

**REPOSITIONING THE FUTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CLOTHING AND TEXTILE INDUSTRIES –
A BRIEFING DOCUMENT BY MR ROB STEWART of B&M ANALYSTS**

SUMMARY

In the fourth Industrial Revolution, enterprises will need to merge their virtual and real production domains as much as possible with the help of advanced software, automation and data integration. Production processes and automation should be designed and commissioned virtually in tight collaboration with suppliers and partners. Manufacturers that want to retain their competitive advantage will increase production flexibility, automate logistics and deploy smart machines and smart products along the manufacturing value chain.

Robert Stewart, an accomplished researcher with B&M Analyst, reflects on the implications of digitalisation and Industry 4.0 in a digital policy briefing document, “Repositioning the Future of the South African Clothing and Textile Industries”. He examines this topic through five interconnected themes: increasing data availability through object linked sensors; object interconnectivity providing large data sets and associated powerful business analytics; the application of artificial intelligence to big data to enable machine learning and responsiveness; new materials availability and capability; and finally the increasing use of additive technologies and robotics.

In his research brief, Mr Stewart, alludes to four lessons that will have implications for the South African Clothing and Textile Industry:

- If South African retailers and manufacturers are to remain relevant, they will need to establish their own digital platforms for connecting with one-another and the consumer.
- The specific combinations of digital disruptions must be understood and responded to at a specific value chain level.
- He notes the impact and role of disruptive technologies in changing the economics of production and the nature of Global Value Chains due to closer monitoring. He cautions that production locations unable to verify their sustainability may be locked out of leading global markets.
- In order to address Clothing and Textiles value chain digitalisation pressures, Mr Stewart calls on appropriate institutions to research, engage, interpret and frame national policy framework. In his paper, he mentions the potentially very positive impact digital technologies could have on regulatory implementation.

Mr Stewart concludes by stating that the future of the South African Clothing and Textile industry will depend on how its stakeholders re-act to digitalisation and Industry 4.0 in the near future.

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