

Retail insights from Design Indaba 2017



By [Gabrielle Mxon](#)

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Fortunate enough to attend the 2017 Design Indaba and sit in to hear some of the most creative people in the world speak, I walked out with some insights that fashion retail brands can look into and implement as part of their current strategies.

As remarkable as their talks were it is important to take out key things that are applicable to many brands as these are the people that are at the forefront of trends and consumer insights in their innovations and creations. That led me to the following trends.

Digital shop

Digital is a big part of the consumer's life but this element isn't well-integrated into South Africa's shopping environment. Consumers often follow brands online yet the in-store experience doesn't bring digital to life in a way that is integrated. Pauline Saglio, who spoke at this year's Design Indaba, [showed the beauty and importance](#) of bringing digital into a shop through interactive experiences that will wow the consumer. Consider your brand's online personality and presence on social media, and how can you incorporate these aspects into the retail space.

Dressing is play

Shoko Tamura who showcased her Urban Play wearable tech jacket at this year's Design Indaba explains that through fashion the young consumer can integrate the elements of music and lights to enhance their social experience and express themselves more artistically. Considering our youth market within South Africa we know they love fashion, they express themselves greatly through music and they are highly attracted to colour and lights (mostly for its attractiveness on social media).

This is what a party or event brings to life and while young consumers dress in their best for these nights out how can a brand really bring music, light and fashion into one experience that connects with the consumer? Dressing, music and lights can be brought together to help the consumer express themselves.

Authentic fabrication

Storytelling is endless. Telling stories through fabric is an opportunity for brands to take advantage of the places they source these fabrics from. At the conference this year we saw how fabric can be used as a medium for telling a story. As a brand's fabrics come from different places it is a great opportunity to share about where these fabrics come from and take the consumer on a journey to an entirely different place.

We know that fashion trends repeat themselves but there is still innovation in textile-making. Be it unique prints, new fabric compositions or places foreign to the consumer where the fabric is made it is an endless source to tell interesting stories to the consumer. As consumers are increasingly aware and questioning of where their products come from and who made them, telling stories about fabric in real, unique and interesting ways will engage the consumer and show a level of transparency in how the products they wear are produced and where they are produced.

Design for equality

[Grace Jun spoke](#) about design for inclusion. In marketing, you learn about niche markets and a specific target market but with travel bans making people feel like the world is taking a step backwards it is important to stand for inclusivity. Especially in fashion.



Grace Jun's Access & Closure range is created for women who have undergone post-surgery breast cancer. Image via www.gracejun.com

Designing for inclusion tackles the need to make clothing for people with disabilities or unique needs. These are people who are often forgotten about. As we strive to live in an equal society fashion is an important space to express this desire and to include and make consideration for all people in offerings.

These are trends that will be growing and can impact a fashion brand's retail strategy. To increase sales it is vital to stay abreast of these new innovations in order to start thinking ahead about how your strategy will incorporate these elements.

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