suggests that when RI goes up by one standard deviation DM goes down by 0.211. Therefore, this suggests that there is a negative correlation between the two variables, meaning as decision-making goes up, entrepreneurs' resilience tends to go down. This implies that entrepreneurs who are highly skilled at making decisions may have lower levels of resilience, meaning they might struggle to bounce back from adversity or setbacks. This is an interesting dynamic where heightened decision-making abilities might come at the expense of resilience when entrepreneurs are posed with challenges. Also, the standard error (SE = .025), composite reliability (C.R = -8.31 and p value ($p < .001$) of the relationship between DM and RI are also estimated by AMOS with a very significant result.

It was also evident from Table 5.19 that decision-making increases at 1.009 for each 1.00 increase in cultural intermediaries (CI). This suggests that when CI goes up by one standard deviation DM goes up by 1.009. The positive relationship between decision-making and cultural intermediaries suggests that intermediaries play a significant role in decision-making processes. They are likely to influence decisions by providing insights, facilitating communication, or mediating the relationship between consumers and entrepreneurs. The standard error (SE = .091), critical ratios (C.R = 11.131) and p value ($p < .001$) of the relationship between DM and CI are also estimated by AMOS with a very significant result.

It is evident from the direct path analysis that in Table 5.19 that when decision-making decreases .264 for each 1.00 increase in perceived uncertainty (PU). This suggests that when PU goes up by one standard deviation DM goes up by .264. This implies that there is an inverse relationship between DM and PU, which implies that as DM increases, the perceived uncertainty tends to decrease, and as perceived uncertainty increases DM activities tend to decrease. In other words, when people are more confident in their DM abilities, they tend to perceive less uncertainty surrounding the outcome of their decisions. Similarly, the standard error (SE = .027), composite ratio (C.R = .027) and p value ($p < .001$) of the relationship between DM and PU are estimated by AMOS with a very significant result.

It can be deduced from the direct path analysis from Table 5.19 above that decision-making decreases at .001 for each 1.00 increase in entrepreneurs' taste (ET). This may imply that when ET goes up by one standard deviation DM goes up by .001. The negative covariance means that as decision-making goes up, entrepreneurs' taste tends to be low. This imply that as decision-making increases, entrepreneurs' taste or preferences in fashion may decrease in importance. This could mean that entrepreneurs prioritize market research, consumer preferences, and industry trends more heavily when making decisions, rather than solely relying on their own preferences. In essence, fashion entrepreneurs succumb to isomorphic pressures, which implies that they mimic patterns and preferences of established brands. The standard error (SE = .071), composite ratio (C.R = 1.01) and p value ($p < .001$) of the relationship between DM and PU are estimated by AMOS with a very significant result.

It is observed from Table 5.19 decision-making increases by .194 for each 1.00 increase in personal experience (PE). This may imply that when PE goes up by one standard deviation

DM goes up by .194. A positive covariance between DM and PE implies that both variables tend to be high at the same. This implies that as entrepreneurs gain more experience in the field of fashion, their decision-making abilities tend to improve. This implies that when entrepreneurs gain more experience it provides them with insights, knowledge, and skills which they can apply to future decisions, leading to better outcomes. Also, the standard error (SE = .035), composite ratio (C.R = 5.60) and p value (p < .001) of the relationship between DM and PE are estimated by AMOS with a very significant result.

From Table 5.19 it can be deduced that decision-making increases by .530 for each 1.00 increase in cultural values (CV). This could imply that when CV goes up by one standard deviation DM goes up by .530. A positive covariance imply that both variables tend to increase and decrease at the same time, as such it can be inferred that when cultural values increases decision-making also increase. This implies that decision-making processes of entrepreneurs are influenced by their cultural values. This can imply that when entrepreneurs come from cultures that prioritize risk taking and innovation, entrepreneurs may be more inclined to make bold decisions and pursue unconventional paths. Unlike cultures that emphasize caution and tradition, entrepreneurs exhibit more conservative tendencies in their decision-making. Similarly, the standard error (SE = .048), composite ratio (C.R = 10.99) and p value (p < .001) of the relationship between DM and CV are estimated by AMOS with a very significant results.

From Table 5.19 above, it can be deduced that decision-making decreases at -.031 for each 1.00 increase in social network (SN). This could imply that when SN goes up by one standard deviation DM goes down by -.031. The positive covariance between decision-making and social network could mean that entrepreneurs who have strong connections within the industry tend to make better decisions. This could be because they have access to information, trends, and market insights through their network. As being part of a social network in the fashion industry can lead to collaboration and partnerships within and across the industry that enhance creativity and innovation in decision-making. Similarly, the standard error (SE = .026), composite ratio (C.R = -1.18) and p value (*p > .001*) of the relationship between DM and SN are estimated by AMOS with a non-significant result.

5.7 Tests of Hypotheses

As recall the following hypotheses proposed in Chapter Two; entrepreneurs' decision-making would influence impact entrepreneurs' performance, resilience would influence the relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance, cultural values would influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance, social networks would influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance, cultural intermediaries would influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance, intuition would influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs performance, entrepreneurs' taste would influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance, strife would influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance were proposed in Chapter Two.

5.7.1. **Hypothesis One**

Table 5.20 Standardised regression weights of the measurement model

Relatedness of Variable			Estimate value	p-
EP	<---	DM	.112	***

As a recall, this hypothesis was proposed in Section 2.2.2 of Chapter Two.

H_1: *Entrepreneurs' decision-making would impact entrepreneurs' performance.*

The results indicate that entrepreneurs' decision-making had a significant direct impact on their performance in the structural model (r = .112). The standardised regression weights confirm a positive relationship, suggesting that improvements in decision-making are associated with corresponding increases in entrepreneurial performance. Thus, Hypothesis 1 (H1)nthat entrepreneurs' decision-making would impact performance—is supported by the data. This result emphasises the importance of decision-making abilities and skills in enhancing the performance of creative entrepreneurs in the fashion industry. It suggests that effective, timely, and adaptive decision-making is a critical determinant of business success, particularly in precarious work environments. Entrepreneurs who can navigate uncertainty through sound decisions are more likely to achieve favourable outcomes. Conversely, those lacking adaptive decision-making skills may struggle to perform effectively under such conditions. This highlights the central role of decision-making in shaping entrepreneurial performance.

5.7.2 Hypothesis Two

As recall, this hypothesis was proposed in Section 2.2.3 of Chapter Two.

> H_2: Perceived uncertainty would moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

As presented in Table 5.20, the baseline relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance was statistically significant. However, introducing perceived uncertainty as a moderator rendered the relationship statistically insignificant. Notably, the direction of the relationship shifted from positive ($r = .087$, $p = .002$) to negative ($r = –.056$, $p = .030$). Despite this shift, the interaction effect between decision-making and perceived uncertainty on performance was not significant. These findings indicate that perceived uncertainty does not significantly moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance outcomes. Instead, entrepreneurs with greater insight, knowledge, and awareness appear better equipped to navigate the uncertainties inherent in the fashion industry. Rather than serving as a true moderating factor, perceived uncertainty functions more as a contextual constraint, introducing complexity to decision-making processes without substantially altering their overall influence on performance.Therefore, the hypothesis that "perceived uncertainty would moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance" was not supported by the data.

5.7.3 Hypothesis Three

As a recall, this hypothesis was proposed in Section 2.2.4 of Chapter Two.

H_3: Entrepreneurs' taste would moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

As presented in Table 5.20, the baseline relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance was statistically significant. However, introducing taste as a moderator rendered the relationship statistically insignificant. Notably, the direction of the relationship shifted from positive (r=.028, p=.002) to negative (r= –.055, p=.136). Despite this shift, the effect of interaction between decision-making and taste on performance was insignificant. The shift emphasises an important reality: despite the intuitive appeal of taste, its influence on performance outcomes is limited. The interaction between decision-making and entrepreneurs' taste remains insignificant, suggesting that taste does not play a crucial role in translating decision-making into measurable results. Rather than serving as a moderator, taste appears to merely inform creative choices without the necessary adaptability to connect those choices with successful performance. The non-significant moderating role of taste implies that aesthetic judgment alone does not strengthen or weaken the link between decision-making and performance. This suggests that taste does not significantly influence how decision-making translates into performance outcomes. Hence, the hypothesis that "entrepreneurs taste would moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance" was not supported.

5.7.4 Hypothesis Four

As a reminder, this hypothesis was proposed in Section 2.25 of Chapter Two.

H_4: Strife/Competition would moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

As presented in Table 5.20, the baseline model revealed a statistically significant positive association between entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance. However, the introduction of strife as a moderating variable attenuated this relationship to a non-significant level ($r = .047$, $p = .062$; $r = .062$, $p = .058$). Notably, the direction of the relationship remained consistent, indicating that the presence of strife did not reverse the effect but rather diminished its statistical robustness. The interaction term (decision-making × strife/competition) also failed to reach statistical significance, indicating an absence of a moderating effect. This suggests that while strife may act as a contextual stimulus that elevates urgency or perceived stakes, it does not enhance the efficacy of decision-making processes in yielding favourable performance outcomes. Overall, strife appears to operate more as a contextual constraint than as an enabling condition for navigating uncertainty in precarious entrepreneurial environments. Consequently, the hypothesised moderating effect of strife on the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance was not supported.

5.7.5 Hypothesis Five

As a recall, this hypothesis was proposed in Section 2.2.6 of Chapter Two.

> H_5: Intuition would moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

As presented in Table 5.20, the baseline model revealed a statistically significant positive association between entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance.

However, the introduction of intuition as a moderating variable did not yield a statistically significant effect. Specifically, the direction of the relationship between decision-making and performance shifted from positive to negative with the inclusion of the interaction term($r = 0.14$, $p = .555$, $r = -.027$, $p = .212$). While the direct effect of intuition on performance was positive, it was not statistically significant, suggesting a limited standalone impact. More notably, the interaction term indicated that higher reliance on intuition in decision-making corresponded with a decline in entrepreneurial performance. This suggests that although entrepreneurs may use intuition for rapid decision-making or in familiar situations, its role in enhancing performance under uncertain or unfamiliar conditions is limited. Therefore, the hypothesis that intuition would moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance was not supported.

5.7.6 Hypothesis Six

As a reminder, this hypothesis was proposed in Section 2.2.7 of Chapter Two.

> H_6: Personal experiences would moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

As shown in Table 5.20, the baseline model revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance. However, the moderating effect of personal experience was not statistically significant. When the interaction term was introduced, the direction of the relationship remained negative and unchanged ($r = -.026$, $p = .233$; $r = -.026$, $p = .179$), suggesting a slight weakening effect, albeit not statistically meaningful. The hypothesis posited that personal experience would moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry. However, the interaction effect was not significant. Although the core association between decision-making and performance remained stable with the inclusion of experience, the data did not support the hypothesised moderation. The results suggest that while personal experience may influence how entrepreneurs make decisions, it does not significantly alter the strength or direction of their effect on performance. This implies that personal experiences guide judgment, but a lack of experience does not guarantee adaptability or success in precarious work contexts. This may imply that whether an entrepreneur had high or low levels of experience, the effectiveness of decision-making on performance remained relatively consistent. Therefore, the hypothesis that personal experience moderates this relationship was not supported.

5.7.7 Hypothesis Seven

As a recall, this hypothesis was proposed in Section 2.2.8 of Chapter Two.

> H_7 Social networks would moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

As presented in Table 5.20, the baseline model revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance. However, the moderating effect of social networks was not statistically significant. When the interaction term between decision-making and social networks was introduced, the direction of the relationship remained positive, and the correlation value slightly improved ($r = .104$, $p < .001$; $r = .006$, $p = .789$). Despite this marginal increase, the change was not statistically meaningful, and the overall pattern of the relationship remained largely unchanged. The non-significant interaction term suggests that social networks did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. One possible explanation is that the quality, competence, and timeliness of decision-making may outweigh the influence of social ties. It is also possible that reliance on redundant or homogeneous network connections limits the diversity and strategic value of such networks, thereby diminishing any moderating effect on decision outcomes. Consequently, the hypothesis that "social networks will moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance" was not supported.

5.7.8 Hypothesis Eight

As a recall, this hypothesis was proposed in Section 2.2.9 of Chapter Two.

H_8: Cultural values would moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

As presented in Table 5.20, the baseline model revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance. However, the moderating effect of cultural values was not statistically significant. When the interaction term between decision-making and cultural values was introduced, the direction of the relationship changed from negative to positive, and the correlation value slightly improved ($r = -.014$, $p = .501$; $r = .003$, $p = .790$). Despite this marginal increase, the change was not statistically meaningful, and the overall pattern of the relationship remained largely unchanged. Cultural values will moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry. The direct effect of cultural values on entrepreneurs' performance was not significant ($p = .501$). The non-significant role of cultural values implies that entrepreneurs may hold certain values such as respect, modesty and community-mindedness, but these values may not directly influence their performance outcomes. Decisions in precarious contexts may be shaped by market factors rather than values. This implies that the absence of a moderation effect suggests that while cultural values shape entrepreneurial identity or design preferences, they do not significantly alter how decision-making translates into business outcomes. Therefore, the hypothesis that "cultural values would moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance" was not supported.

5.7.9 Hypothesis Nine

As a recall, this hypothesis was proposed in Section of 2.2.9 of Chapter Two.

H_9: Cultural intermediaries would moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

As shown in Table 5.20, the baseline model revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance. However, the moderating effect of cultural intermediaries on this relationship was not statistically significant. When the interaction term between decision-making and cultural intermediaries was introduced, the direction of the relationship shifted from negative to positive, with a slight improvement in the correlation values (from $r = –0.019$, $p = 0.231$ to $r = 0.018$, $p =$

0.229). The results suggest that while cultural intermediaries may shape the production and consumption dynamics within entrepreneurial ecosystems, they do not significantly influence the strength or direction of the relationship between decision-making and performance. Consequently, the hypothesis that "cultural intermediaries moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance" was not supported by the data.

5.7.1.10 Hypothesis Ten

As a recall, this study hypothesis was proposed in Section 2.2.11 of Chapter Two.

> H_{10}: Resilience will mediate the relationship between decision making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

A key assumption in mediation analysis is that the independent variable must significantly predict the mediating variable and the mediator must have a direct effect on the outcome. As shown in Table 5.20, the baseline model revealed a statistically significant positive association between entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance ($r = .113$), indicating that effective decision-making is positively related to entrepreneurial outcomes. Further analysis demonstrated that decision-making also had a statistically significant direct effect on resilience ($r = .13$), while resilience, in turn, exhibited a significant positive relationship with performance ($r = .15$). These results satisfy the conditions for mediation as outlined in Baron et al., (1986) framework, suggesting the presence of an indirect pathway.

The results indicate that resilience partially mediates the relationship between decision-making and performance. In other words, entrepreneurs' decision-making contributes not only directly to performance but also indirectly through the enhancement of resilience. The mediation analysis confirmed that resilience partially mediates the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance. Specifically, the indirect path from decision-making to performance via resilience was significant, indicating that entrepreneurs with higher levels of resilience are better equipped to convert decision-making efforts into successful performance outcomes. This implies that decision-making processes are more effective when entrepreneurs possess or cultivate the psychological capacity to adapt, persist, and recover from setbacks in precarious business environments. The mediating role of resilience emphasizes its functional importance in bridging cognitive action (decision-making) and behavioural outcomes (performance), particularly within the volatile and uncertain conditions. Thus, resilience operates as a key strategy that facilitates the translation of strategic intent into tangible entrepreneurial success. This implies that resilience acts as a buffering mechanism, reducing the adverse effects of precarity and uncertainty. Therefore, the hypothesis that resilience mediates the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance in Ghana's fashion industry was supported.

5.8 Discussion of Key Findings

The primary objective of this chapter was to examine the impact of decision-making on the performance of entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry. It also explored the mechanisms through which decision-making influenced entrepreneurial performance, as well as the contextual factors that strengthened this relationship. The analysis was guided by two key theoretical frameworks, Neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio et al., 1991) and Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977) and informed by existing literature. Within this framework, the hypothesised relationships were systematically examined and interpreted.

Decision-making and entrepreneurial performance

The first hypothesis proposed that entrepreneurs' decision-making would have a significant impact on their performance. The results confirmed this assertion, revealing a statistically significant relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. This finding provides strong support for the initial hypothesis. Moreover, the predictive strength of decision-making indicates that performance in Ghana's fashion industry is shaped by entrepreneurs' decision-making abilities, skills, and practices. This underscores decision-making as not only a learned skill but also a strategic asset that, when effectively employed, enhances entrepreneurial outcomes—particularly within precarious and uncertain business environments like the Ghanaian fashion industry. The results point to a strong link between decision-making quality and entrepreneurial success in Ghana's fashion industry. Both financial and non-financial outcomes appear to be shaped by entrepreneurs' ability to navigate uncertainty through effective decision-making. This implies that failure in fashion ventures may reflect weaknesses in decision-making processes and strategic judgment, underscoring the critical role of decision-making as a core entrepreneurial competency.

The results of the present study aligned with a body of research that has established a strong link between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance (Caves, 2000; DeVanny, 2004; Weerasekara et al., 2021; Long, et al., 2021; Manolopoulos et al., 2022). Decision-making has been conceptualised in the literature as a strategic tool that contributes to both immediate operational efficiency and long-term business sustainability (Schreiber, 2014; Schreiber et al., 2018). For example, Weerasekara et al. (2021) found that SME performance was positively affected by specific decision-making styles. Long et al. (2021) reported that both causation and effectuation decision-making approaches were significant predictors of sustainable performance among new ventures. Earlier contributions by Amason and

Schweiger (1997) underscored the benefits of rational-strategic decision-making. Likewise, Okechukwu, Okoronkwo, and Obina (2018) demonstrated that decision-making under uncertainty could positively influence market outcomes and increase shareholder value in manufacturing firms.

Previous research has substantially enhanced understanding of the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. However, much of this work has paid limited attention to the institutional contexts within which decision-making occurs—particularly under conditions of uncertainty. Drawing on insights from neo-institutional theory, it is evident that fashion entrepreneurs operate within environments shaped by institutional pressures that promote conformity to prevailing norms and expectations (Scott, 1983). These pressures often manifest in the widespread adoption of similar design aesthetics, production techniques, marketing strategies, and distribution models across fashion enterprises. The findings of this study indicate that fashion entrepreneurs tend to make comparable managerial, operational, and strategic decisions, which collectively influence their performance. This suggests that institutional conformity in decision-making may enhance performance, particularly for businesses that align their practices with dominant industry logics and contextual norms.

Bourdieu's theory of practice emphasises that the actions and decisions of social actors, including fashion entrepreneurs, are deeply embedded within the cultural and social contexts in which they operate (Bourdieu, 1991). Rather than merely conforming to external norms, individuals actively navigate their environment through their habitus—an internalised system of dispositions shaped by past experiences and social conditions. In this view, entrepreneurial choices are not random but are guided by embodied knowledge and cultural capital, which influence how opportunities are perceived, evaluated, and acted upon. Consequently, the habitus plays a central role in shaping entrepreneurial behaviour and, ultimately, performance outcomes.

Fashion entrepreneurs who possess a strong grasp of industry trends and consumer preferences are better positioned to innovate whether through original design, curated collections, or strategic marketing that connects with their target market. The capacity to anticipate and respond to changing market demands contributes not only to financial success but also to non-financial outcomes such as brand recognition and customer loyalty. This highlights the significance of entrepreneurial decision-making, which is shaped by a complex interplay of external factors including market conditions, social structures, and institutional influences and internal capabilities and strategic judgement. Although a strong association exists between entrepreneurs' decision-making and their performance in Ghana's fashion sector, decision-making alone cannot fully explain their outcomes. This implies that other factors shape or complicate the impact of decision-making on business success.

Perceived uncertainty, decision-making and performance

It was hypothesised that perceived uncertainty would moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance. Moderation analysis using AMOS-based structural equation modeling (SEM) showed that perceived uncertainty reversed the direction of this relationship from positive to negative. While decision-making initially appeared to improve entrepreneurial performance, the presence of perceived uncertainty weakened this positive effect. Despite this shift, the moderating role of perceived uncertainty was not statistically significant. These findings indicate that although perceived uncertainty influences the decision-making–performance link, it does not substantially alter the overall entrepreneurial activities of fashion entrepreneurs. Perceived uncertainty did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance, as over time, it became a taken-for-granted feature of the entrepreneurial environment. From a neo-institutional perspective, such routinisation reflects the process by which repeated exposure to unpredictability leads to its normalisation within everyday practices (DiMaggio et al., 1991; Scott, 2008). Rather than being experienced as an external force that demands adjustment, uncertainty becomes embedded in the institutional fabric of entrepreneurial activity. In contexts characterised by chronic instability, such as Ghana's precarious fashion industry, entrepreneurs gradually adapt by internalising uncertainty as part of their operational logic. Consequently, uncertainty no longer functions as a mechanism that actively shapes or disrupts decision-making processes. Instead, it forms part of the contextual backdrop against which entrepreneurial actions unfold. This institutionalisation of uncertainty emphasizes how taken-for-granted conditions may lose their explanatory power in influencing behaviour, not because they are absent, but because they are omnipresent and no longer consciously negotiated.

This finding aligns with principles from Neo-institutionalism (DiMaggio et al., 1991; Pedersen et al., 2006) and Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977). It indicates that despite operating in a highly uncertain and trend-driven fashion industry, entrepreneurs adapt their practices in response to both internal and external pressures. The adoption of similar decision-making approaches and structures among entrepreneurs enable them navigate precarious conditions effectively. Thus, institutional pressures contribute to stability and foster homogeneity rather than disrupting the organisational field. The study underscores the relevance of neo-institutional theory in explaining how entrepreneurs navigate uncertainty within their industry context. It demonstrates that institutional pressures—whether normative, mimetic, or coercive—promote conformity among fashion entrepreneurs, fostering a shared repertoire of practices that support both stability and adaptability in the face of environmental volatility. Rather than destabilising the field, these pressures contribute to the institutionalisation of uncertainty as a taken-for-granted condition, thereby reinforcing organisational legitimacy and coherence. This challenges conventional claims that institutional pressures necessarily undermine stability, instead revealing the sector's resilience and the adaptive strategies embedded in everyday entrepreneurial routines.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, the finding that perceived uncertainty did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance can be understood through the concept of habitus—the system of durable dispositions that guide perception and action. In a field marked by ongoing precarity, such as the Ghanaian fashion industry, entrepreneurs develop a practical sense that enables them to navigate uncertainty as a routine condition. Over time, this repeated engagement with instability becomes embedded in the habitus, producing a form of embodied familiarity with unpredictable conditions. In this context, perceived uncertainty is no longer consciously interrogated or disruptive; rather, it is absorbed into the doxic order—the taken-for-granted assumptions that structure the field. What appears as uncertainty from an external or theoretical standpoint is, for these actors, simply the normal terrain of operation. As such, it no longer functions as a variable that significantly alters decision-making or performance, but becomes part of the background logic of practice within the field.

Entrepreneurs' taste, decision-making and performance

The analysis did not support the hypothesis that entrepreneurs' taste moderates the relationship between decision-making and performance. Rather, the findings indicate that taste functions as a moderating variable, shaping the pathway through which decision-making influences performance. From a Bourdieusian perspective, taste is not an individual or autonomous preference but a socially conditioned disposition, produced through entrepreneurs' embeddedness in specific social fields and relational networks (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu, 1993). Within the Ghanaian fashion industry, these networks facilitate the circulation of information and aesthetic cues, often giving rise to trend imitation and herd behaviour (Godart et al., 2009; Aspers, 2013). In such contexts, creative outputs are frequently aligned with prevailing stylistic norms, leading to a convergence in product designs and a saturation of similar fashion items. This tendency reflects the influence of the field's dominant doxa and the institutional pressure to conform in order to gain legitimacy and market acceptance (DiMaggio et al., 1983; Scott, 2008). As a result, entrepreneurial decision-making is filtered through socially validated tastes, which constrain the scope for novelty and strategic divergence. Consequently, taste lacks the autonomy and heterogeneity required to moderate the decision-making performance relationship effectively. Instead, it operates as a mediating mechanism, reinforcing normative expectations and structuring how creative decisions are formed, justified, and translated into performance outcomes.

Although Bourdieu (1984) conceptualises taste as a structuring force that moderates individual choices by reflecting ingrained aesthetic judgements, this study finds limited support for such a moderating effect on the relationship between decision-making and performance. Rather, the data suggest that taste reflects institutionalised expectations within the field serving as a form of cultural capital that guides conformity rather than enabling strategic distinctiveness (Godart et al., 2009; Aspers, 2013). In the Ghanaian fashion industry, shared aesthetic norms are reproduced through social ties and informal institutions that promote similarity in output. As such, taste operates within a constrained field shaped by doxic norms and pressures for legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008). These institutional forces diminish taste's capacity to function as a dynamic moderator of performance. Instead, taste appears to solidify existing trajectories of decision-making, limiting its influence to a reinforcing mechanism rather than a source of performance variation.

In the fashion industry, success is often determined more by alignment with evolving consumer tastes and aesthetic trends than by the functional utility of products. This creates a complex challenge for independent brands seeking to stand out, as such differentiation demands considerable skills, resources, and strategic acumen—assets not equally accessible to all entrepreneurs. This study examined the Ghanaian fashion industry in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, a period characterised by heightened uncertainty, shifting consumer preferences, and erratic demand. In response to these pressures, many entrepreneurs gravitated toward conformity, guided by institutional norms and shared understandings circulating through social networks. These dynamics shaped both their decision-making strategies and their performance outcomes. Although decision-making is critical to entrepreneurial success, it remains understudied in relation to its practical implications—particularly within volatile and institutionally embedded contexts such as the fashion sector.

Strife, decision-making and performance

The analysis did not support the hypothesis that strife or competitive intensity moderates the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance, as the moderating effect was statistically insignificant. This indicates that the influence of decision-making on performance remains stable, irrespective of the degree of competition within the environment. In other words, entrepreneurs' performance appears to depend more on the nature and timeliness of their decisions than on external rivalries. This outcome contrasts with Bourdieu’s (1996) depiction of competition within social fields, where advancement often entails displacing others through ongoing struggles for symbolic dominance. Bourdieu described these dynamics using militaristic metaphors, such as “symbolic revolutions” or “wars,” to illustrate the contested nature of positioning in social spaces (Alacovska et al., 2024). However, in highly informal or community-oriented entrepreneurial ecosystems, such as Ghana’s fashion sector, collaboration and shared networks may reduce the adversarial nature of competition. This form of “coopetition”, a blend of cooperation and competition, can soften the effects of rivalry, thereby weakening its moderating role. Moreover, the findings challenge assertions by neo-institutional theorists that fashion entrepreneurs are primarily driven by pressures for legitimacy, client satisfaction, and reputation. In such contexts, competition is often associated with imitation and conformity rather than with strategic innovation or differentiation. This tendency toward herding behaviour may lead to convergence across firms, where competitive dynamics fail to significantly distinguish successful entrepreneurs from others, thus diluting the performance-enhancing potential of competition.

According to Franssen et al. (2016), drawing on Bourdieu’s theory, social actors become accustomed to competition, which functions not simply as external pressure but as a structuring principle of the organisational field. Competition is framed as an identity logic—pervasive and general, where all actors continuously vie for advantage. Within the fashion industry, this field is defined by struggles over different forms of capital: cultural, economic, social, and symbolic. Entrepreneurs operate within these dynamics, and success is shaped not only by competitive intensity but also by their ability to navigate and leverage the field's structures. This highlights the variation in entrepreneurial decision-making approaches, strategies, and skillsets. Those with well-developed decision-making capacities can perform successfully, regardless of how fierce the competition is, because their performance stems from internalised, field-specific practices rather than reactive behaviour. Furthermore, social capital such as industry relationships, affiliations, and networks plays a crucial role. Entrepreneurs who strategically activate these connections often gain a competitive edge, independent of market rivalry. From a neo-institutional perspective, fashion entrepreneurs improve their performance not by directly engaging in competitive battles, but by adapting their decisions to align with institutional expectations. In this context, legitimacy and reputational conformity matter more than rivalry, thereby weakening competition's moderating role in performance outcomes.

Intuition, decision-making and performance

It was hypothesised that intuition would moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance. However, the analysis indicated that the moderating effect of entrepreneurs' intuition on this relationship was statistically insignificant. This implies that fashion entrepreneurs who rely heavily on intuition may not necessarily achieve better performance outcomes. In fact, excessive reliance on intuition could negatively influence their results.

Although intuition remains integral to creative decision-making, its contribution to enhancing entrepreneurial performance appears limited.

This suggests that other factors such as strategic thinking, learned experience, or access to resources may play a more decisive role in shaping outcomes.Interpreted through Bourdieu's theory of practice, this finding underscores the importance of habitus, field, and capital in understanding entrepreneurial behaviour.

Intuition may be embedded within an entrepreneur's habitus—those internalised dispositions formed by past experiences and social contexts. However, in Bourdieu's view, success in a given field (such as the fashion industry) depends not only on one's habitus, but also on the effective mobilisation of various forms of capital (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic) in accordance with the field's logic. If intuitive practices are not aligned with the dominant logic or do not convert into valued capital, their influence on performance remains constrained. Thus, decision-making informed solely by intuition, without strategic calibration or embeddedness within the field's power structures, may limit rather than enhance entrepreneurial effectiveness.

Ultimately, entrepreneurs' success appears to be shaped more by their personal attributes and the cumulative effect of their adaptive strategies than by intuitive judgment alone. This finding contrasts with earlier studies such as Seifert et al. (2009), which highlighted the positive role of intuition in managerial forecasting and business decisions in the music industry. Similarly, Sanda et al. (2023) found that intuitive decision-making had a beneficial impact on the performance of fashion entrepreneurs. The divergence in findings may be explained by contextual differences such as variations in entrepreneurial experience, personal traits, available resources, institutional norms, and the pursuit of legitimacy.

The finding that intuition did not significantly moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance offers important insights into the dynamics of entrepreneurial behaviour in the fashion industry. This outcome may be attributed to the influence of institutional constraints specifically normative, coercive, and mimetic pressures (Scott, 2008), which can limit the space for intuitive decision-making. In highly structured or legitimacy-driven environments, entrepreneurs may prioritise practical considerations, client demands, and market signals over instinctual responses. Furthermore, intuition may be so deeply embedded within the institutional and cultural context of the fashion industry that it becomes a taken-for-granted practice. As such, it does not serve as a distinguishing variable that explains variation in entrepreneurial performance. Instead, its influence may be more salient in shaping other aspects of the entrepreneurial process, such as creativity, design orientation, or strategic flexibility, rather than directly impacting performance outcomes.

These findings suggest that while intuition remains a subtle and contextually relevant factor, it is not a dominant driver of performance among fashion entrepreneurs. Rather, their decision-making reflects a negotiation between short-term responsiveness and long-term strategic aims, shaped by broader institutional norms and the pursuit of legitimacy. This contrasts with studies such as Seifert et al. (2009) and Sanda et al. (2023), which highlight the benefits of intuitive judgments in other creative sectors, indicating that the role of intuition may be more context-dependent than previously assumed.

Experience, decision-making and performance

It was initially hypothesised that personal experience would moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

However, the results did not support this proposition. The analysis showed that the inclusion of personal experience did not significantly alter the relationship between decision-making and performance, which remained negative. Although prior research (Rasmussen et al., 2002; Juliusson et al., 2008; Dew et al., 2009; Faroque, 2021) has highlighted the role of past experiences in shaping future decisions and influencing performance, this study found no statistically significant moderating effect. In essence, the presence of personal experience did not amplify or diminish the impact of decision-making on performance outcomes.

Additionally, the sample of entrepreneurs in this study had broadly similar backgrounds, particularly in terms of informal training and apprenticeship-based learning. As a result, the variance in personal experience may not have been substantial enough to produce significant moderating effects. When entrepreneurs undergo comparable forms of practical, tacit knowledge acquisition within similar socio-institutional settings, their experiences may reinforce shared norms and routines rather than generate diverse decision-making approaches or performance outcomes. This further supports the idea that institutional embeddedness, rather than individual experience, plays a more influential role in shaping entrepreneurial behaviour within the Ghanaian fashion industry.

Although Bourdieu posits that past experiences shape habitus, structuring present choices and future outcomes, this study suggests that such accumulated experiences may not significantly influence performance outcomes in the Ghanaian fashion industry. In highly dynamic and trend-driven sectors like fashion, past experiences can become outdated, particularly when entrepreneurs are confronted with rapidly shifting consumer preferences, styles, and operational models. This could explain why personal experience did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in this study. The findings of this study, which show that personal experience does not significantly moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance, can be further understood through the lens of neo-institutional theory. This perspective highlights how entrepreneurial behaviour is often shaped more by institutional pressures, normative, coercive, and mimetic than by individual traits or accumulated experience (Scott, 2008; Greenwood et al., 2017; Suddaby et al., 2022). In this context, fashion entrepreneurs may feel compelled to align their actions with prevailing industry norms, customer expectations, and the behaviours of successful peers to maintain legitimacy. As such, the influence of personal experience may be muted by the need to conform to the institutional logic of the field. Neo-institutional theory also posits that in uncertain or dynamic environments, actors tend to engage in mimetic isomorphism—replicating perceived best practices rather than relying on past experiential knowledge (DiMaggio et al., 1983; Lounsbury, 2008). This may explain why experience did not significantly strengthen or weaken the decision-making–performance relationship: even experienced entrepreneurs may adopt decisions that reflect broader institutional expectations rather than lessons drawn from the past. Moreover, as the fashion industry is characterised by rapidly evolving trends and symbolic demands, prior experiences may lose relevance if not continually updated to align with the changing field (Bitektine et al., 2015). Thus, while experience contributes to entrepreneurs' habitus, its effects are embedded within and constrained by the institutional environment, reducing its distinct impact on performance. Entrepreneurs are compelled to look beyond past practices and instead remain agile, drawing on real-time market feedback, contemporary trends, and evolving industry norms to guide their decisions.

Social networks, decision-making and performance

It was hypothesised that social networks would moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance in Ghana’s fashion industry. However, the findings revealed no statistically significant moderating effect of social networks on this relationship. While social networks did not alter the link between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance, the analysis did reveal a significant association between social support and decision-making itself. This suggests that although networks play a role in shaping how decisions are made, they do not necessarily enhance or diminish their impact on performance outcomes.

These findings contrast with those of Fernández-Pérez et al. (2016), who demonstrated that CEOs' social support systems influence cognitive outcomes—such as decision-making—which, in turn, affect organisational performance. Their study also emphasised the significance of network size and composition in shaping strategic flexibility. Similarly, Schreiber (2018) highlighted that success in the cultural industries often depends on an individual’s ability to navigate and build effective networks within the organisational field.

In contrast, the results of this study suggest that in the Ghanaian fashion industry, the quality of social ties—characterised by trust, reciprocity, and access to useful resources—may be more influential than the size or formal structure of one’s network. This aligns with the findings of Oluseye (2016), who observed that when entrepreneurs rely on similar or redundant connections, the strategic value of their networks diminishes. As a result, such homogeneity can weaken the potential for networks to significantly moderate decision-making outcomes.

In the context of the Ghanaian fashion industry, this study suggests that the presence of social networks may weaken the relationship between decision-making and performance. While fashion entrepreneurs place high value on both personal and professional networks—such as close relationships and colleagues, the complexities and ambiguities involved in maintaining these connections can discourage sustained business engagement. Supporting this view, Chen et al. (2016) observed that extensive social networks can sometimes undermine decision-making effectiveness and performance, as the resulting information overload promotes rivalry and reduces distinct competitive strengths.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, this phenomenon can be understood through the concept of polymorphism, where actors participate simultaneously in multiple social fields, leading to overlapping and sometimes conflicting social obligations within their networks. This multiplicity complicates decision-making as entrepreneurs navigate varied expectations and demands across different relational contexts. Additionally, DiMaggio et al.'s (1983) theory of institutional isomorphism offers insight into how entrepreneurs may conform to prevailing norms and practices within their networks, promoting homogeneity rather than differentiation. This pressure to conform—whether coercive, mimetic, or normative—can lead to similar behaviours and decisions across the industry, limiting the strategic value of social networks and potentially dampening their positive effect on performance.

Cultural values, decision-making and performance

It was hypothesised that cultural values would moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance in Ghana’s fashion industry. However, the study found no supporting evidence for this moderating effect. Prior research on the interplay between decision-making, cultural values, and performance has produced mixed results. Some studies highlight a positive association, highlighting the importance of cultural values in shaping entrepreneurial decisions and outcomes (e.g., Hofstede, 2011; Triandis, 2018). Conversely, other research points to the complexities and additional costs that integrating cultural values can introduce, particularly in product design and development processes (e.g., Moon et al., 2013; Singh et al., 2020). These conflicting findings suggest that the role of cultural values in entrepreneurial decision-making and performance remains context-dependent and warrants further exploration.For example, Hwang et al. (2014) found a positive relationship between decision-making and cultural values, emphasizing the important role cultural values play in shaping these connections. Similarly, Razzaghi et al. (2009) reported that designers' creative processes are influenced by their own cultural and societal values. However, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) highlighted that neglecting cultural considerations in product design can lead to additional costs in research and development, especially for culturally specific and customised products. Likewise, De Souza and Dejean (1999) noted that designers often view product customization as conflicting with the principles of mass production and dominant industry trends. The study's results indicated that cultural values did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. This finding contrasts with some earlier research but aligns with other studies that found no significant influence of cultural values on the decision-making and entrepreneurship relationship, often attributing this to the effects of globalization (Hofstede, 2001).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, social actors' capital and habitus are shaped by their organisational environment, leading to a realignment of their values over time (Bourdieu, 1990; Emirbayer et al., 2008). Bourdieu's theory emphasizes that personal values and practices are not fixed; rather, they are fluid and continuously adapt based on the contexts in which fashion entrepreneurs operate (Swartz, 1997). In the fashion industry, this means that a designer's, marketer's, or brand manager's approach is influenced by their experiences, the capital they possess, and the dynamics of the field they navigate (Thornton, 2008; Bruni et al., 2008). This ongoing process of shaping and reshaping one's habitus highlights how closely personal values are intertwined with organisational and market environments (Bourdieu, 1998; Swartz, 2002). As fashion entrepreneurs engage with the industry field, their habitus and cultural capital are continuously shaped and reshaped. Consequently, their values and practices may evolve in response to market trends, client demands, and competitive pressures.

Cultural intermediaries, decision-making and performance

It was hypothesised that cultural intermediaries would moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. However, the results of this study did not support this hypothesis. While the direct relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance was negative, the presence of cultural intermediaries appeared to reverse the direction of this relationship, suggesting that they enhance the link between decision-making and performance. Despite this, the moderating effect of cultural intermediaries was not statistically significant. These findings contrast with those of Lin, Zeng, Liu, and Li (2016), who found that firms' connections to cultural intermediaries positively influence both financial and innovative performance. Similarly, Negi and Pabalkar (2020) demonstrated that influencer blog posts significantly affect consumer decisions, boosting entrepreneurs' long-term marketing outcomes. In this study, however, the expected significant moderating role of cultural intermediaries on the decision-making and performance relationship was not confirmed.

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural intermediaries in the creative industries, these actors play a key role in shaping individuals' social and cultural capital. However, this perspective has faced criticism for prioritising the economic value of cultural products over their social and cultural significance, which has contributed to changing perceptions of intermediaries within Ghana's fashion industry. Critics argue that the cultural and creative industries can sometimes undermine genuine cultural production (Gernham, 2005; Pratt et al., 2009). In the Ghanaian context, the high fees charged by cultural intermediaries for endorsements, promotions, and partnerships make them less appealing to some established fashion brands. Many entrepreneurs perceive these intermediaries as exploitative, which damages their credibility and trustworthiness. As a result, cultural intermediaries tend to focus their efforts on emerging and aspirational brands, which rely heavily on intermediaries to build legitimacy and enhance the appeal of their fashion products. Despite these mixed perceptions, cultural intermediaries remain influential by helping decision-makers interpret what is culturally relevant at a given time and by shaping how fashion products resonate with the public.

Resilience, decision-making and performance

Hypothesis ten anticipated that resilience would mediate the link between decision-making and performance among entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry. The data corroborates this, indicating that resilience is an important mechanism connecting decision-making with business outcomes. The findings suggest that entrepreneurs' increasing resilience enables them to thrive despite challenging environments. Decision-making practices contribute to this resilience, which in turn enhances performance, implying that strong decision-making equips fashion entrepreneurs with the capacity to actively face and overcome industry obstacles.

When fashion entrepreneurs make informed and deliberate decisions, they are more likely to achieve positive outcomes that strengthen their capacity to plan and manage industry challenges. The resilience of fashion brands in the face of unexpected major disruptions depends both on strategic decisions and proactive measures implemented well before a crisis, as well as on agile operational choices made immediately after an incident. Together, these factors enable fashion brands to maintain continuity and recover quickly from precarious situations. This aligns with the findings of Mishra, Allen, and Pearman (2015), whose study on decision-making during emergencies demonstrated that analytical decision-making significantly improves the ability to respond resiliently to unforeseen disruptions. The results indicate that resilience significantly influences entrepreneurs' performance. This aligns with the findings of Fisher, Maritz, and Lobo (2016), who emphasized that resilience plays a crucial role in achieving and sustaining entrepreneurial success. Their study shows that resilient entrepreneurs are better equipped to thrive and perform well in their ventures. The ability to recover from setbacks enables fashion entrepreneurs to develop effective strategies, make timely decisions, and seize opportunities despite challenges, ultimately driving improved performance and business success.

Within the framework of neo-institutional theory, decision-making functions as a protective mechanism that empowers fashion entrepreneurs to demonstrate resilience and make effective choices despite prevailing institutional pressures. Such decisions not only enhance adaptability but also contribute to improved entrepreneurial performance. Resilience allows entrepreneurs to align their operations with institutional norms while maintaining the flexibility necessary to navigate changing environments. When examining the mediating role of resilience between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance, it is important to acknowledge existing studies—such as those by Mishra et al. (2015) and Fisher et al. (2016)—which have explored the connections between decision-making and resilience, as well as between resilience and performance. However, there remains a paucity of research that provides a comprehensive, evidence-based explanation of how resilience mediates the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial outcomes. Most studies have addressed isolated aspects of this nexus, rather than fully capturing how decision-making influences resilience and, consequently, entrepreneurs' performance.

5.9 Postscript Analysis

The study employed Neo-institutional theory (DiMaggio et al., 1991; Zilber, 2002; Strandgaard et al., 2006; Dobbin, 2008; Scott et al., 2014) and Bourdieu's theory (Bourdieu, 1977; Sieweke, 2014) of practice to investigate how fashion entrepreneurs operate within a regulated and dynamic market environment. Viewing the industry through the lenses of Bourdieusian and Neo-institutionalism provided valuable insight into the decision-making processes and the factors that influence entrepreneurs' decisions and performance within the Ghanaian fashion industry. The results indicated that the fashion industry's institutions both guide and limit the decisions and performance of industry players. These players adhere to routines, reputations, conventions, and procedures in response to the uncertainties of the industry. Despite originating from different continents, these two theories share important assumptions, particularly their rejection of rationality and their emphasis on socialisation within an organisational field, which elucidates how entrepreneurs make decisions and navigate the uncertainties within their field.

The results showed a strong and interrelated connection between entrepreneurs' intuition, resilience, and experience, and how these internal resources influence performance outcomes in the Ghanaian fashion industry. These capabilities do not function in isolation; rather, they interact in dynamic and context-sensitive ways that enable entrepreneurs to navigate uncertainty, make timely decisions, and recover from setbacks in fluid and informal market environments.

Intuition, often described as a form of non-linear, experience-based knowledge, plays a critical role in decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. Within this study, entrepreneurs demonstrated an ability to make rapid judgements without formal analysis, particularly in moments of market volatility or limited information. Experience, accumulated over time through practice and exposure to industry-specific challenges, sharpened this intuitive capacity by equipping entrepreneurs with pattern recognition skills and tacit knowledge, in line with prior research on experiential learning and entrepreneurial judgement.

Resilience, meanwhile, emerged as a critical psychological resource that enabled entrepreneurs to persist despite adversity. Rather than being a static trait, resilience in this context was shown to be shaped and strengthened through decision-making processes, particularly in the wake of post-pandemic uncertainty. This finding nuances existing literature, which typically treats resilience as an antecedent to decision-making, by revealing how entrepreneurial decision-making also builds resilience over time. Making adaptive and purposeful decisions in precarious situations appeared to reinforce entrepreneurs' self-efficacy and capacity to withstand future disruptions.

The results suggest that intuition, experience, and resilience function as a mutually reinforcing triad, where intuition draws from experience, experience deepens through repeated exposure to complex decision-making, and resilience is cultivated through adaptive responses to adversity. This interrelationship was crucial for sustaining performance in a resource-constrained and rapidly evolving environment like the Ghanaian fashion industry. Unlike prior studies that primarily highlight the influence of resilience on decision-making, this study presents a compelling insight: decision-making itself can strengthen resilience. In precarious and resource-limited contexts, the act of making informed, context-sensitive decisions appears to build adaptive capacity, equipping entrepreneurs with the psychological fortitude to withstand ongoing challenges.

The results of this study highlights the strategic importance of cultural intermediaries (CIs) in the decision-making processes of fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana, particularly during the production phase of the value creation process. Quantitative results, reflected in high factor loadings (e.g., CI1 = .838; CI2 = .838; CI3 = .761; CI4 = .866), reveal a strong reliance on bloggers, influencers, and other gatekeepers in navigating aesthetic preferences, market uncertainties, and trend alignment. These intermediaries serve not only as sources of information but as collaborators whose involvement helps ensure that the final products resonate with consumer tastes.

Despite their value, the study found that fashion entrepreneurs, especially emerging brands are less likely to engage CIs in marketing and supply chain-related decisions due to the high financial costs involved. Instead, some entrepreneurs resort to informal arrangements such as barter exchanges, offering clothing or styling services in return for promotional support. This adaptive strategy reflects the realities of operating in a resource-constrained, informal sector, where relational capital and non-monetary exchanges are leveraged to sustain visibility and market relevance. These insights reaffirm the role of cultural intermediaries in shaping creative decision-making, while highlighting the contextual constraints that govern the extent and form of their engagement across the entrepreneurial value chain.

Although hope was not explicitly examined in the quantitative component of this study, it remains a conceptually significant construct with considerable explanatory potential. Future research could investigate the mediating role of hope in the relationship between entrepreneurial decision-making and performance, as well as its influence on the relationship between resilience and decision-making. Given the precarious nature of entrepreneurship in resource-constrained environments, hope may function as a strategic psychological mechanism, enabling entrepreneurs to sustain agency, navigate adversity, and remain committed to long-term goals amid ongoing uncertainty. The correlation matrix revealed a strong positive relationship between resilience and social networks. This suggests that entrepreneurs with stronger social ties may develop greater resilience through shared experiences, emotional support, and resource exchange. In contexts like the Ghanaian fashion industry, where formal support systems are limited, these networks likely serve as critical buffers against stress and uncertainty, reinforcing entrepreneurs' capacity to adapt and persevere.

The absence of statistically significant relationships among some variables examined in this study may be attributed to several interrelated and nuanced factors. First, the Ghanaian fashion industry's informal and highly fluid nature, especially within contexts marked by precarious working conditions and resource constraints, introduces considerable complexity that can weaken or obscure expected associations. Traditional entrepreneurial frameworks and decision-making models, often developed in more formalised and stable settings, may fail to fully capture the lived realities, adaptive strategies, and non-linear behaviours of fashion entrepreneurs working in such dynamic and uncertain environments. These contextual complexities may also manifest in heterogeneity among entrepreneurs in terms of experience, access to resources, and market positioning, further complicating the detection of clear patterns.

Second, measurement challenges must be considered. Constructs developed in different cultural or industrial contexts may not fully resonate or capture the nuances of local entrepreneurial practices and meanings. Issues around construct validity, reliability, and contextual fit can attenuate observed relationships. For instance, scales or indicators designed for formal sectors may inadequately reflect informal sector dynamics, leading to measurement error or conceptual mismatches. Third, it is plausible that some hypothesised relationships are contingent upon unmeasured moderating or mediating variables not included in the current analytical model. Factors such as informal networks, social capital, cultural norms, or external shocks (e.g., economic fluctuations or policy changes) may shape how decision-making translates into performance in complex and non-linear ways.

Beyond these empirical and contextual considerations, it is important to reflect on the broader methodological discourse surrounding statistical significance. As McShane et al. (2019) argue, strict adherence to conventional thresholds for statistical significance (e.g., $p < 0.05$) can obscure meaningful patterns and lead to an overemphasis on arbitrary cutoffs rather than substantive understanding. They advocate for a move away from dichotomous significance testing towards more nuanced interpretations that consider effect sizes, confidence intervals, and the practical implications of findings within their context. Applying this perspective, the lack of statistical significance in this study should not be interpreted as evidence of no effect but rather as a prompt to explore the complexity of entrepreneurial decision-making with greater analytical flexibility and contextual sensitivity.

Moreover, these non-significant findings can provide valuable insights and serve as informal training mechanisms for entrepreneurs. Understanding where expected relationships do not hold may help entrepreneurs reassess assumptions, refine their decision-making strategies, and adapt more effectively to the realities of the Ghanaian fashion industry. By recognising the limits and contingencies of certain approaches, entrepreneurs can better navigate uncertainty and develop resilience in the face of market volatility. The results highlight the critical importance of adopting context-sensitive research approaches that incorporate local realities and complexities. They also underscore the need for further research using refined measurement instruments, larger and more diverse samples, and analytical models that explicitly account for potential moderators and mediators. Embracing methodological pluralism and moving beyond rigid significance thresholds can deepen understanding of entrepreneurial dynamics in the Ghanaian fashion industry and similar informal sector contexts.

5.10 General Discussion

The study examined two main objectives: first, to examine how precarity influences entrepreneurial decision-making and the role of hope in this process within Ghana's fashion industry; and second, to explore how decision-making affects entrepreneurs' performance, along with the factors that shape this relationship. Research activities were carried out in three key entrepreneurial hubs in Ghana—Tamale, Kumasi, and Accra. An exploratory sequential mixed methods design guided the research. The study began with a qualitative phase involving in-depth interviews with 60 fashion entrepreneurs across the three regions. This phase explored how precarious conditions and hope influenced entrepreneurial decision-making. Insights from the qualitative data informed the development of instruments used in the subsequent quantitative phase, during which 732 fashion entrepreneurs completed structured questionnaires. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis, while the quantitative data were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The study was grounded in two key theoretical frameworks: Bourdieu's theory of practice and neo-institutional theory.Two main research questions guided the qualitative phase: (i)How do precarious working conditions influence decision-making among entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry? (ii) How does hope orient and shape decision-making among these entrepreneurs? Thematic analysis revealed that key elements of precarity in the Ghanaian fashion industry include limited access to credit, inadequate institutional support, market uncertainty, and an unstable client base.

The findings of the qualitative study illustrate that precarity in Ghana's fashion industry is multifaceted, encompassing not only economic hardship but also uncertainty, limited social and institutional support, and a lack of access to education and technical expertise (cultural capital). While consistent with established literature, this study expands current understanding by revealing the critical role of non-economic factors—such as day-to-day operational challenges, managerial capacity, and training deficits—in influencing the decisions and success trajectories of fashion entrepreneurs. This finding links to key Human Resource Management (HRM) issues such as skills development, capacity building, and employee support systems. The lack of access to education and technical expertise reflects gaps in training and talent development—core HRM functions. Similarly, weak managerial capacity and institutional support highlight deficiencies in leadership development, organisational structure, and strategic HR planning. These HRM issues ultimately affect how fashion entrepreneurs recruit, train, manage, and retain talent, which in turn impacts business performance and sustainability.

Similarly, the qualitative findings reveal that hope—anchored in the aspiration for a better future through work—functions as both a strategic force and an organising principle in the decision-making of fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana. To navigate the uncertainties of a precarious industry, these entrepreneurs rely on proximal relational infrastructure—including close-knit social ties, informal networks, and community-based support. The process of forming and nurturing these relationships is deliberate, with each interaction shaping entrepreneurial choices and influencing performance outcomes. These relational forms of capital are actively cultivated within a hopeful, future-oriented mindset, enabling entrepreneurs to persist and adapt despite structural limitations. In this context, hope operates not only as an emotional motivator but also as a strategic resource guiding risk assessment, opportunity recognition, and long-term planning.

The study shows that factors like intuition, personal taste, resilience, cultural values, life experiences, social ties, and even adversity significantly influence the decision-making processes of fashion entrepreneurs. Yet, these influences are not experienced uniformly. Entrepreneurs interpret these factors differently, leading to varying effects on their choices and business outcomes. The variation resulted in inconclusive findings, reflecting the subjective and context-specific dynamics of entrepreneurial performance and pointing to the importance of exploring these patterns in broader populations.

In the quantitative study, which is the quantitative aspect of the study ten hypotheses were examined. The study confirmed that resilience serves as a mediator in the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. However, several other factors were not found to significantly moderate this relationship. Specifically, entrepreneurs' taste, intuition, perceived uncertainty, strife or competition, social networks, cultural intermediaries, and cultural values did not demonstrate a moderating effect. These findings suggest that while resilience plays a pivotal role in shaping outcomes, the influence of other personal and sociocultural factors on the link between decision-making and performance may be more nuanced or indirect than initially anticipated.

The qualitative and quantitative findings complement each other effectively. The qualitative data highlighted resilience as a crucial strategy and personal trait for navigating precarity, a point reinforced by the quantitative results, which confirmed resilience's significant mediating role between decision-making and performance. Similarly, the qualitative findings pointed to a minimal reliance on intuition, a conclusion supported by the quantitative analysis showing that intuition did not significantly moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance. Likewise, the limited role of personal experience identified qualitatively was echoed in the quantitative results, which found no significant moderating effect of personal experience on the decision-making–performance link.

The qualitative findings also revealed a limited role for taste, which was supported by the quantitative results indicating no significant moderating effect of taste on the relationship between decision-making and performance. Similarly, strife and competition emerged in the qualitative data but did not demonstrate a significant moderating influence in the quantitative phase. The influence of cultural intermediaries and cultural values was also minimal, with both qualitative and quantitative findings showing no significant moderation of the decision-making–performance relationship. Additionally, social networks, despite their perceived importance, did not significantly moderate this relationship according to both qualitative insights and quantitative analysis. Lastly, perceived uncertainty was identified qualitatively but was not found to have a significant moderating effect in the quantitative results.

The qualitative findings played a crucial role in shaping the quantitative measures used in this study. Themes that arose during the qualitative phase formed the basis for building the scales tested in the quantitative phase, where their reliability and validity were confirmed via principal component analysis. While measures from other fields existed, adopting them could have weakened the cultural and contextual relevance essential to understanding Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs. Developing scale items directly from the study context ensured the instruments are both meaningful and applicable, enhancing their usefulness within the target group. These findings are visually represented in the empirical model shown in Figure 2.

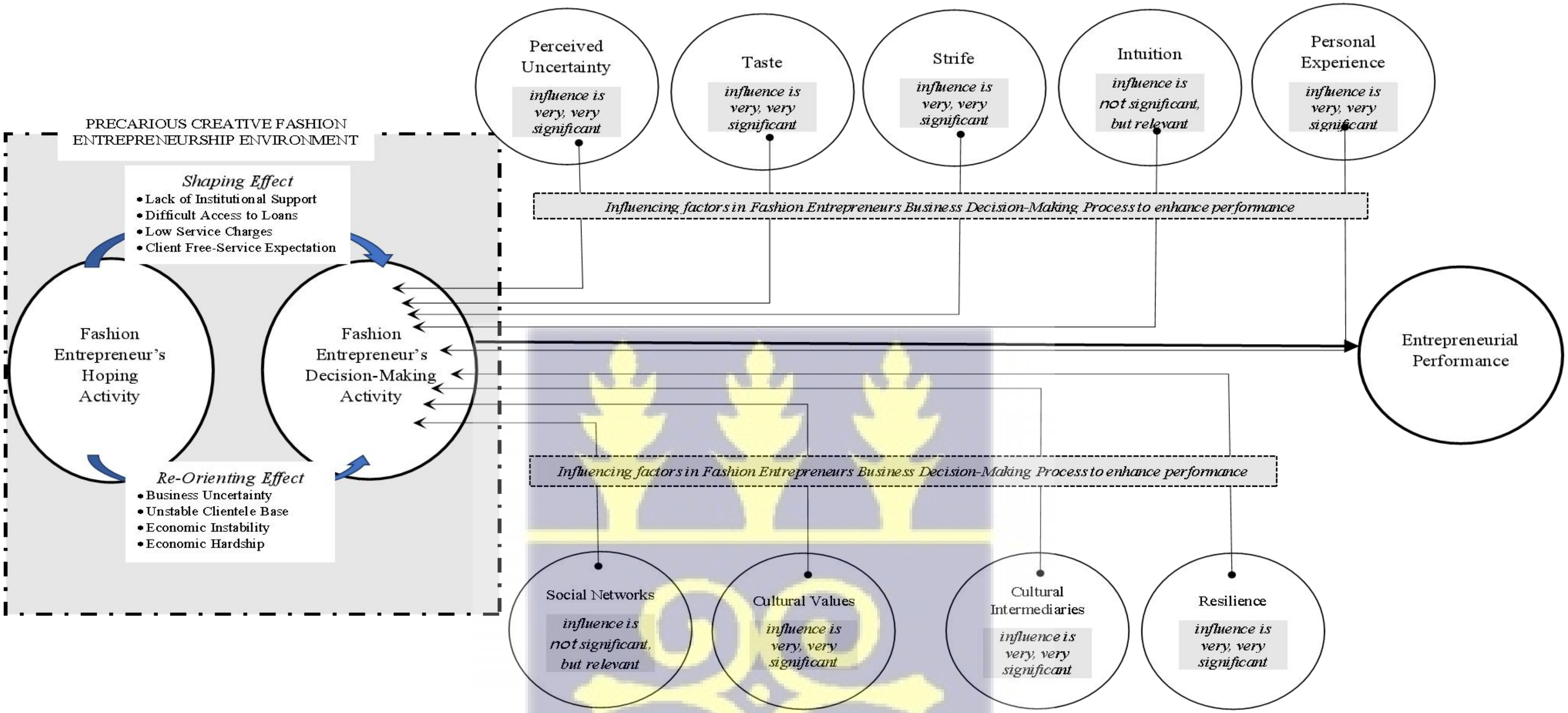

Figure 6.1 Revised Conceptual Framework of Entrepreneurs' Decision-Making and Performance

5.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter began by discussing the reliability scores of the instruments used in the study, followed by an overview of the demographic profile of the 732 respondents. To develop and validate the measurement instruments for the study's conceptual framework, principal component analysis (PCA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were conducted. Detailed explanations were provided on psychometric methods for assessing reliability, dimensionality, and construct validity. Statistical analyses were performed using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 21.0 for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for descriptive statistics and demographic profiling. The chapter concluded with an examination of the structural paths representing the hypothesised relationships within the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The concluding chapter provides a summary of this study, conclusion, recommendations, implications and direction for future studies. In a broader sense, it evaluates some critical lessons drawn from the study and discusses the contribution this research makes to theory, practice and policy. The chapter is segmented into five key parts. First, the chapter provides a summary of the research problem, research objectives, and presents major outcomes of each objective. Following this, the second part of the chapter presents the conclusion, as well as recommendations and implications for research and practice. Lastly, the study discusses the limitations of this research by pointing out relevant research avenues for examining entrepreneurs' decision-making and entrepreneurial performance in the fashion industry.

6.1 Summary of Findings

This section summarised the key findings from both the qualitative and quantitative analyses.

6.1.1 Summary of findings from the qualitative analysis

The following key findings were made from the qualitative analysis:

i. Analysis of entrepreneurs' perceptions of industrial challenges within Ghana's fashion landscape revealed that workers must navigate multiple hardships while simultaneously coordinating and managing complex supply chain activities—from sourcing raw materials to production and distribution—often within self-enterprising and resource-constrained environments. In particular, owner-managers reported persistent difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled labour. Moreover, many entrepreneurs expressed frustration with the government's perceived lack of interest and support in addressing both individual concerns and broader industry challenges, a situation seen to exacerbate the already precarious working conditions in the sector.

ii. Entrepreneurs perceived the process of establishing a fashion business in Ghana as constrained by systemic gaps, particularly the lack of access to educational training programmes. This limitation was viewed as a major obstacle to skills development. Furthermore, the absence of formal standards and regulatory institutions was seen to erode credibility and weaken customer confidence in their businesses.

iii. Findings from the study reveal that the decision-making processes of Ghanaian fashion entrepreneurs are shaped by a range of factors, though outcomes were inconclusive across several dimensions—including perceived uncertainty, taste, intuition, personal experience, competition, cultural values, cultural intermediaries, resilience, and social networks. This ambiguity highlights the nuanced and context-dependent nature of entrepreneurial decision-making, pointing to the need for more targeted research to clarify these relationships.

iv. Findings indicated that hope was central to how fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana approached business development. It functioned as both a source of motivation and a strategic lens through which they made decisions. By envisioning a more secure future, entrepreneurs developed creative tactics that enabled them to navigate uncertainty and sustain their ventures.

v. The findings on performance measurement and the identification of key performance indicators in Ghana's fashion industry revealed important insights. The study showed that in the informal economy, performance was assessed using a range of both tangible and intangible indicators. These measures varied significantly across individuals, reflecting the subjective and context-specific nature of how success was understood and evaluated by fashion entrepreneurs.

vi. Findings from the study showed that, in their efforts to overcome industry challenges, fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana strategically built and maintained relationships as a central business strategy. These connections spanning personal, professional, and spiritual domains were key to their ability to withstand precarity. By drawing support from family, friends, customers, suppliers, peers, community networks, institutional actors, and faith, entrepreneurs created resilient systems of support around their ventures.

vii. Findings from the qualitative study on success factors in Ghana's fashion industry revealed that financial profitability alone does not define business success. Rather, entrepreneurial achievements are shaped by a combination of social, cultural, and economic capital. Social capital, which includes social ties and networks, proved particularly crucial in lobbying efforts. In contrast, cultural and economic capital played a more significant role during negotiations and in stimulating consumer interest and demand.

6.1.2 Summary of findings from the quantitative results

The key findings from the quantitative analysis are as follows:

i. The quantitative analysis demonstrated that entrepreneurs' decision-making significantly influenced their performance in Ghana's fashion industry. These results emphasise the pivotal role of decision-making in achieving successful outcomes, underscoring its critical impact on entrepreneurial activities and overall performance.

ii. The quantitative analysis showed that perceived uncertainty did not significantly moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance in Ghana's fashion industry. This indicates that entrepreneurs' perceptions of uncertainty do not have a meaningful impact on how their decision-making affects business success.

iii. The quantitative analysis revealed that the moderation effect of entrepreneurs' taste was insignificant. Taste did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in Ghana's fashion industry. This suggests that although taste influences creative decisions, it lacked the adaptive capacity to translate these decisions into improved business performance.

iv. The analysis results indicated that strife did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in Ghana's fashion industry. While strife shapes the context within which decisions are made, it does not directly translate these decisions into successful outcomes. Strife may create an impetus for action, but it does not, by itself, propel decisions toward performance; instead, it raises the stakes without offering the coping or adaptive mechanisms necessary to achieve success.

v. The results showed that intuition did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in Ghana's fashion industry. This suggests that while intuition may aid quick decision-making, its lack of structure and reflection makes it less reliable for sustaining long-term performance, especially in novel and precarious situations.

vi. Entrepreneurs' past experiences did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and performance in Ghana's fashion industry. This indicates that prior experience neither strengthens nor weakens the impact of decision-making on entrepreneurial performance.

vii. The data analysis revealed that social networks did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance in Ghana's fashion industry. This suggests that factors such as decision quality, competence, adaptive strategies, and timeliness have a greater influence on performance than the strength of network ties. Although the moderation effect was not statistically significant, the findings remain relevant given the unique contextual factors of this study.

viii. The results from the data analysis indicated that cultural values did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance in Ghana's fashion industry. This suggests that cultural values are considered normative, and non-performative. Personal values and beliefs do not directly shape how decisions lead to outcomes in a precarious and resource-constrained contexts such as Ghana's fashion industry.

ix. Results from the quantitative analysis indicated that cultural intermediaries did not moderate the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance. The moderation effect of cultural intermediaries on the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance was statistically insignificant. This implies that cultural intermediaries provide information, legitimacy and access, but they largely operate as external inputs to the decision-making processes of fashion entrepreneurs but do not yield performance gains in the fashion industry.

x. Results from the quantitative analysis showed that the entrepreneurs resilience mediated the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurs performance. This implies that entrepreneurs who are more resilient are able to cope with precarious working conditions, adopt adaptive strategies that consequently impact their performance.

6.2 Conclusion

The study explored how hope-driven decision-making impacts the performance of entrepreneurs in Ghana's fashion industry. It also examined the key factors influencing entrepreneurial outcomes, including decision-making processes and performance, as well as how entrepreneurs navigate the industry's complexities. Based on the findings, the study concludes that entrepreneurs' decision-making plays a critical role in shaping their performance, mainly when they effectively manage the challenging conditions within their work environment. Through analytical generalization, the study highlights the importance of personal and sociocultural factors in influencing decision-making and entrepreneurial outcomes. This research highlights a multifaceted relationship between personal and sociocultural factors and entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance in the Ghanaian fashion industry. While elements such as personal taste, cultural values, and social networks influenced entrepreneurial choices, only resilience demonstrated a statistically significant effect on decision-making and performance in the analysed data.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the research findings and conclusions the study made the following recommendations, which could enhance the learning highlighted in this study:

i. The study's findings provide a practical guide on how personal and sociocultural factors highlighted in the empirical model provide a holistic guide for implementing mechanisms to enhance efficient decision-making and improve overall performance in Ghana's fashion industry. This model could assist small and micro enterprises (SMEs) in the fashion industry in effectively dealing with the complexities in decision-making and how entrepreneurs can safely navigate the precarious nature of the industry.

ii. Policymakers, development agencies, and support organisations should recognise and actively support the psychological and sociocultural resources particularly hope and resilience that underpin entrepreneurial survival and growth in vulnerable contexts such as Ghana's fashion industry. Given the limited institutional support and prevailing economic insecurity, interventions should go beyond financial assistance and focus on strengthening entrepreneurs' adaptive capacities. This can be achieved by designing training programmes, mentorship initiatives, and community-based support systems that cultivate forward-looking motivation (hope) and build emotional and practical resilience. Such efforts would complement material support and contribute to more sustainable and contextually grounded entrepreneurial development.

iii. It is recommended that the empirical model developed in this study be further explored within the cultural and creative industries, particularly among emerging brands. The model serves as a valuable learning tool for identifying and addressing strategic decision-making and performance challenges. By integrating sociological and ethnographic insights with traditional management perspectives, it uncovers previously overlooked aspects of entrepreneurial practice, offering a more nuanced understanding of decision-making dynamics in informal and precarious settings. This framework provides a strong conceptual foundation for future theorisation and can be refined and tested across different sectors and contexts within the cultural and creative industries to generate broader theoretical insights and practical applications.

iv. From both sociological and management perspectives, the conceptual model underscores the significance of cultural, social, and individual factors in shaping entrepreneurial decision-making. It highlights how social norms, values, and everyday practices influence business choices and outcomes. This approach aligns with neo-institutional theory, which emphasises the routine behaviours individuals adopt within specific social contexts. By integrating these sociological insights, the model offers a deeper understanding of how entrepreneurs navigate their environments, make strategic decisions, and achieve success. These findings provide a valuable foundation for designing training programmes tailored to strengthen Ghanaian-owned businesses, particularly within the cultural and creative industries.

The integrated model presented in this study has important implications for further research and theorisation. It offers a foundation for developing more nuanced theories that explain how sociocultural and institutional factors shape entrepreneurial decision-making and performance. Both researchers and practitioners can apply this framework to explore entrepreneurial behaviour across various contexts, sectors, and regions. By building on and extending this model, scholars can deepen the understanding of entrepreneurship at the intersection of sociology, ethnography, and management theory. This integrative approach not only advances theoretical knowledge but also provides practical insights for designing context-sensitive strategies to support and develop entrepreneurs in diverse and often precarious environments.

6.4 Implications of the Study

As with many research studies, generalising the findings to other sectors and contexts presents certain limitations. However, the underlying principles may be applicable in settings that share similar structural conditions and contextual characteristics.

6.4.1 Theoretical implications

i. In the literature on business strategy—particularly within the domain of decision-making—factors such as intuition, perceived uncertainty, taste, cultural intermediaries, cultural values, strife or competition, and social networks are often treated as variables that can be deliberately manipulated to enhance entrepreneurial performance. These elements are frequently viewed as strategic levers that entrepreneurs can activate to improve their market success. However, in severely resource-constrained environments, decision-making tends to be routinised, shaped more by imitation and the pursuit of 'satisficing' rather than optimal outcomes. In such settings, where time, financial resources, and information are limited, entrepreneurs often rely on habitual or contextually informed strategies, rather than calculated, high-effort decision-making processes.

ii. Most owner-managers acknowledged that their decision-making is largely guided by established industry standards and accepted norms. These conventions serve as a practical framework for making decisions that are generally regarded as safe and effective within the field. However, the idea of imitating other brands wholesale—particularly as a strategy to escape competition—was widely rejected. This resistance was often rooted in the entrepreneurs' personal values and their desire to establish a distinct market identity. Instead, many business owners preferred to hybridise or transmute (Pedersen et al., 2006) existing ideas, selectively adapting them to preserve their brand identity while gaining a competitive edge.

iii. By hybridising or transmuting existing ideas, businesses skillfully navigate competition and resource constraints while building a strong brand identity that resonates deeply with their target market. This strategic approach enables them to offer unique products that appeal to consumers seeking both current trends and individual expression. Consequently, imitation, along with normative and coercive institutional pressures and routinised behaviours, influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. Moreover, decision-making serves as a mediator between institutional factors and entrepreneurs' performance. The source of this uniqueness—referred to as polymorphism—aligns with Bourdieu's concept of 'distinction,' reinforcing his theory of practice.

iv. Bourdieu's theory highlights how individuals and groups use cultural capital to distinguish themselves and attain social status. For fashion entrepreneurs, polymorphism refers to the creation of unique, hybridised, or transmuted products that differentiate their brands from competitors. Those who successfully employ hybridisation or transmutation cultivate a distinctive brand identity that resonates with consumers' desires for both current trends and personal expression. This distinctiveness acts as a form of cultural capital, enabling entrepreneurs to navigate competitive and resource-limited environments effectively. Thus, the focus on uniqueness and distinction within the fashion industry underscores the relevance of Bourdieu's theory of practice. By leveraging their unique cultural capital, fashion entrepreneurs can achieve differentiation and success, demonstrating that practices rooted in distinction are key to understanding entrepreneurial decision-making and performance.

6.4.2 Implications for Practice

i. In the fashion industry, as in other creative and cultural sectors such as theatre, music, and publishing, qualities like resilience, hope, and product diversity are common. These challenges underscore the importance of decision-making and performance for entrepreneurs. The study suggests that strategic and effective decision-making plays a vital role in enhancing business outcomes and overall performance for owner-managers who continually face precarious working conditions.

ii. The study identified both internal factors—such as resilience, hope, cultural values, and taste—and external factors like cultural intermediaries and strife/competition as crucial to business success in the fashion industry. To enhance decision-making and improve business performance in Ghana's fashion sector, entrepreneurs should adopt several key strategies based on these findings. Engaging cultural intermediaries can offer valuable market insights and strategic guidance for effective positioning and growth. Entrepreneurs are also encouraged to address perceived uncertainties by implementing structured risk management and resilience-building practices. Furthermore, integrating cultural values and a deep understanding of consumer tastes can foster innovation and increase market appeal. Lastly, managing competition through thorough competitive analysis and encouraging healthy rivalry will contribute to the overall advancement of the industry.

iii. Building resilience and maintaining hope are essential for fashion entrepreneurs to manage the uncertainties and challenges inherent in the industry. Institutions should provide resources and support to help entrepreneurs develop these qualities. An entrepreneur might benefit from a government-sponsored program that includes resilience-building workshops and access to a network of industry professionals for ongoing support and advice.

iv. While intuition and social networks are often considered important for entrepreneurs, this study's findings suggest that they may not be as influential in directly impacting performance as previously thought. For instance, instead of relying solely on social connections, entrepreneurs should invest in formal business development activities like attending industry fashion weeks, assigning onto masterclass, participating in trade shows, or seeking mentorship from experts.

6.5.1 Contributions to Knowledge

i. This thesis significantly contributes to the field by developing and empirically synthesizing Neo-Institutional Theory and the Theory of Practice into an integrated theoretical framework. This framework provides a nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial activities within Ghana's distinctive socio-economic landscape, characterized by pervasive precarity and a largely informal economy. The application of these two theoretical perspectives, which are traditionally applied in distinct contexts, the thesis tailors their application to the unique challenges and opportunities in Ghana's entrepreneurial environment. The research employs a mixed-methods approach and gathers data from fashion entrepreneurs across three key entrepreneurial hubs in Ghana. The application of this integrative theoretical framework, in this study advances the discourse in creative entrepreneurship literature (e.g., Schreiber et al., 2018; Sanda et al., 2023). It highlights that entrepreneurial decision-making and outcomes, such as the performance of owner-managed businesses in the cultural and creative industries, are shaped by complex, dynamic, and interactive factors that cannot be adequately explained by a single theoretical perspective.

ii. This study is the first to systematically examine entrepreneurial decision-making within the informal and precarious context of Ghana's fashion industry, highlighting the often-overlooked role of Human Resource Management (HRM) and informal apprenticeship systems in shaping business outcomes. While earlier research (e.g., Sarpong et al., 2012; Langevang, 2016) has explored the future prospects of fashion enterprises in Accra, much of the focus has been on industry-level challenges and opportunities rather than on the internal decision-making processes and HRM dynamics that sustain these ventures.

This research is particularly timely, given that small and micro enterprises (SMEs) in the informal economy have become central to the Ghanaian government's agenda to strengthen the cultural and creative industries—sectors increasingly referred to as Africa's "new frontier" (Jennings, 2011).

In Ghana's fashion industry, entrepreneurial success is often contingent upon effective HRM practices such as talent development, informal training, and knowledge transfer through apprenticeship. The widespread reliance on informal apprenticeship—where skills, values, and work discipline are transferred through close, hands-on mentorship—serves as both a workforce development tool and a cultural mechanism for sustaining enterprise growth. Despite the growing recognition of Ghanaian fashion across Africa, the industry continues to trail behind regional leaders like South Africa, Nigeria, and Nairobi in terms of economic output and contribution to GDP (UNDP, 2013). Addressing this lag requires a more robust understanding of how decision-making, HRM, and informal learning systems intersect to shape performance, resilience, and long-term growth in the sector. Without targeted support for these foundational human capital strategies, the fashion industry may struggle to generate the employment and wealth needed for meaningful economic transformation.

This study, situated within Ghana's fashion industry, offers a timely and in-depth examination of the link between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. It provides empirical insights that can inform policy strategies aimed at transforming the industry through contextually relevant business models and interventions. The research stands out as the most extensive investigation of its kind in Ghana, drawing on a wide array of variables and field data. A distinctive feature of this thesis is its integration of macro-level institutional theory with micro-level theory of practice. This dual-theoretical framework contributes to a more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurship by bridging structural and agentic perspectives—offering a response to longstanding theoretical divides (Sieweke, 2014; see Chapter 2). Moreover, the findings in Chapter 6 enrich discourses in cultural entrepreneurship and management by presenting grounded evidence from Ghana, thereby expanding current knowledge on creative industries in the Global South.

iii. As the existing literature presents both significant and non-significant associations between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance, this study sought to address these inconsistencies by uncovering underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions. Specifically, the analysis considered factors such as perceived uncertainty, intuition, taste, social networks, experience, cultural values, cultural intermediaries, strife/competition, and resilience. The findings revealed that decision-making processes do indeed have a significant impact on entrepreneurial performance. However, this relationship was shaped and strengthened by the influence of these intervening variables. These results help clarify previous contradictory findings by highlighting the contextual and mediating factors that condition the relationship between decision-making and performance.

iv. This thesis offers important contributions to the scholarship on entrepreneurial decision-making by deepening understanding of the personal and sociocultural factors that influence the relationship between decision-making and entrepreneurial performance. By uncovering previously overlooked mechanisms and boundary conditions, the study provides nuanced insights into how these factors shape—and sometimes constrain—entrepreneurial choices and outcomes in the fashion sector. The contribution to management and organisational research is particularly significant for several reasons. First, the study explores the interaction between decision-making and performance across two key domains of SME management. Second, it advances knowledge of the informal sector, a vital yet underexamined area in business research despite its increasing relevance to economic development. Third, the thesis makes a notable intervention in the field of cultural entrepreneurship, which has traditionally centred on identifying structural challenges and proposing policy responses (e.g., Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015; Aakko, 2018; Belfiore, 2022). By adopting a divergent lens, this research shifts focus toward the lived experiences of creative workers and the everyday strategies they employ to navigate uncertainty within the fashion industry. In doing so, it foregrounds the agency, resilience, and innovation of entrepreneurs operating under precarious conditions, thereby offering fresh perspectives on both cultural entrepreneurship and informality.

v. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of entrepreneurial resilience by examining how hope, social embeddedness, and patterned behaviours coalesce to support decision-making in uncertain environments. The findings underscore the importance of informal, relational, and adaptive strategies in cultural entrepreneurship, especially within under-resourced settings. By integrating these dimensions, the study deepens scholarly perspectives on how innovation and perseverance emerge within fragile and unpredictable market conditions.

vi. Recent studies in Ghana have highlighted how socio-economic developments and globalization are reshaping traditional notions of success. Building on this research, the current study goes beyond simplified explanations of performance, which often rely on binary classifications such as objective versus subjective or financial versus non-financial metrics. Instead, it delves into how entrepreneurs, particularly those operating in Ghana's informal and precarious contexts, perceive, evaluate, and define performance. This study provides a nuanced perspective by identifying performance measures and metrics that offer a deeper understanding of the cultural and creative industries. It explores the factors contributing to the success of fashion businesses while shedding light on how these entrepreneurs interpret and navigate failure within their fields. These findings serve as a foundation for examining the dynamics of entrepreneurial performance in the unique socio-cultural and economic environment of Ghana's creative industries.

vii. This thesis highlights the pivotal role of relational interdependence—including personal, professional, community, spiritual, and governmental ties—as well as social networks and professional associations, in shaping future-oriented decision-making among entrepreneurs in the creative industries. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study offers a comprehensive analysis of how these interwoven relationships influence entrepreneurial decisions, cultivate hope, and impact performance within Ghana's predominantly informal and precarious economic landscape.

viii. This research offers a detailed perspective on how cultural entrepreneurs successfully balance their creative aspirations with practical business strategies, providing a framework for harmonizing these dual priorities. It makes a significant contribution not only to the field of cultural entrepreneurship but also to management research by framing decision-making as a dynamic process influenced by contextual, relational, and personal factors.

ix. This study contributes to a deeper and more holistic understanding of decision-making and performance in cultural entrepreneurship, offering valuable insights for management research. Exploring the intricacies of decision-making in precarious settings addresses gaps in the existing literature. It sheds light on how cultural entrepreneurs in the fashion industry navigate uncertainty, competition, and adversity. These findings add to our understanding of the strategies employed by entrepreneurs to adapt and succeed in challenging environments.

6.5.2 Contributions to Practice

i. Given the nature of the Ghanaian fashion industry, characterized by uncertainty, instability, limited access to loans, and the prevalence of unpaid work, emerging fashion entrepreneurs must fully grasp the importance of decision-making and the complexities involved in the process. Entrepreneurs aiming to establish businesses in this dynamic space must navigate various challenges, including adapting to external environmental shifts. Fashion entrepreneurs seeking efficiency in their decision-making must follow institutionalized practices, such as mimicking the strategies of established brands. By aligning their decisions with current trends and pressures, they can gain credibility, survive, and remain competitive. In-depth interviews reveal that conforming to isomorphic pressures—adapting to industry norms—significantly ensures business longevity and success. Moreover, the thematic analysis highlights that entrepreneurs' ability to leverage their social networks is crucial in driving resource acquisition, survival, and performance. This aligns with Neo-institutionalism and Bourdieu's theory of practice, emphasizing the importance of social interactions and integrating social constructs in management research. These perspectives challenge the rationalist view of decision-making, suggesting that social dynamics, rather than purely individual rationality, shape organisational outcomes such as decision-making and performance. However, while social relations are vital, they come with their own set of challenges. The intermingling and ambivalent nature of these relationships can create complexities, requiring entrepreneurs to navigate both their social networks' benefits and potential drawbacks. This nuanced understanding of social capital adds depth to studying entrepreneurial decision-making in precarious industries.

ii. The findings from the qualitative study shed light on the role of hope in navigating the challenging Ghanaian fashion industry. It revealed that in this context, hope serves as more than just a psychological resource or a temporary state of mind; it is a strategic tool that entrepreneurs use to explore opportunities even in the face of severe constraints. The study found that this strategic use of hope is deeply intertwined with social relationships; fashion entrepreneurs not only draw hope from their own resilience but also from making, maintaining, and, in some cases, severing connections within their social networks. By leveraging these relationships, entrepreneurs can access resources, support, and guidance, which are crucial for adapting to the industry's volatility and uncertainty. This nuanced understanding of hope as a social and strategic tool provides new insights into how entrepreneurs manage challenges in precarious environments.

6.5.3 Contributions to Policy

i. The qualitative findings indicated that many fashion entrepreneurs in Ghana are not members of professional bodies for various reasons.

ii. A significant factor is their negative perceptions of these organisations' policies and practices, along with a limited understanding of the benefits of membership. To address this issue, leaders of unions and professional associations should implement educational initiatives to inform non-members about the benefits of joining these organisations. Additionally, efforts should be made to shift the negative perceptions and misconceptions that owner-managers hold about unions and professional associations. Leaders can incentivise members and strengthen professional networks within the fashion industry by focusing on these areas.

iii. The Ghanaian government, particularly the Ministry of Trade and Arts and culture and the Ghana Association of Fashion Designers, must ensure that government resources are allocated fairly, without favouritism or nepotism. Checks and balances should be in place to guarantee that support for the fashion industry reaches its intended beneficiaries.

iv. In addition, governments in developing countries such as Ghana must collaborate with unions/professional bodies and non-governmental agencies (NGOs) to support fashion businesses in Ghana by sponsoring fashion shows, seminars and workshops as such platforms create opportunities for creative entrepreneurs to network, collaborate and share information. Knowledge sharing is an essential aspect of creative entrepreneurship, as espoused by Bourdieu in his theory of practice. For example, Bourdieu asserts that social actors with higher cultural capital levels, including knowledge, taste, and aesthetic sensibilities, can make decisions and judgments that easily resonate with consumers and increase their performance in a competitive field. Cultural capital is that unique selling proposition of creative entrepreneurs acquired through training and constant learning.

6.5.4 Contribution to Theory and Future Research

i. The study has generated a discussion regarding the assumptions of neo-institutionalism and the theory of practice, particularly their relevance in managing uncertainties within organisational fields. Neo-institutionalism suggests that organisations attain legitimacy and credibility by conforming to shared structures and practices. In contrast, the theory of practice highlights the role of social actors in negotiating and mobilizing different forms of capital within their fields.

ii. This debate highlights the need for caution when applying various frameworks to owner-managed businesses in Ghana's creative industries, particularly in the fashion sector. In resource-constrained environments like Ghana, leveraging social relationships can be complex. While relational ties and networks can provide advantages, their interconnectedness may sometimes hinder effective decision-making. These relational structures can limit an individual's ability to fully utilize social capital, revealing the complexities of operating in such contexts. Future research should carefully examine these dynamics, focusing on how social actors balance conformity and relational ties in response to contextual challenges.

iii. About extending the current thesis, the generalisation of the findings could be extrapolated to other contexts if the conceptual framework is replicated in a similar cultural and creative industry sub-sector in Ghana as well as in similar owner-managed businesses in the global South. The revised framework (Chapter 5) could serve as a first step and a theoretical basis for such a study. Based on the findings from the quantitative research, the constructs and their associated measures/scales could be adapted by other researchers examining similar constructs in a similar context to increase the reliability of the test items. Considering the outcomes of the qualitative analyses, it might be suggested that the relative differences and importance found among the factors could be examined in future studies using statistical tests, and at best, future research can utilise a mixed methods approach as studies in cultural entrepreneurship have relied heavily on qualitative research designs.

6.6 Limitation to the Study

Some limitations were identified in this study, potentially impacting the confidence and applicability of the analyzed data and weakening the strength of the results and conclusions. These limitations may constrain the broader relevance of the findings. However, the study offered valuable insights into how hope-driven decision-making influences entrepreneurial performance, as well as the role of hope in navigating the precarious working conditions of the Ghanaian fashion industry.

i. Cross-sectional studies, while useful for providing a snapshot of a particular phenomenon at a single point in time, present several limitations when applied to a thesis on decision-making and performance in the fashion industry. Cross-sectional studies capture data at a single point in time, which restricts their ability to analyze changes over time or understand the dynamics of how decisions and performance evolve. Firstly, cross-sectional studies are inherently limited in their ability to establish causality. Since the data is collected at one point in time, it is difficult to determine whether the decision-making processes observed directly influence performance outcomes or if other, unmeasured factors are at play. This is particularly challenging in the fashion industry, where trends, market conditions, and consumer preferences can change rapidly. The inability to track these changes over time means that cross-sectional studies may overlook the dynamic nature of decision-making and its evolving impact on performance.

ii. Moreover, the static nature of cross-sectional studies limits the exploration of causality. While such studies can identify associations between variables, they cannot determine the direction or cause of these relationships. In decision-making and performance research, understanding the causal links between various factors such as intuition, experience, and resilience is important for developing actionable insights. Cross-sectional studies may therefore provide a limited understanding of these causal relationships.Additionally, cross-sectional studies often face challenges related to data representativeness. The sample surveyed might not fully reflect the diversity of experiences and practices within the fashion industry, leading to potential biases in understanding how different factors influence decision-making and performance. This limitation can be particularly pronounced in industries like fashion, where trends and practices can vary significantly across different regions and market segments. To address these limitations, future research could benefit from longitudinal studies that track changes over time, allowing for a deeper understanding of how decision-making processes and performance outcomes evolve. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive view of the factors influencing fashion entrepreneurship and offer insights into the dynamic nature of the industry.

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APPENDIX A

Department of organisation and Human Resource Management
University of Ghana Business School
P. O. Box LG 78, Legon, Accra, Ghana

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Exploring How Hope-Driven Decision-Making Influences Entrepreneurial Performance in a Precarious Ghanaian Fashion Industry: The Role of Internal and External Factors

Synopsis

If you are an entrepreneur operating in the fashion industry of Ghana, we are happy to invite you to participate in our anonymous research seeking to investigate the link between entrepreneurs' decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance. Specifically, the study aims to examine how precarious work conditions might influence the entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance nexus, and how entrepreneurs cope with precarious work conditions in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

The study is being conducted to meet the requirements of an award of a PhD by Lilian Ama Afun, whose work is being supervised by Dr. Aminu-Sanda (MSanda@ug.edu.gh), Prof. Obi Berko-Damoah (Obiberko@gmail.com) and Prof. Ana Alacovska (aa.msc.dk) of the Department of Organisation and Human Resource Management, UGBS and Copenhagen Business School.

Participation in this anonymous survey is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in the survey, you would be invited to complete our paper and pencil survey, which should take approximately 40 minutes to complete. The questions are straightforward. You will be required to provide your opinion by (√) how you feel or think about different aspects of your work and working conditions.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the survey are confidential. No individual will be identified in any communication or publication of results, which will take the form of broad conclusions based on analysis of multiple participants. If you will like a summary of the study findings, you can Lilian at (amaafun@gmail.com; 0207680841).

Thank you!

SECTION A

Business Profile

1. Can you describe how you started your fashion business?
2. What form of funding did you use when starting this business? (Bootstrapping, Bank Loan, Loans from Family/Friends, Venture Capital etc.)
3. Can you share with me a bit about key accomplishments, what have you achieved since you started your fashion business?
4. Are there other business ventures you engage in to support your business and yourself financially? (Do you supplement your monthly earnings in anyways?)
5. Is your business affiliated to any union or association? Please give details.
6.

SECTION B

Conceptualizing/Understanding Work Precarity in the Fashion Industry

1. What are some of your experiences as a fashion entrepreneur in Ghana?
   A. Do you perceive the Ghanaian fashion landscape as a precarious (difficult, unstable, uncertain) work environment and what form do they mainly take?
2. Do you perceive that working in the Ghanaian fashion industry is challenging and full of many struggles? (If yes, in what ways? If no, why?)
3. In what ways is your work as a fashion entrepreneur in Ghana affected by a lack of predictability and stability in the fashion industry?
4. Would you say that working as a fashion entrepreneur in Ghana is challenging due to a lack of social benefits and social support?
5. How do you understand the precarity (difficult, unstable, uncertain) of the Ghanaian fashion industry?
6. What are some of the challenges you face in your line of work?

SECTION C

Decision Making under Precarious Work Conditions

1. How do you make decisions as an owner- manager in the fashion industry in Ghana?
2. In what ways do global and local trends influence your decision making as a fashion entrepreneur in Ghana?
3. Do you feel that your 'innate structure' influences how or what decisions you take? intuition, taste, cultural values, resilience, past experience?

4. Do you think that your ‘external structures’ have a role to play in what decisions you take in your business? Cultural intermediaries, social network, strife/competition?

SECTION D

Entrepreneurial Performance

1. How do you measure performance (success and failure) of your business in the Ghanaian fashion industry?
2. What are the indicators of growth in your business?
3. Does recognition (through awards and promotion on media platforms) count as a measure of your business growth and performance as a fashion entrepreneur?
4. In what ways is sales a measure of your entrepreneurial performance?
5. Do you consider expansion by opening new stores in other places an indication of your business doing well?
6. What motivates you to succeed in precarious working conditions in the Ghanaian fashion industry?

SECTION E

Strategies for Navigating Challenges in Ghana’s Fashion Industry

1. How do you navigate the challenges you face every day working in the Ghanaian fashion industry?
2. What are your strategies for surviving in Ghana’s challenging fashion industry?
3. Does the prospect of growth and expansion in the future give you hope to continue working hard for your big breakthrough in Ghana’s fashion industry?
4. How does the hope of better earnings propel you to work hard to improve your designs and output in Ghana’s difficult fashion industry?
5. Are you working hard now to expand your business so you can attract top clientele such as celebrities, business and media personalities to promote your business?

SECTION A

Demographic Information of Participants

1. What is your gender? Male [ ] Female [ ]
2. What is your age? 18-20 years [ ] 21-30 years [ ] 31-40 years [ ] 41-50 years [ ] 51-60 years [ ]

3. What is your highest level of education? Below JHS [ ] SHS/WASEC [ ]

Vocational [ ] Diploma [ ] Degree [ ] Masters [ ] PhD [ ]

4. What is the legal name of your business ?______________________________________

5. How long have you operated this business?

2-5 years [ ] 6-10 years [ ] 11-15 years 16-20 years [ ] Over 20 years [ ]

7. How many other individuals are currently employed in your business? ______________

8. Do you produce other fashion products besides clothes? ___________________________

9. Are there other businesses that exist under business name?

Thanks for your Time!

APPENDIX B

Department of Organisation and Human Resource Management

University of Ghana Business School

P. O. Box LG 78, Legon, Accra, Ghana

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Exploring How Hope-Driven Decision-Making Influences Entrepreneurial Performance in a Precarious Ghanaian Fashion Industry: The Role of Internal and External Factors

Synopsis

If you are an entrepreneur operating in the fashion industry of Ghana, we are happy to invite you to participate in our anonymous research seeking to investigate the link between entrepreneurs' decision-making and entrepreneurs' performance. Specifically, the study aims to examine how precarious work conditions might influence the entrepreneurs' decision-making and performance nexus, and how entrepreneurs cope with precarious work conditions in the Ghanaian fashion industry.

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Participation in this anonymous survey is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in the survey, you would be invited to complete our paper and pencil survey, which should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The questions are straightforward. You will be required to provide your opinion by (√) how you feel or think about different aspects of your work and working conditions.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the survey are confidential. No individual will be identified in any communication or publication of results, which will take the form of broad conclusions based on analysis of multiple participants. If you will like a summary of the study findings, you can Lilian at (amaafun@gmail.com; 0207680841).

Thank you!

SECTION A
PRECARIOUS WORK CONDITIONS

On a Likert Scale of 1 to 5, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Kindly tick **the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.**

No.	*ITEMS*	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (NS)	4(A)	5(SA)
	Perceived uncertainty6					
PU1	As a manager I am able to determine my target population					
PU2	As a manager I am to determine my supply outlet					
PU3	I am unaware of the actions and activities of my competitors					
PU4	It is easy to predict the activities and actions					
PU5	I am aware that my designs can easily be copied by competitors					
PU6	The thought that my designs can easily be copied by my competitors affect my decisions					
PU7	Consumer demands and preferences are not easy to predict					
PU8	The rate at which fashion products are getting out-of-date in the industry is very fast					
PU9	The mode of production of fashion products is subject to much change					
PU10	The mode of marketing and distribution of fashion products often change					
PU11	There is no absolute surety that my designs/clothes will be sold					
PU12	My business must change its marketing practices frequently to meet the demands of customers					
PU13	There is always the fear of losing my workers to my competitors					
	Labor insecurities	**1(SD)**	**2(D)**	**3(NS)**	**4(A)**	**5(SA)**
LI14	The possibility of losing my job occupies my thoughts constantly					
LI15	I am not sure of how long my business will last					
LI16	No matter how hard I work there is no guarantee that I am going to keep my job					
LI17	My fashion business seems to have clear goals and a definite strategy for achieving them					
LI18	I am expecting unfavorable changes in the fashion industry					
LI19	Overall, my physical working conditions are likely to decline					
LI20	I feel as though government is avoiding our challenges as entrepreneurs of this industry (e.g., cost of importing raw materials)					

LI21	Government appears to be preparing in advance and planning for the future of the fashion industry					
LI22	I wish my business could go back to normal after the pandemic/COVID-19 or other challenges					
	Social Protection/Benefits/Trade Unionization /Association	**1 (SD)**	**2(D)**	**3(NS)**	**4(A)**	**5(SA)**
SP23	Pension and social security coverage are a part of my business social protection measures					
SP24	This business has insurance coverage					
SP25	This business has laws to ensure occupational health and safety measures of its members					
SP26	This business is aware of rules regarding dismissal, maternity benefits and legal minimum wage for its employees					
SP27	As a manager I am aware of trade unions and associations to safeguard, defend and advance this business interest					
SP28	As owner of this business, I am aware of trade unions and associations to safeguard, defend and advance its business interest					
SP29	This business has rules regarding employers' reliability related to injury					

SECTION B
ENTREPRENEURS' DECISION MAKING

Kindly tick the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.

No.	***ITEMS***	**1(SD)**	**2(D)**	**3(NS)**	**4(A)**	**5(SA)**
	Daily, Operational and Managerial Decisions					
DM1	In the past two years I have considered changing /altering/modifying my style of designing/production					
DM2	In the past two years I have considered relocating my business					
DM3	In these past few years I have made talent selection/hiring and recruiting decisions.					
DM4	I constantly make marketing, supply and value change decisions					
DM5	Over the last two years I have made decisions that concerns cash flow and investment					
DM6	In the past two years, I have made decisions about social media strategies (Tiktok, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp etc) for visibility					
DM7	In the past two years I have considered expanding my business					
DM8	In the past two years, I have made decisions about					

	purchasing new machines for my business.					
DM9	Over the past few years, I have made decisions about collaborating with other designers					
DM10	In the last few years, I have considered doing other businesses besides fashion (clothing)					

SECTION C
ENTREPRENEURS' TASTE

Kindly tick the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

	Entrepreneurs' Taste in Decision Making	**1(SD)**	**2(D)**	**3(NS)**	**4(A)**	**5(SA)**
ET1	I am aware that my personal taste influences my creative design/process					
ET2	My taste affects my aesthetic judgments /choice /decisions as a fashion entrepreneur					
ET3	I am aware that my social network has a role to play in personal taste and in my decisions in the fashion industry					
ET4	I am aware that my quest for distinction/to be different/unique influence my decision making as a fashion entrepreneur					
ET5	I am aware that entrepreneurs in the fashion industry have collective taste/similar preferences					

SECTION D
ENTREPRENEURS' INTUITION

Kindly tick the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

	Entrepreneurs' Intuition in Decision Making	**1(SD)**	**2(D)**	**3(NS)**	**4(A)**	**5(SA)**
EI1	My intuition comes to me quickly and it drives my decisions as an entrepreneur					
EI2	I am aware my gut feelings influence my choice and decisions as an entrepreneur					
EI3	I trust my intuition, especially in familiar situations					
EI4	My approach to problem solving relies heavily on my intuition					
EI5	My intuition shapes my decisions in uncertain contexts					
EI6	My gut feelings influence my design process such as choice of style, design, fabrics					
EI7	My intuition affects my marketing and adverting decisions					

SECTION E
ENTREPRENEURS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Kindly tick the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

	Personal Experience in decision-making	**1(SD)**	**2(D)**	**3(NS)**	**4(A)**	**5(SA)**
PE1	My personal experiences influence my inspiration and design process as fashion designer					
PE2	My past experiences affect my creative decisions as a fashion entrepreneur					
PE3	I am aware that my old styles are the bases for the new variations in my production					
PE4	My designs communicate my personal experiences as a designer					

SECTION F
ENTREPRENEURS' RESILIENCE

Kindly tick the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

	Entrepreneurs' Resilience	**1(SD)**	**2(D)**	**3(NS)**	**4(A)**	**5(SA)**
RI1	I feel I can handle many things (e.g., taking a lot of orders) during the peak seasons					
RI2	I can get through difficult times because I have experienced difficulty before in my career/profession					
RI3	When I am in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it					
RI4	My belief in myself gets me through hard times as an entrepreneur					
RI5	I usually manage to make decisions in difficult situations					

SECTION G
CULTURAL INTERMEDIARIES

Kindly tick the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

	Cultural Intermediaries /celebrities /gatekeepers/ influencers	**1(SD)**	**2(D)**	**3(NS)**	**4(A)**	**5(SA)**
CI1	My decisions are influenced by bloggers/gatekeepers in the fashion space					
CI2	I benefit from sponsoring influencers					
CI3	My decisions to sponsor a celebrity is influenced by a cost-benefit analysis					
CI4	In moments of uncertainty I rely on influencers gatekeepers in my decision-making					

SECTION H
CULTURAL VALUES

Kindly tick the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

	Cultural Values	1(SD)	2(D)	3(NS)	4(A)	5(SA)
CV1	I leverage on my heritage and background in my decision-making					
CV2	My creative designs/processes are influenced by my religious or cultural values					
CV3	I tell stories about my culture and context in my design process and creative decisions					
CV4	My decisions to design for a particular person is based on my cultural values					
CV5	My decisions on what to design are based on my cultural values					

SECTION I
SOCIAL NETWORK

Kindly tick the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

	Social Network	1(SD)	2(D)	3(NS)	4(A)	5(SA)
SN1	As a fashion entrepreneur, I am aware that external sources of information influence my decision making					
SN2	I keep a relationship with other entrepreneurs in the fashion landscape					
SN3	I consult/seek other entrepreneurs in my decision making					
SN4	Consumers influence my decision making as a fashion entrepreneur					
SN5	I seek advice and rely on the opinions of my networks in my decision making					
SN6	I collaborate with other fashion entrepreneurs in my line of work or on a project					

SECTION J
STRIFE/COMPETITION

Kindly tick the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

	Strife/Competition	1(SD)	2(D)	3(NS)	4(A)	5(SA)

SC1	I am aware that my competitors influence my decisions in the fashion industry					
SC2	I see other fashion entrepreneurs/designers as a threat to your business					
SC3	I see poaching/stealing/luring away as a threat to my business					
SC4	I think my competitors are at an advantage than me in the fashion industry					
SC5	The fashion industry causes a great deal of threat to the survival of my fashion business					
SC6	I am aware of tough price competition in the industry					
SC7	I am aware that there is more supply than there is demand for fashion products					

SECTION K
ENTREPRENEUR'S PERFORMANCE

Kindly tick the appropriate number on the Likert Scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.

No.	***Performance***	**1(SD)**	**2(D)**	**3(NS)**	**4(A)**	**5(SA)**
EP1	My business sales have grown significantly over the years					
EP2	I am aware of my business in the public image					
EP3	I am aware of the compliments of my customers of my business					
EP4	My brand has introduced different fashion products into the industry					
EP5	I am focusing on improving the performance of my current business rather than entering new domains.					
EP6	There is decline in sales resulting from loss of a major customer					
EP7	Timelines for order completion has improved					
EP8	Employees/workers/apprentices are productive					
EP9	My customers are satisfied with the order delivery accuracy rate of the business					
EP10	Customers are satisfied with the quality of the products					
EP11	There is a high need to purchase additional equipment to improve the quality-of-service delivery and production					

SECTION A: Demographic Information of Participants

Please kindly answer the following by ticking (√) the appropriate answer of your choice.

1. Gender: [ ] Male [ ] Female

2. Age:
   [ ] 18-24years [ ] 25-34years [ ] 35-44years [ ] 45-55years [ ] Over 55years

3. Educational level:

   [ ] Below JHS [ ] SHS/WASSCE [ ] Vocational [ ] Diploma

   [ ] First Degree [ ] Masters [ ] PhD

4. Number of years as an entrepreneur:
   [ ] Less than a year [ ] 1-3 years [ ] 4-6 years

   [ ] 7-9 years [ ] 10 years and above

5. What is the legal name of your business? ____

6. What year was this business established? ____

7. How many other individuals are currently employed in your business?__________________

8. Do you produce other fashion products besides clothes?______________________________

9. Are there other businesses that exist under this business name?________________________

Thanks for Taking Time to Complete This Questionnaire!

APPENDIX C

Code	Age	Gender	Level of Education	Years of Experience	Number of Workers/Apprentices	Location
Interviewee 1	36	F	Degree	15	3	Accra
Interviewee 2	58	F	Basic Education	23	3	Accra
Interviewee 3	38	F	Basic Education	22	4	Accra
Interviewee 4	31	M	Degree	4	3	Accra
Interviewee 5	37	F	Degree	3	0	Accra
Interviewee 6	44	F	Basic Education	4	0	Accra
Interviewee 7	39	F	Basic Education	18	0	Accra
Interviewee 8	40	F	Degree	13	2	Accra
Interviewee 9	36	F	Basic Education	8	0	Accra
Interviewee 10	24	F	Secondary	2	0	Accra
Interviewee 11	36	F	Degree	2	0	Accra
Interviewee 12	37	F	Masters	3	0	Accra
Interviewee 13	35	M	Masters	8	7	Accra
Interviewee 14	38	F	Degree	4	5	Accra
Interviewee 15	39	M	Secondary	9	6	Accra
Interviewee 16	40	F	Vocational	10	0	Accra
Interviewee 17	32	F	Degree	13	7	Accra
Interviewee 18	37	M	Basic Education	14	1	Accra
Interviewee 19	46	F	Vocational	12	2	Accra
Interviewee 20	34	F	Basic Education	3	2	Accra
Interviewee 21	36	F	Degree	8	3	Tamale
Interviewee 22	36	F	Basic Education	7	2	Tamale
Interviewee 23	35	F	Degree	9	0	Tamale
Interviewee 24	39	M	Vocational	14	6	Tamale
Interviewee 25.	36	F	Masters	4	4	Tamale
Interviewee 26	38	M	Diploma	22	12	Tamale
Interviewee 27	48	F	Basic Education	23	0	Tamale
Interviewee 28	28	F	Degree	6	8	Tamale
Interviewee 29	40	F	Basic Education	17	5	Tamale
Interviewee 30	54	F	Secondary	23	2	Tamale

Interviewee 31	40	M	Diploma	7	11	Tamale
Interviewee 32	37	M	Degree	3	23	Tamale
Interviewee 33	38	F	Secondary	19	7	Tamale
Interviewee 34	39	F	Basic Education	14	1	Kumasi
Interviewee 35	47	F	Diploma	14	3	Kumasi
Interviewee 36	35	F	Degree	7	3	Kumasi
Interviewee 37	56	F	Vocational	23	2	Kumasi
Interviewee 38	34	F	Vocational	2	1	Kumasi
Interviewee 39	28	F	Degree	7	15	Kumasi
Interviewee 40	33	F	Degree	3	3	Kumasi
Interviewee 41	48	F	Basic Education	25	0	Kumasi
Interviewee 42	48	F	Vocational	14	1	Kumasi
Interviewee 43	28	F	Secondary	9	4	Kumasi
Interviewee 44	48	F	Basic Education	9	1	Kumasi
Interviewee 45	40	M	Basic Education	3	6	Kumasi
Interviewee 46	47	M	Basic Education	30	10	Kumasi
Interviewee 47	29	M	Diploma	8	5	Kumasi
Interviewee 48	37	M	Diploma	9	2	Kumasi
Interviewee 49	36	M	Degree	9	3	Kumasi
Interviewee 50	35	M	Degree	8	8	Kumasi
Interviewee 51	28	M	Secondary	3	3	Kumasi
Interviewee 52	38	M	Diploma	9	1	Kumasi
Interviewee 53	34	M	Diploma	8	2	Kumasi
Interviewee 54	36	M	Degree	3	1	Kumasi
Interviewee 55	35	M	Degree	14	4	Kumasi
Interviewee 56	43	M	Secondary	13	1	Kumasi
Interviewee 57	29	F	Basic Education	9	0	Kumasi
Interviewee 58	38	F	Secondary	8	2	Kumasi
Interviewee 59	35	M	Diploma	7	0	Kumasi
Interviewee 60	48	M	Basic Education	25	0	Kumasi

Appendix D

Respondent's Profile

		N	%
Gender	Male	111	37.2
	Female	189	62.8
Age	18-24	23	8.0
	25-34	119	39.5
	35-44	76	25.2
	45-55	64	21.3
Education	Below JHS	136	45.5
	SHS/WASSCE	67	22.3
	Vocational	56	18.6
	Diploma	19	6.3
	First Degree	22	7.3
Establishment	Less than a year		6.0
	1-3	18	13.6
	4-6	41	23.3
	7-9	70	18.6
	10 years and above	55	38.5

APPENDIX E

Items	Item Total Correlation
1. PWC1	.889
2. PWC2	.867
3.PWC3	.803
PWC4	.459
PWC5	.322
PWC6	.735
PWC7	.443
PWC8	.756
PWC9	.775
PWC10	.321
PWC11	.232
PWC12	.711
PWC13	.733
DM1	.799
DM2	.743
DM3	.688
DM4	.431
DM5	.231
DM6	.697
DM7	.778
DM8	.757
DM9	.693
DM10	.213
ET1	.676
ET2	.749
ET3	.757
ET4	.711
ET5	.499
EI1	.714
EI2	.708
EI3	.817
EI4	.791
EI5	.301
EI6	.632
EI7	.737
PE1	.707
PE2	.759
PE3	.681
PE4	.726
RI1	.806
RI2	.811
RI3	.762
RI4	.798

RI5	.667
CI1	.838
CI2	.838
CI3	.761
CI4	.866
CV1	.893
CV2	.818
CV3	.789
CV4	.772
CV5	.919
SN1	.307
SN2	.682
SN3	.675
SN4	.624
SN5	.743
SN6	.649
SC1	.441
SC2	.718
SC3	.449
SC4	.730
SC5	.790
SC6	.790
SC7	.763
EP1	.840
EP2	.214
EP3	.612
EP4	.212
EP5	.655
EP6	.125
EP7	.429
EP8	.313
EP9	.757
EP10	.709
EP11	.823

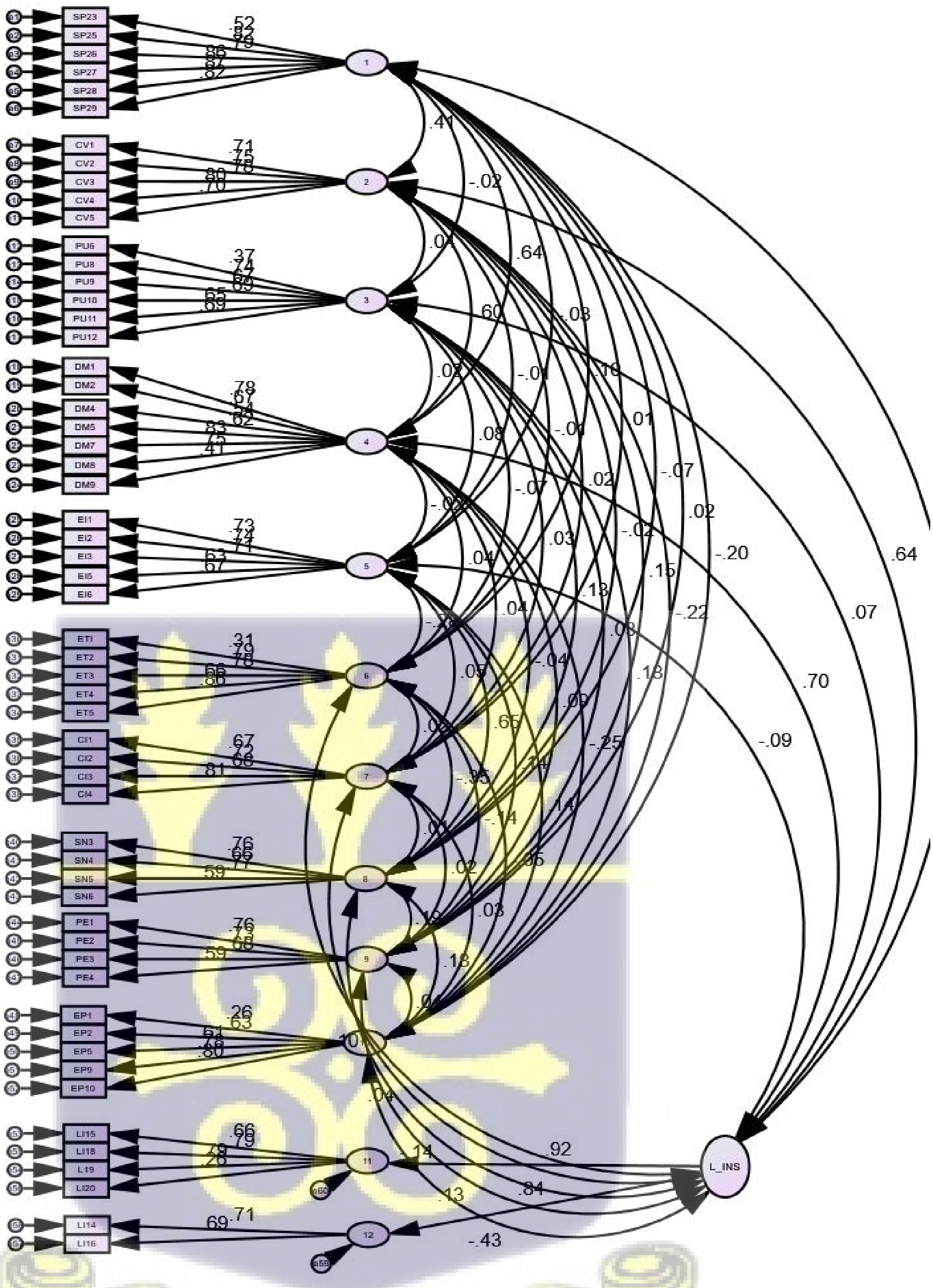
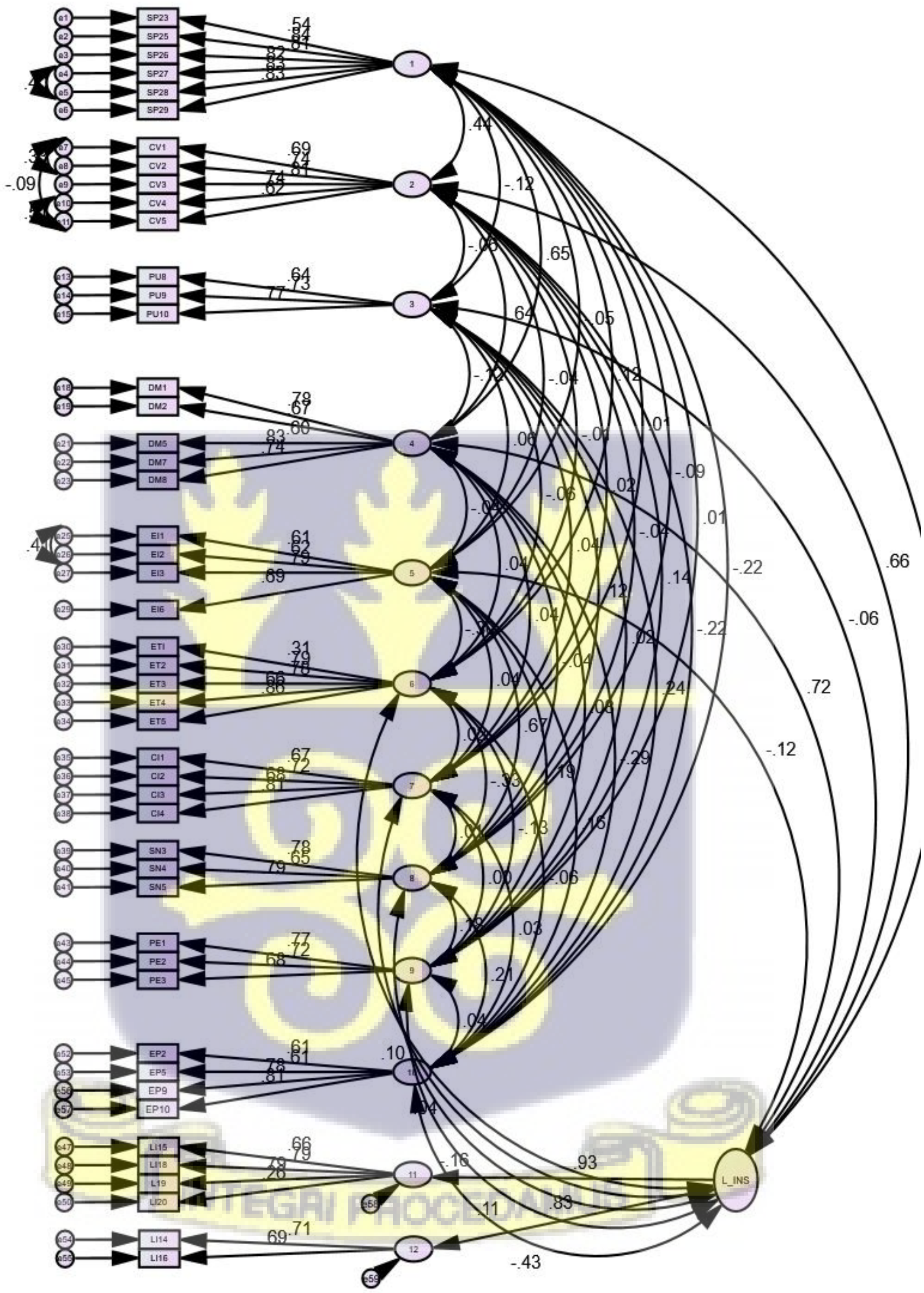
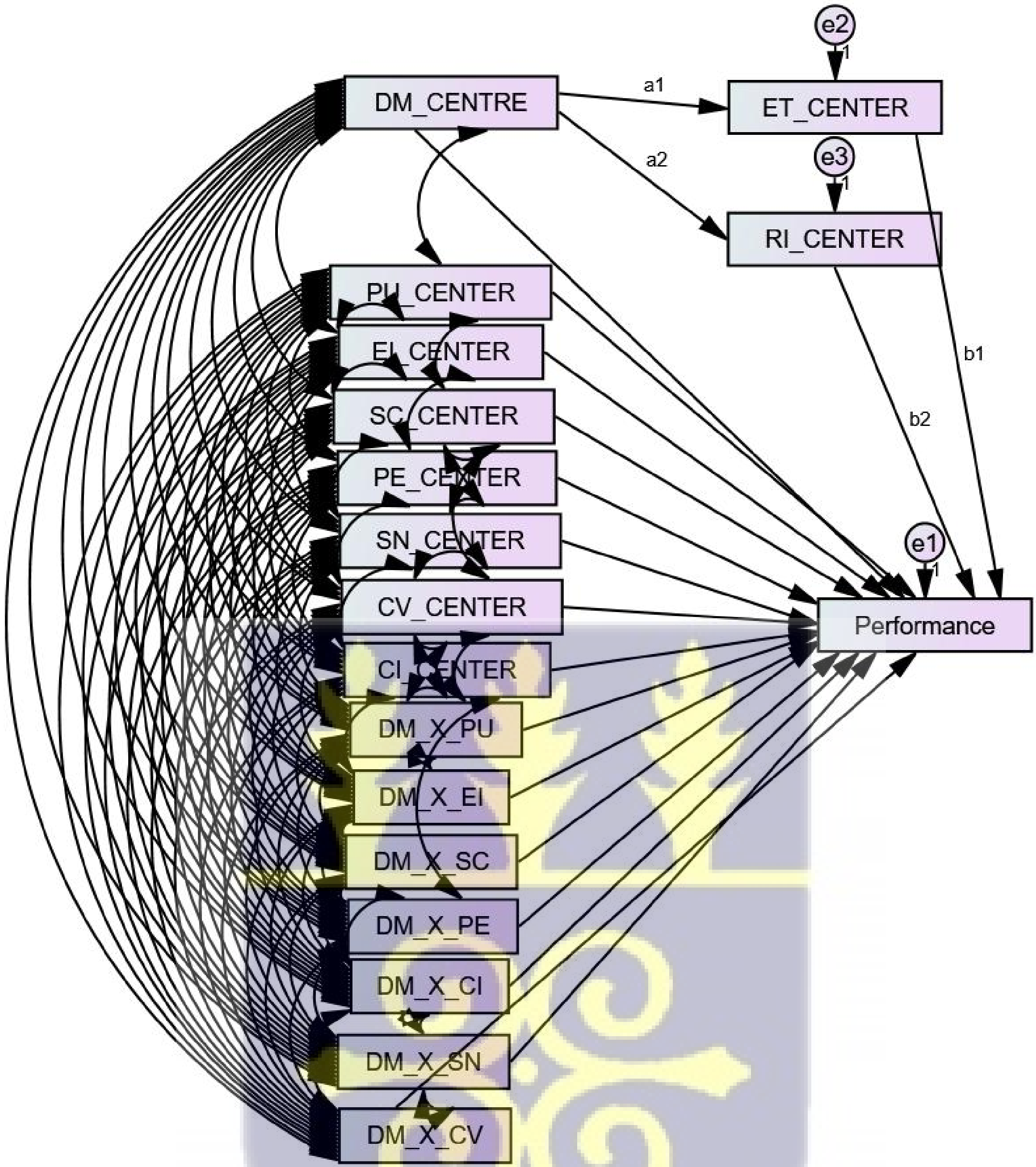


Figure 5.3: The Initial Measurement Model with Standardised Loadings



C

Figure 5.4 Finalized Model of Confirmatory Factor Analysis



Path Diagram Showing the Hypothesized Model.