

Kenyan eco-friendly footwear brand wins sustainable design contest

Pine Kazi, a women-led shoe design house based in Kenya, is the winner of Fashionomics Africa's [sustainable fashion competition](#). The fashion company, which converts pineapple leaf and recycled rubber into fashionable footwear, wins a \$2,000 cash prize, access to media exposure opportunities, and mentorship and networking opportunities from competition collaborators. wins Fashionomics Africa sustainable design competition for turning



Fashionomics Africa is an initiative of the African Development Bank, designed to increase Africa's participation in the global textile and fashion industry value chains, with an emphasis on women and youth. Its latest competition was launched in December 2020 to support designers and producers of sustainable and circular fashion in Africa.

Sustainable textile innovation

Competition judges said Pine Kazi's shoes are innovative and sustainable.

The Kenyan brand was co-founded by Olivia Okinyi, Angela Musyoka and Mike Langa. Pine Kazi's shoe uppers are made from pineapple textile, while the inside is lined with organic cotton. The sole is made from sisal plant fiber, fitted with recycled tyre underneath. According to Pine Kazi, the shoes are 100% handmade to reduce carbon footprint and can last three years.

"Pine Kazi is greatly humbled to be the winners of the first Fashionomics Africa contest in Africa. This is indeed an honour to the Kenyan people and the African continent at large," said Okinyi. Musyoka added: "All our dreams can come true if we have the courage and the patience to pursue them."

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A post shared by pinekazi (@pinekazi)

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d invest half the winnings in machinery used to
make shoe source materials. “[This machinery] will see pineapple leaf waste put to work and create more green jobs for
unemployed youth,” she added.

The design house said resources would also be divided equally between research and development of natural dyes, the acquisition of professional stylists and the establishment of a centralised production system.



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19 Feb 2021



Judging process

The Fashionomics Africa contest honoured African fashion brands working to change how fashion is produced, bought, used and recycled, to encourage more sustainable consumer behaviour.

A panel of four judges representing the Bank and competition collaborators – the United Nations Environment Program, the

Parsons School of Design and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation – reviewed 110 entries from 24 African countries and selected three finalists: Pine Kazi; CiiE Luxuries, an eco-friendly accessories business based in Abuja, Nigeria; and clothing brand Labake Lagos.

Of the applications, 65% were submitted by women and the businesses were predominantly micro-enterprises (54%), solo entrepreneurs (35%) and small businesses (12%). An online public vote by 986 participants determined the winner: Pine Kazi got 400 votes, 318 votes went to CiiE Luxuries, and 268 to Labake Lagos.

Emanuela Gregorio, coordinator of the Fashionomics Africa initiative at the African Development Bank, commented, “We were pleasantly surprised by all the applications received for the first edition of our Fashionomics Africa competition. It was very difficult to make a choice, but the finalists stood out with their innovative, durable and contemporary designs.”

Amel Hamza, division manager at the Bank’s Gender, Women and Civil Society Department, commented, “What we learned from this Fashionomics Africa contest, in this month celebrating women around the world, is that many women entrepreneurs are advocating for sustainable production and consumption, and we commend their efforts.”

Competition judge and a programme director at New York-based Parsons School of Design, Brendan McCarthy, congratulated Pine Kazi during the competition winners announcement. “You transformed waste materials from pineapples into profound new textiles and absolutely beautiful new shoes,” he said.

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