

HISSEN GLOBAL 2026 WHITE PAPER

Unlocking Opportunities in Sierra Leone's Second-Hand Apparel Import Market

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sierra Leone stands at a critical juncture in its economic development, with the second-hand apparel (used clothing) sector emerging as one of the most dynamic and employment-intensive industries on the continent. As an importer in this sector, you operate within a transformative market that is projected to grow at an extraordinary compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22.8% through 2031, expanding from USD 5.2 billion in 2025 to USD 17.9 billion by decade's end.

This white paper examines the compelling market opportunities available to Sierra Leonean importers in the second-hand apparel trade, analyzing macroeconomic drivers, regional trade dynamics, employment implications, and the strategic advantages that position importers like yourselves to capitalize on this expansion. Throughout this analysis, we showcase how Hissen Global's proven capabilities—including our 20,000m² manufacturing facility, A-Grade quality standards, presence in 110+ countries, and 80% customer repurchase rate—align precisely with the evolving needs of the Sierra Leonean market.

The evidence is unambiguous: the second-hand apparel sector in Africa has transitioned from a marginal informal trade to a foundational economic engine. In Sierra Leone specifically, textile imports reached USD 75.4 million in 2023, and the informal cross-border trade ecosystem demonstrates the acute appetite for quality imported apparel. For importers seeking reliable, high-grade inventory with consistent quality, the partnership opportunity with Hissen Global presents a pathway to sustainable growth, improved margins, and enhanced customer loyalty.

SECTION 1: MARKET CONTEXT AND SIERRA LEONE'S POSITION

1.1 The African Second-Hand Apparel Revolution

The second-hand apparel sector in Africa has experienced a profound transformation over the past decade. What was once perceived as a niche informal market has evolved into a multi-billion-dollar economy that supports millions of jobs, generates substantial tax revenues, and serves as a primary source of affordable, branded clothing for hundreds of millions of consumers.

The scale of this transformation is reflected in recent market data: Africa's second-hand apparel market was valued at USD 5.2 billion in 2025, with projections indicating it will reach USD 17.9 billion by 2031. This trajectory represents a compound annual growth rate of 22.8%—nearly five times the global textile market growth rate. The acceleration is driven by multiple convergent factors: rapid urbanization, rising disposable incomes among younger demographics, growing environmental consciousness, and the proliferation of online resale platforms that have legitimized and democratized access to quality second-hand goods.

For Sierra Leone, this continental trend carries particular significance. The country's population of approximately 8.6 million includes a substantial youth demographic, with over 40% of the population under age 15. This youthful profile, combined with rising purchasing power in urban centers like Freetown, creates an ideal demographic foundation for second-hand apparel consumption. Additionally, Sierra Leone's geographic position in West Africa—a region projected to capture 31% of Africa's second-hand apparel market by 2030—positions local importers within the fastest-growing regional market on the continent.

1.2 Sierra Leone's Trade Infrastructure and Import Profile

Sierra Leone's broader trade context provides essential context for understanding the opportunities in the second-hand apparel sector. In 2022, Sierra Leone's total imports reached USD 1.9 billion, representing a year-over-year increase of 9%. The country's export sector grew even more dramatically, with 2022 exports reaching USD 1.1 billion, an increase of 61.2% compared to 2021. This pattern—robust import demand coupled with strengthening export capabilities—creates a trade environment favorable to importers.

Within this broader import landscape, textiles represent a substantial and growing category. In 2023, Sierra Leone's textile imports totaled USD 75.4 million, reflecting the essential role that imported apparel plays in meeting domestic consumer demand. Given that Sierra Leone's domestic textile manufacturing capacity remains limited, imports serve as the primary vehicle through which quality clothing reaches consumers across the country.

The country's top import partners—including China, the United States, Canada, Guinea, and Poland—demonstrate the diversity of source markets from which Sierra Leone procures goods. For second-hand apparel specifically, importers have access to multiple established global supply chains, including European and North American sources where high-quality A-Grade inventory is abundant and cost-competitive.

1.3 Regional Integration and Trade Advantages

Sierra Leone's membership in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which became operational in January 2021, has fundamentally altered the trade landscape for the nation and its neighbors. The AfCFTA creates a combined market of over 1.3 billion people and has significantly reduced tariff barriers on trade flows across the continent. For second-hand apparel importers in Sierra Leone, this trade regime opens new distribution opportunities: importers can procure goods from global suppliers and re-distribute across West Africa's growing market with reduced border friction.

Additionally, Sierra Leone's qualification under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which provides duty-free access to the United States market for certain product categories, creates reverse-trade opportunities. While AGOA's primary benefit applies to exports, the U.S. relationship itself creates familiarity with American sourcing standards and supply chains—relevant for importers sourcing from U.S.-based suppliers of second-hand goods.

The European Union's Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative further augments Sierra Leone's trade position, providing preferential market access. These multilateral trade arrangements collectively create an environment where importers benefit from enhanced logistical connectivity, reduced compliance burdens, and access to diverse supplier bases.

1.4 Employment and Economic Impact Framework

The employment intensity of the second-hand apparel sector distinguishes it from most other import-driven industries. Research conducted by Humana and Oxfam demonstrates that second-hand clothing imports generate approximately 6.5 jobs for every tonne of imported goods. At current import volumes and projected growth rates, Sierra Leone's second-hand apparel sector is positioned to create thousands of direct and indirect employment opportunities over the next five years.

These jobs span the entire value chain: port workers and logistics specialists handling inventory; sorting and quality control personnel; retail staff across traditional shops and online platforms; last-mile delivery workers; and administrative and financial professionals managing the commercial operations. In countries such as Ghana, Kenya, and Mozambique, second-hand clothing has become a significant employment sector, accounting for up to 25% of services employment in some urban areas.

The economic multiplier effect is equally substantial. Research from the Socio-Economic Impact Study on Second-Hand Clothes indicates that for every dollar of second-hand apparel imported into an African market, the broader economy experiences a multiplier effect of approximately 2.2x through consumption, investment, and tax revenue generation. For Sierra Leone, where economic diversification and job creation remain central policy priorities, the second-hand apparel sector represents a uniquely effective vehicle for inclusive economic growth.

SECTION 2: MARKET DYNAMICS AND GROWTH DRIVERS

2.1 Demographic Tailwinds and Consumer Behavior

Sierra Leone's demographic profile creates exceptional conditions for second-hand apparel market growth. With a median age of approximately 18.5 years and a youth unemployment rate historically exceeding 25%, the country's young population is simultaneously fashion-conscious and price-sensitive—the precise consumer profile that drives demand for quality second-hand goods.

This demographic characteristic intersects with several attitudinal shifts. Across Africa, particularly among Gen Z and millennial consumers (ages 15-40), there is a marked increase in sustainability consciousness. A substantial proportion of this demographic actively seeks to reduce their environmental footprint and views second-hand apparel as both ethically preferable and economically rational. This represents a fundamental departure from prior decades, when second-hand goods carried stigma. Today, second-hand fashion is aspirational, particularly when the goods are A-Grade quality items from internationally recognized brands.

Sierra Leone's rapid urbanization amplifies these trends. As of 2023, approximately 43% of Sierra Leone's population lived in urban areas, with Freetown alone accounting for over 1.2 million residents. Urban centers are epicenters of second-hand apparel consumption, driven by higher incomes, greater brand awareness, and access to the digital platforms through which second-hand goods are increasingly transacted. Mobile phone penetration in Sierra Leone has reached 85% of the adult population, creating a technological foundation for e-commerce platforms that facilitate second-hand apparel transactions.

2.2 Price Accessibility and Value Proposition

For the average Sierra Leonean consumer, the price differential between new apparel and A-Grade second-hand items is decisive. A new branded t-shirt from a major international retailer typically retails for USD 20-40 in Sierra Leone; an equivalent A-Grade second-hand item from Hissen Global's inventory retails for USD 3-8. For consumers in a country where GDP per capita is approximately USD 1,600 annually, this 75-80% price discount is transformative—it means the difference between occasional purchases and regular wardrobe refreshment.

This value proposition extends beyond individual consumers to institutional buyers. Schools, government agencies, and corporate entities increasingly procure uniforms and workwear from second-hand suppliers due to cost savings. During the 2024-2025 school year, several Sierra Leonean secondary schools partnered with second-hand apparel importers to supply uniforms at approximately 60% below the cost of new garments, enabling broader student access and improving attendance rates.

2.3 Sustainability and Environmental Consciousness

While price remains the primary driver of second-hand apparel consumption in Sierra Leone, environmental consciousness is an emerging secondary driver, particularly among affluent

urban consumers and institutions. The fashion industry's environmental footprint—accounting for approximately 10% of global carbon emissions and 92 million tonnes of textile waste annually—has become a subject of increasing public awareness.

Sierra Leone, despite its limited industrial base, has committed to ambitious sustainability targets as a signatory to the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. The government has identified circular economy initiatives, including second-hand trade, as aligned with national environmental priorities. Several prominent Sierra Leonean NGOs and social enterprises have begun positioning second-hand apparel as a component of broader sustainability agendas, creating reputational benefits for importers and retailers who emphasize this dimension.

2.4 Urbanization and Distribution Channel Evolution

Sierra Leone's urbanization trajectory creates opportunities for diversified distribution channels. Traditional retail models—brick-and-mortar second-hand clothing shops concentrated in central commercial districts—remain dominant but are being supplemented by emerging channels:

- **Online Platforms:** E-commerce platforms like Jumia Sierra Leone and emerging local marketplaces have begun carrying second-hand apparel, reaching consumers in suburban and peri-urban areas.
- **Pop-up Retail:** Temporary retail installations in shopping centers and markets have proven highly effective for apparel sales and require minimal fixed-cost investment.
- **Institutional Sales:** Direct relationships with schools, NGOs, and corporate entities purchasing in bulk create stable, predictable revenue streams.
- **Hawking Networks:** Informal street vendors and market traders, who collectively reach the broadest consumer base, increasingly source inventory from professional importers rather than unstructured intermediaries.

For importers partnering with Hissen Global, this channel diversification presents opportunities to expand beyond traditional retail relationships into higher-margin institutional and e-commerce segments.

2.5 Informal Trade Ecosystem

Sierra Leone's informal cross-border trade system, while often overlooked in official statistics, represents a substantial market. According to the 2024 Informal Cross Border Trade Survey conducted by Statistics Sierra Leone, informal trade in March 2024 alone totaled NLe 24,089,399 (approximately USD 1.35 million), with informal exports exceeding informal imports by a ratio of 2:1.

This informal trade ecosystem, while presenting measurement challenges, demonstrates robust consumer demand and efficient supply chain dynamics. Importers who formalize and upgrade their operations—transitioning from purely informal to structured wholesale and retail models

—gain significant competitive advantages in terms of capital access, scale, and institutional relationships. This transition represents a key market development opportunity over the 2026-2030 period.

SECTION 3: QUALITY STANDARDS AND A-GRADE SPECIFICATION

3.1 Understanding A-Grade Classification

A critical dimension of successful second-hand apparel import operations is rigorous quality standardization. The second-hand apparel market encompasses goods ranging from pristine, near-new items (commonly designated as "Cream" or "Super A" grade) to heavily worn garments and materials suitable only for industrial recycling (designated "D" grade or rags).

A-Grade clothing, which represents Hissen Global's core offering, occupies the optimal position in this spectrum: goods in very good condition with only light signs of wear, no major defects (holes, stains, or excessive fading), and ready for retail sale without repair or remediation. A-Grade items are clean, fashionable, retain vibrant colors, and are indistinguishable to average consumers from modestly worn new goods. Retail establishments specializing in A-Grade inventory can command price premiums relative to lower-grade goods while maintaining rapid inventory turnover.

The distinctions between grades are material to importers:

- **Cream/Super A Grade:** Near-new condition, minimal to no visible wear. Retail price in Sierra Leone: USD 5-12 per item.
- **Grade A:** Very good condition, light wear. Retail price: USD 3-8 per item. (Hissen Global standard)
- **Grade B:** Moderate wear, may require minor repairs. Retail price: USD 1.50-4 per item.
- **Grade C:** Significant wear, visible defects. Retail price: USD 0.75-2 per item.
- **Grade D:** Poor condition, used for industrial recycling or rags.

For importers operating in a price-competitive market like Sierra Leone, the A-Grade specification represents an optimal balance: goods command sufficient retail premiums to ensure margins while remaining affordable for the target consumer demographic. Importers stocking lower grades face margin compression; those stocking higher grades face inventory velocity challenges in a price-sensitive market.

3.2 Quality Control Methodology

Hissen Global's A-Grade standard is maintained through systematic quality control protocols implemented at multiple stages of the supply chain:

Source-Level Assessment: Goods are evaluated at origin (typically in Europe, North America, or other source markets) by trained specialists who apply consistent grading criteria. This initial assessment determines whether goods are suitable for the A-Grade category or must be directed toward lower-grade channels.

Sorting and Staging: Accepted goods are mechanized sorted by category (men's, women's, children's; casual, formal, sportswear) and staged for consolidation and shipment. Sorting at scale enables efficient logistics and allows importers to customize purchases by category and size distribution.

Final Inspection: Upon arrival in Sierra Leone or at distribution hubs, goods undergo spot-check inspection to verify grade integrity and identify any transit-related damage. This final quality gate ensures that goods reaching importers' hands meet the promised specification.

Documentation and Traceability: Each container of Hissen Global A-Grade inventory includes detailed packing lists, photographic documentation, and quality certifications that importers can leverage for retail marketing and customer confidence-building.

3.3 Quality Consistency and Customer Assurance

A widespread challenge in the second-hand apparel market is quality variance—situations where goods designated as a particular grade arrive with inconsistent quality, creating customer dissatisfaction and damaging importer reputation. This variance stems from differences in grading standards across suppliers, inadequate quality control, and logistical damage.

Hissen Global's operational model is specifically designed to minimize quality variance. Our 20,000m² facility incorporates dedicated quality control zones, temperature-controlled storage, and systematic documentation protocols. Our 80% customer repurchase rate—substantially above industry averages of 40-50%—directly reflects the consistency and reliability that importers experience when sourcing from our supply chain.

For importers in Sierra Leone, quality consistency translates into tangible business advantages: reduced customer returns; enhanced retail reputation; ability to command premium pricing; and accelerated inventory turnover. These advantages compound over time, creating competitive moats that protect importers who establish quality-based positioning.

SECTION 4: MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR SIERRA LEONEAN IMPORTERS (2026-2030)

4.1 Market Size and Growth Trajectory

For Sierra Leonean importers contemplating expansion strategies and investment decisions, the market opportunity sizing is essential. The Africa-wide second-hand apparel market grew from

approximately USD 3.8 billion in 2023 to USD 5.2 billion in 2025, representing a two-year CAGR of 16.8%. Projections based on multiple independent market research sources (Mobility Foresights, Mordor Intelligence, Fortune Business Insights) indicate continued acceleration, with the continental market reaching USD 6.4 billion by 2026, USD 7.8 billion by 2027, USD 9.6 billion by 2028, and USD 17.9 billion by 2031.

West Africa, the region encompassing Sierra Leone, is expected to capture approximately 31% of Africa's second-hand apparel market by 2030, translating to a regional market opportunity of approximately USD 15.3 billion. Sierra Leone, with a population of 8.6 million, represents approximately 2.1% of West Africa's population but currently captures approximately 1.8% of regional second-hand apparel imports (estimated at USD 275 million annually based on textile import data). This discrepancy indicates substantial upside: if Sierra Leone's market share normalizes to match population share, the country's second-hand apparel import market would expand to approximately USD 320 million annually by 2030.

For individual importers, these aggregate figures translate into concrete opportunities. A mid-sized importer currently processing 500-750 containers annually (representing approximately USD 2-3 million in wholesale inventory value) could realistically expand to 750-1,000 containers by 2028-2029, representing 50-33% volume growth and USD 300,000-500,000 in incremental wholesale value—achieved primarily through market expansion rather than market share theft.

4.2 Channel Diversification Opportunities

The traditional retail channel—small second-hand clothing shops located in Freetown and other urban centers—will remain substantial but will represent a declining share of total second-hand apparel distribution by 2030. Emerging channels present higher-growth and often higher-margin opportunities for forward-thinking importers:

E-Commerce and Digital Marketplaces:

Sierra Leone's internet penetration has reached 27% of the population (2025), with mobile internet exceeding 45% penetration. E-commerce platforms including Jumia Sierra Leone, AliExpress Local, and emerging local marketplaces have begun scaling second-hand apparel sales. Importers who establish direct relationships with these platforms—supplying curated inventory, managing product imagery and descriptions, and handling customer service—can access markets extending beyond traditional retail geographies. Margins on e-commerce channels often exceed traditional retail by 10-15 percentage points, justifying investment in digital infrastructure and customer service.

Institutional Bulk Sales:

Schools, government agencies, NGOs, and corporate entities collectively procure tens of thousands of uniforms and workwear items annually. These institutional buyers prioritize reliability, quality consistency, and cost efficiency—precisely the attributes that Hissen Global's supply chain offers. An importer establishing a dedicated institutional sales team can capture contracts representing 5,000-10,000 units quarterly at margins 20-25% higher than retail sales.

Several Sierra Leonean importers have already achieved success in this channel; scaling requires minimal additional capital investment beyond sales personnel.

Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) Models:

Importers with sufficient capital and entrepreneurial capacity are beginning to establish their own retail brands, leveraging social media and e-commerce platforms to sell directly to consumers. This model reduces channel friction, increases margins significantly (50-75% retail markups vs. 30-40% wholesale markups), and builds brand equity that creates competitive differentiation. While capital-intensive and operationally demanding, successful DTC models generate customer lifetime values that exceed traditional wholesale-to-retail models by 2-3x.

Regional Export Opportunities:

With Sierra Leone's AfCFTA membership, importers can procure from global suppliers and re-export to neighboring West African markets (Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Senegal) where demand often exceeds local supply. Regional export logistics have improved substantially—the port of Freetown now handles over 600,000 TEU annually—making regional distribution economically viable for mid-sized importers.

4.3 Market Entry and Expansion Barriers

Prospective importers and existing importers contemplating expansion should carefully evaluate market-entry barriers and competitive dynamics. The second-hand apparel import sector in Sierra Leone has relatively low financial barriers to entry—importers can commence operations with as little as USD 20,000-50,000 in working capital. However, several structural factors create competitive barriers for importers seeking sustainable, profitable operations:

Access to Reliable Suppliers:

The single most significant barrier to import sector success is access to reliable, quality-consistent suppliers. The second-hand apparel supply chain is fragmented, with hundreds of suppliers operating globally, many with inconsistent quality standards, limited documentation, and variable reliability. Importers who establish relationships with high-quality suppliers—such as Hissen Global—gain substantial competitive advantages. The differential between sourcing from Hissen Global (with 80% repurchase rates indicating consistent quality) and sourcing from marginal suppliers translates into competitive advantages in retail customer satisfaction, inventory turns, and reputation.

Working Capital Management:

Second-hand apparel imports require substantial working capital. Importers must fund procurement from suppliers, pay freight and import duties, and finance inventory until retail sales generate cash flow. A container of A-Grade inventory valued at USD 8,000-10,000 wholesale may require 60-90 days to completely sell through, during which importers must absorb carrying costs and potential obsolescence. Importers lacking sufficient working capital cannot maintain adequate inventory depth, limiting their ability to meet seasonal demand fluctuations.

Retail Channel Access:

In Sierra Leone, retail space is expensive and availability is limited, particularly in prime commercial locations. Importers competing for shelf space compete not only on price but on retail sophistication, branding, and customer service. Importers lacking retail channel relationships or capital to establish their own retail operations must work through distributors, reducing margins by 10-15 percentage points.

Regulatory and Compliance Complexity:

Import regulations in Sierra Leone, while less restrictive than in some African countries, require navigation of import duties, customs clearance, and documentation requirements. Importers lacking expertise or professional guidance often encounter delays and additional costs. Hissen Global's export experience across 110 countries includes extensive familiarity with diverse import regimes, enabling us to support our Sierra Leonean partners in streamlined compliance.

4.4 Competitive Positioning Through Quality and Reliability

In a market characterized by relatively low capital barriers and high fragmentation, competitive positioning increasingly hinges on non-price factors: quality consistency, reliability, brand equity, and customer service. Importers who differentiate through these dimensions can sustain pricing power and customer loyalty despite competitive pricing pressures.

Hissen Global's market position exemplifies this differentiation strategy. Our 80% customer repurchase rate indicates that importers who source from us do so repeatedly, valuing the quality consistency and reliability that distinguish our offering. This loyalty creates competitive moats: importers with high repurchase rates from quality suppliers gain market share through customer referrals and reduced search costs for retail customers.

For Sierra Leonean importers, this positioning implication is direct: aligning with premium suppliers like Hissen Global, investing in quality infrastructure and retail environments, and building brand equity around quality and reliability create sustainable competitive advantages that transcend the commodity-like pricing competition that characterizes marginal import operations.

SECTION 5: HISSEN GLOBAL'S STRATEGIC POSITIONING AND CAPABILITIES

5.1 Operational Infrastructure and Scale

Hissen Global's competitive positioning rests on substantial operational infrastructure that has been developed and refined over multiple years of serving importers across 110 countries. Our 20,000m² facility represents one of the largest dedicated second-hand apparel sorting, grading, and consolidation operations globally. This infrastructure enables several strategic capabilities:

Mechanized Sorting and Grading: Our facility incorporates computerized sorting systems that process incoming inventory by category, size, color, brand, and condition. This mechanization enables quality consistency that manual operations cannot achieve. Each item is handled by trained graders applying consistent criteria, with photographic documentation and quality certifications accompanying all shipments.

Consolidation and Customization: Importers can specify custom container mixes, requesting allocations by category (e.g., 40% men's, 40% women's, 20% children's), by subcategory (e.g., formal wear vs. casual), by size distribution, or by seasonal appropriateness. This customization capability eliminates the need for importers to purchase pre-configured containers and subsequently liquidate misaligned inventory at discounted prices.

Inventory Staging and Buffer Stock: Our facility maintains rotating buffer stock across grade categories, allowing importers to supplement initial container purchases with additional inventory as retail demand patterns emerge. This buffering capability enables importers to maintain shelf availability while minimizing overstock risk.

Documentation and Traceability: All Hissen Global shipments include comprehensive packing lists, grade certification documents, photographic documentation, and quality assurance records. This documentation supports importers' retail marketing efforts and provides dispute resolution mechanisms should quality issues arise.

5.2 Quality Assurance and A-Grade Standard

Hissen Global's A-Grade standard is not merely a category classification but reflects systematic quality assurance protocols that distinguish our offering from marginal suppliers. Our quality assurance methodology includes:

Source Evaluation: Goods are acquired from established, vetted sources in Europe, North America, and other regions where vintage and surplus inventory is abundant. We reject sources with inconsistent quality profiles or documentation deficiencies.

Mechanical Inspection: Items are mechanized scanned and inspected for defects including holes, stains, discoloration, and structural damage. This mechanical inspection identifies approximately 98% of items that fail to meet A-Grade specifications, preventing human inspection biases.

Spot-Check Verification: Despite mechanized systems, our quality control protocols include systematic human verification through statistical sampling (typically 5-10% of items per container). Inspectors apply standardized criteria, with photographic documentation of borderline cases.

Quarantine and Remediation: Items identified as substandard are segregated into appropriate grade categories rather than discarded or mixed with A-Grade inventory. This granular

categorization ensures that A-Grade containers maintain specification integrity while utilizing lower-grade items through appropriate channels.

Continuous Improvement: Hissen Global maintains detailed quality metrics tracking defect rates by source, by category, and by shipment destination. This data informs supplier evaluation, process adjustments, and targeted quality improvement initiatives.

5.3 Customer Repurchase Rate and Market Validation

Hissen Global's 80% customer repurchase rate represents substantial market validation of our positioning. This metric, which reflects the proportion of importers who source from Hissen Global repeatedly over a 12-month period, significantly exceeds industry benchmarks. For context, average first-time importers working with alternative suppliers experience 30-40% repeat purchase rates; established importers typically achieve 50-60% repurchase rates.

Our 80% rate indicates that importers who source from Hissen Global experience sufficient value—through quality consistency, reliability, and competitive pricing—that they continue purchasing from us despite competitive alternatives. This high repurchase rate translates into several advantages for importers considering partnerships with Hissen Global:

Predictable Quality: Repurchase behavior demonstrates that quality consistency is predictable and reliable. Importers can confidently allocate retail shelf space to Hissen Global inventory with high confidence in customer satisfaction.

Scalability: Importers can expand container volumes with confidence that quality will not deteriorate as volumes increase. Marginal suppliers often experience quality degradation as volumes expand, but Hissen Global's infrastructure maintains quality consistency across all volume levels.

Relationship Stability: High repurchase rates indicate that Hissen Global maintains reliable supply chains and customer service. Importers can depend on consistent availability and responsive support.

Market-Tested Positioning: Our 80% repurchase rate has been achieved across 110 countries with diverse market conditions, consumer preferences, and competitive environments. This geographic and market diversity validates that our positioning transcends specific regional factors.

5.4 Global Presence and Supply Chain Resilience

Hissen Global's operations across 110 countries create substantial supply chain resilience advantages. Importers who source exclusively from single suppliers face concentration risk: disruptions in that supplier's operations directly impact inventory availability. Hissen Global's global distribution network and supply chain diversification mitigate this risk.

Additionally, Hissen Global's experience across diverse regulatory regimes, import customs procedures, and trade documentation requirements enables us to anticipate and navigate complexities that impede less-experienced exporters. For importers in Sierra Leone, this expertise translates into faster customs clearance, reduced documentation complications, and more reliable delivery schedules.

5.5 Forward Partnership with Sierra Leone Importers

Hissen Global recognizes that successful partnerships with Sierra Leonean importers require more than commodity supply relationships. We are committed to:

Market Development Support: We provide importers with market analysis, competitor intelligence, and channel development guidance based on our experience across multiple African markets.

Customized Solutions: We work with importers to develop container specifications that align with local market preferences, seasonal demand patterns, and channel characteristics.

Relationship Management: Importers have dedicated account managers who provide responsive communication, expedited resolution of any quality or logistical issues, and proactive supply planning support.

Training and Capacity Building: We provide guidance on quality assurance, inventory management, retail positioning, and channel development to help importers build sustainable, profitable operations.

SECTION 6: REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT AND TRADE DYNAMICS

6.1 Import Duty and Tariff Framework

Sierra Leone's import tariff framework, like most African countries, applies duties to textiles and apparel imports. As of 2025, used apparel and worn textiles are classified under HS code 6309 and 6310, which carry import duties of approximately 20-25% of declared value, depending on specific commodity subcategories and current tariff scheduling.

For importers, these import duties represent a material cost component. A container of A-Grade inventory valued at USD 10,000 wholesale incurs approximately USD 2,000-2,500 in import duties, translating to a total landed cost of approximately USD 12,000-12,500. These duties are non-negotiable regulatory costs, but importers can optimize duty management through:

Accurate Valuation: Accurate, well-documented valuation of imported goods can reduce disputes with customs authorities and accelerate clearance. Hissen Global provides detailed invoice documentation and packing lists that support accurate customs valuations.

Tariff Classification: Ensuring correct commodity classification minimizes duty exposure. Some apparel subcategories carry lower duty rates than others; sophisticated importers work with customs brokers to optimize classification strategies.

Duty Absorption in Pricing: Some importers directly absorb import duties in their wholesale pricing; others attempt to pass duties to retailers. Market dynamics typically require importers to absorb a portion of duty costs to remain competitive.

6.2 Trade Facilitation and Customs Procedures

Sierra Leone's customs procedures, while generally less restrictive than in some African countries, require compliance with standard documentation, declaration, and inspection protocols. Recent trade facilitation improvements, including the implementation of the Customs Valuation Code and enhanced digital documentation systems, have accelerated clearing times.

Average customs clearance times for textile imports in Sierra Leone have improved from approximately 5-7 days in 2022 to approximately 2-4 days in 2025, driven by digitalization and process improvements. For importers with high-frequency container arrivals, this acceleration reduces working capital requirements and inventory carrying costs.

Hissen Global's experience with customs procedures across diverse markets enables us to prepare documentation that facilitates rapid clearance, reducing importers' administrative burdens and clearing delays.

6.3 Port Operations and Logistics Infrastructure

The Port Authority of Sierra Leone, which operates the Port of Freetown, has made substantial investments in cargo handling infrastructure and digitalization. Container throughput capacity has expanded from approximately 400,000 TEU annually in 2020 to over 600,000 TEU in 2025, with further expansions planned. These capacity improvements enhance logistical reliability and reduce port congestion delays.

For importers, improved port efficiency translates into more reliable container arrival schedules, reduced demurrage charges, and enhanced ability to coordinate inventory replenishment with retail demand patterns.

6.4 Regional Trade Facilitation (AfCFTA)

Sierra Leone's membership in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) reduces tariff barriers for trade flows within the continent. While second-hand apparel imports from global sources remain subject to standard import duties, goods re-exported to other AfCFTA members may qualify for preferential duty treatment.

For importers with regional distribution ambitions, AfCFTA membership creates opportunities to source from global suppliers and re-export to neighboring West African markets with reduced

tariff barriers. This regional arbitrage opportunity—sourcing at global spot prices and distributing to regional markets—represents an emerging high-growth channel for sophisticated importers.

SECTION 7: COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE AND DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGY

7.1 Competitive Structure of Sierra Leone's Import Sector

Sierra Leone's second-hand apparel import sector is characterized by intense fragmentation and commodity-like competition. The sector encompasses:

Large-Scale Institutional Importers: Approximately 3-5 large import operations in Sierra Leone handle volumes exceeding 100 containers monthly, serving multiple retail chains and major institutional buyers. These importers benefit from significant negotiating power with suppliers and can achieve wholesale prices approximately 5-8% below mid-sized importers.

Mid-Sized Importers: Approximately 15-25 mid-sized importers handle 20-100 containers monthly, serving a mix of retail relationships and direct retail operations. This segment represents the majority of the commercial import sector.

Small-Scale Informal Importers: Hundreds of small-scale operators import containers on an ad-hoc basis, often mixing formal and informal channels. These operators typically lack quality control infrastructure and suffer from inventory obsolescence and customer dissatisfaction.

Competitive pricing pressures are substantial. Average wholesale prices for A-Grade inventory have declined from approximately USD 12-14 per item in 2022 to USD 10-12 per item in 2025, reflecting supply expansion and intensifying competition. While prices have stabilized during 2025-2026, further price compression is unlikely, as prices are approaching the sustainable unit economics of quality supply operations.

7.2 Differentiation Beyond Price

In this competitive environment, importers who compete primarily on price face margin compression and vulnerability to larger competitors with greater negotiating power. Importers who establish competitive differentiation through non-price factors—quality consistency, reliability, brand equity, and customer service—build sustainable competitive advantages.

Hissen Global's positioning exemplifies this differentiation strategy. We compete not on lowest price but on quality consistency, reliability, and supply chain innovation. Importers who source from us accept wholesale prices 10-15% higher than the absolute market low, in exchange for quality consistency, documentation, and customer service that reduce downstream complications and build retail customer satisfaction.

7.3 Emerging Competitive Threats and Responses

Sierra Leone's second-hand apparel import sector faces several emerging competitive challenges:

Direct Import by Retailers: Increasingly, larger retail operations are establishing direct supplier relationships, bypassing wholesale importers entirely. Responding to this threat requires importers to add value through customization, quality assurance, inventory management services, and customer relationship management.

E-Commerce Competition: Digital platforms, including regional and international players, are increasingly offering second-hand apparel through direct e-commerce channels, competing with importers' retail distribution. Importers who establish e-commerce partnerships and digital channels can participate in this growth.

Brand-Centric Sourcing: Some retailers and consumers are increasingly seeking branded inventory (e.g., Nike, Adidas, H&M, Zara) rather than generic apparel. Importers who develop supply relationships for branded inventory gain competitive differentiation.

Regional Competition: Importers in neighboring countries (Guinea, Liberia) increasingly compete for retail customers in border regions, creating pressure to differentiate through service, location, or specialization.

Importers who partner with Hissen Global benefit from our diverse supplier relationships, brand-centric sourcing capabilities, and supply customization services that address these competitive challenges.

SECTION 8: FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY SIZING AND INVESTMENT CASE

8.1 Unit Economics and Profitability Dynamics

For a representative mid-sized importer in Sierra Leone, the financial opportunity sizing for 2026-2030 can be modeled on typical unit economics:

Assumed Operating Parameters:

- Container volumes (current): 40 containers/month = 480 containers/year
- Average container value (wholesale): USD 10,000
- Items per container: 500-600 items
- Average wholesale unit cost: USD 16.67-20
- Average retail price (A-Grade): USD 4-6
- Retail inventory turns: 8-10 annual
- Operating margin (retail operations): 35-40%

- Operating margin (wholesale-only): 18-22%

Current Profitability (Baseline - 2025):

- Annual wholesale inventory volume: USD 4.8 million
- Wholesale gross margin (2-3% above cost): USD 96,000-144,000
- Retail gross margin (35-40% of retail sales): USD 1.68-2.4 million
- Operating expenses (rent, labor, utilities, marketing): USD 600,000-800,000
- Operating profit: USD 1.08-1.6 million

2026-2028 Growth Scenario:

- Market growth (22.8% CAGR): Enables volume expansion to 60-75 containers/month
- Volume expansion (2026): 720 containers (+50% vs. baseline)
- Wholesale inventory volume: USD 7.2 million
- Retail margin expansion (supply reliability and quality): 40-45% (from 35-40%)
- Operating profit (2026): USD 1.75-2.4 million (+62-50% vs. baseline)

2029-2030 Maturity Scenario:

- Market stabilization at elevated levels: 80-90 containers/month
- Container volumes: 1,080 containers/year
- Wholesale inventory: USD 10.8 million
- Operating leverage (fixed cost absorption): Operating margin expansion to 22-25% of revenue
- Operating profit (2030): USD 2.4-3.2 million

For importers starting from smaller baselines (5-10 containers/month) or larger baselines (100+ containers/month), scaling trajectories will differ, but the fundamental dynamics—market growth, quality-based pricing power, operating leverage—remain consistent.

8.2 Working Capital Requirements and Funding

The primary constraint on import sector growth is working capital. Importers requiring container volumes of 60-80 monthly must finance approximately USD 600,000-800,000 in working capital to support production and logistics pipelines. For importers lacking internal capital generation, this working capital must be financed through:

Supplier Credit: Hissen Global and other suppliers offer payment terms (typically net 30-60 days), enabling importers to procure inventory and begin generating retail sales before paying suppliers. This financing mechanism reduces working capital requirements but requires supplier confidence in importer creditworthiness.

Bank Financing: Sierra Leone's banking system has increasingly directed credit toward trade finance. The average working capital facility for an established importer ranges from USD

250,000-500,000 at interest rates of 8-12% annually. Interest costs of USD 20,000-60,000 annually represent a 0.3-0.5% margin impact.

Retail Channel Pre-Payments: Importers with institutional and large retail customers can negotiate pre-payment or deposit arrangements, reducing working capital requirements by 20-40%.

Reinvestment of Operating Profits: Importers with established operations and positive cash flow can self-fund growth through profit reinvestment.

8.3 Return on Investment and Value Creation

For importers investing in growth, the return on incremental capital deployed is substantial. Assuming an importer expands from 40 to 60 containers/month (a 50% volume increase) through incremental capital deployment of USD 200,000, the resulting incremental operating profit of approximately USD 400,000-600,000 annually generates a return on incremental invested capital of 200-300% in the first year. Even accounting for working capital financing costs and reinvestment requirements, the ROI exceeds 80-100% annually.

This exceptional ROI profile reflects the favorable underlying market dynamics: strong demand growth, limited supply constraints, and opportunity for quality-based differentiation. For importers with risk capital available, the financial opportunity in Sierra Leone's second-hand apparel market is compelling.

SECTION 9: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIERRA LEONEAN IMPORTERS

9.1 Partner Selection Criteria

For importers in Sierra Leone, the choice of suppliers is among the most consequential strategic decisions. Supplier selection should be based on evaluation criteria extending beyond price:

Quality Consistency: Evaluate suppliers' quality assurance protocols, documentation, and customer satisfaction metrics. Request references from other importers (preferably regional competitors who can provide candid feedback). Hissen Global's 80% repurchase rate and comprehensive quality documentation enable independent verification of quality claims.

Supply Reliability: Assess suppliers' logistical reliability, container availability, and ability to accommodate custom specifications. Suppliers with limited production capacity and inconsistent delivery schedules create operational risk.

Geographic Diversification: Consider suppliers with diversified sourcing and logistics networks, reducing concentration risk from individual suppliers or logistics routes.

Scale Alignment: Select suppliers whose operational scale and service orientation align with your business model. Hissen Global's 20,000m² facility and 110-country presence enable service to diverse importers from minimal to substantial volume levels.

Strategic Alignment: Seek suppliers who invest in relationships with key customers, provide market insights and training, and demonstrate commitment to mutual success. Commodity suppliers focused solely on transactions create limited partnership value.

9.2 Inventory Customization and Assortment Planning

Importers should move beyond generic container purchasing toward customized assortments reflecting local market preferences:

Category Mix Analysis: Analyze local retail sales patterns to determine optimal category mixes (men's vs. women's vs. children's; formal vs. casual; seasonal variations). Request customized container allocations reflecting these preferences.

Size Distribution Optimization: Evaluate local size distribution preferences (bust sizes, inseam lengths, shoe sizes) and request customized container allocations. This reduces downstream liquidation of misaligned inventory.

Brand Preferences: Identify locally preferred brands and request brand-centric container specifications. Branded inventory commands premium retail pricing and reduces inventory velocity risk.

Seasonal Planning: Align container arrivals with seasonal demand (heavier apparel for cool months, lighter fabrics for warm months). Work with suppliers to stage inventory arrivals accordingly.

Hissen Global's customization capabilities enable these advanced assortment planning strategies, creating competitive advantage for importers who embrace this approach.

9.3 Channel Diversification and Competitive Positioning

Importers should develop multi-channel distribution strategies rather than over-relying on traditional retail relationships:

E-Commerce Penetration: Allocate 20-30% of inventory to e-commerce channels (Jumia, local marketplaces, DTC platforms). These channels command 15-25% retail margin premiums despite lower inventory turns.

Institutional Sales Development: Establish dedicated teams to develop school, government, and corporate relationships. These channels provide volume stability and margin premiums.

Private Label Development: Invest in private label brands, retail branding, and consumer marketing that build brand equity and enable pricing power.

Regional Distribution: Develop relationships with retailers in neighboring countries (Guinea, Liberia) to create regional distribution networks. AfCFTA benefits create incentives for regional arbitrage.

9.4 Quality Infrastructure Investment

Importers should invest in quality assurance infrastructure—sorting facilities, inspection systems, documentation protocols—that enable quality-based differentiation:

Sorting Capability: Establish in-house sorting capability to further segregate inventory by size, color, brand, and condition. Customized assortment capabilities enhance retail satisfaction and reduce liquidation.

Photography and Documentation: Invest in photographic documentation and detailed packing lists that support retail selling and dispute resolution.

Inventory Management Systems: Implement inventory management systems that track goods from intake through retail delivery, enabling quality monitoring and performance analytics.

These infrastructure investments require capital of USD 50,000-150,000 but generate ROI through margin expansion and competitive differentiation.

9.5 Formalization and Institutional Evolution

Importers operating at the margins between formal and informal channels should prioritize formalization:

Business Registration and Licensing: Formal business registration provides access to financing, enables institutional customer relationships, and reduces regulatory risk.

Financial Management: Implement formal accounting and financial management systems that support tax compliance and facilitate financing access.

Supply Chain Documentation: Maintain comprehensive supply chain documentation and quality records that support retail marketing and customer confidence.

Digital Systems: Invest in point-of-sale, inventory management, and customer relationship management systems that enhance operational sophistication.

SECTION 10: RISK FACTORS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

10.1 Market and Demand Risk

The second-hand apparel market is subject to demand fluctuations driven by macroeconomic conditions, consumer preference shifts, and competitive dynamics. Mitigation strategies include:

- **Market Monitoring:** Track retail sales patterns, competitor activities, and consumer sentiment to anticipate demand shifts.
- **Inventory Discipline:** Maintain disciplined inventory management, avoiding over-inventory in slow-moving categories.
- **Channel Diversification:** Reduce dependence on single channels (e.g., traditional retail) by developing multiple distribution channels.
- **Product Flexibility:** Maintain supplier relationships that enable rapid assortment adjustments in response to demand changes.

10.2 Supplier Concentration Risk

Importers dependent on single suppliers face disruption risk if suppliers experience operational challenges. Mitigation strategies include:

- **Multi-Source Procurement:** Develop relationships with 2-3 quality suppliers (e.g., Hissen Global as primary, one alternative European supplier, one alternative North American supplier).
- **Supply Agreement Terms:** Negotiate supply agreements that specify quality standards, delivery schedules, and dispute resolution procedures.
- **Strategic Reserves:** Maintain strategic inventory reserves (30-45 days of sales) that buffer against supply disruptions.

10.3 Regulatory and Political Risk

Sierra Leone's regulatory environment, while generally stable, could be subject to changes in trade policy, import tariffs, or sector-specific regulations. Mitigation strategies include:

- **Policy Monitoring:** Monitor trade policy developments and maintain relationships with industry associations and government contacts.
- **Tariff Hedging:** Evaluate long-term supply contracts that lock in pricing and partially hedge against tariff increases.
- **Diversification:** Develop export capabilities that enable pivot to regional distribution if domestic market conditions deteriorate.

10.4 Foreign Exchange Risk

Sierra Leone's currency (Sierra Leonean Leone) has experienced volatility relative to the U.S. dollar and other hard currencies. Since most supplier payments are in hard currencies, importers face foreign exchange risk. Mitigation strategies include:

- **Hedging:** Large importers can establish forex forward contracts to hedge currency exposure.
- **Pricing Pass-Through:** Adjust retail pricing to reflect forex changes, gradually passing through currency risk to consumers.

- **Cost Reduction:** Seek supplier pricing reductions or alternative sourcing to offset currency headwinds.

10.5 Operational and Quality Risk

Despite quality assurance protocols, quality issues can emerge. Mitigation strategies include:

- **Supplier Selection:** Select suppliers with strong quality track records and documented quality assurance protocols.
- **Inspection and Documentation:** Implement rigorous inspection and photographic documentation protocols.
- **Dispute Resolution:** Establish clear dispute resolution procedures with suppliers to enable resolution of quality issues.
- **Customer Service:** Implement hassle-free return policies that build customer confidence despite occasional quality issues.

SECTION 11: THE PATH FORWARD FOR SIERRA LEONE'S IMPORT SECTOR

11.1 Industry Evolution and Professionalization

Sierra Leone's second-hand apparel import sector is at an inflection point. The transition from purely informal operations to structured, professional import enterprises is accelerating. By 2030, the sector will likely comprise:

- A consolidated tier of 3-5 large-scale importers controlling 35-40% of market volume
- A stable mid-market tier of 20-30 professional importers controlling 35-40% of volume
- A fragmented informal tier of small-scale operators controlling 20-25% of volume

This consolidation reflects natural market evolution and the competitive advantages of scale, quality focus, and operational sophistication. Importers who invest in professionalization—quality infrastructure, supply chain management, customer service, and digital systems—will succeed within this evolved market. Importers operating at commodity prices and informal margins will increasingly face pressure.

11.2 Geographic Expansion Opportunities

While Freetown remains the primary distribution hub for second-hand apparel in Sierra Leone, rapid urbanization is creating opportunities in secondary cities: Bo, Kenema, Makeni, and other urban centers with populations exceeding 100,000. Importers establishing distribution networks in these secondary markets during 2026-2028 will capture first-mover advantages before competitive intensity increases.

11.3 Value-Added Service Opportunities

Beyond commodity import-wholesale, opportunities exist for value-added services:

- **Quality Certification:** Importers developing reputation for quality can offer third-party quality certifications to retail partners, building customer confidence.
- **Digital Retail Platforms:** Importers can establish their own e-commerce platforms, capturing retail margins and building direct consumer relationships.
- **Logistics Services:** Established importers can offer inventory management, fulfillment, and logistics services to retail partners.
- **Market Intelligence:** Importers with extensive market data can monetize market insights through industry reporting and advisory services.

11.4 Institutional and Government Engagement

Government institutions, schools, and NGOs represent high-volume, stable customer segments. Importers should proactively engage government procurement processes, develop relationships with institutional buyers, and establish institutional sales capabilities.

11.5 Sustainability and Social Impact Narrative

Sierra Leone's commitment to environmental sustainability and circular economy objectives creates opportunity to position second-hand apparel as aligned with national priorities. Importers can leverage sustainability narratives in marketing, institutional sales development, and brand positioning.

SECTION 12: CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION

12.1 Summary of Opportunity

Sierra Leone's second-hand apparel import sector faces exceptional growth prospects. The continental market is expanding at 22.8% annually, driven by demographic trends, economic growth, environmental consciousness, and digital innovation. Within this continental growth, West Africa—including Sierra Leone—is emerging as the fastest-growing regional market. For importers in Sierra Leone, this market dynamic creates the opportunity to expand volumes, enhance profitability, and build sustainable, valuable enterprises.

The market opportunity is not unlimited or without risk. Competitive intensification, potential tariff changes, and macroeconomic volatility present genuine challenges. However, the underlying demand fundamentals—affordable, high-quality apparel for a young, growing consumer population—are robust and unlikely to reverse.

12.2 The Hissen Global Advantage

Within this market opportunity, the choice of supplier partners is critically consequential. Hissen Global offers Sierra Leonean importers several distinctive advantages:

Proven Quality Consistency: Our 80% customer repurchase rate, documented across 110 countries, demonstrates that we deliver on quality promises. This consistency translates into reduced customer dissatisfaction, improved inventory turns, and enhanced profitability for importer partners.

Operational Sophistication: Our 20,000m² facility, mechanized sorting systems, and comprehensive quality assurance protocols enable customization and reliability that marginal suppliers cannot provide. Importers benefit from assortment planning support, documentation, and logistical reliability.

Scale and Reach: Our presence across 110 countries provides supply chain resilience, competitive pricing power, and market insights that smaller suppliers cannot offer. Importers gain access to best practices from diverse markets.

Partnership Orientation: Beyond commodity transactions, we invest in relationships with key customers, provide market insights, and support importers' growth aspirations. Our account management approach ensures responsive support and proactive problem-solving.

12.3 Call to Action

For Sierra Leonean importers contemplating growth strategies, we invite partnership with Hissen Global. We are committed to:

- **Customized Solutions:** Developing container specifications reflecting your market knowledge, category preferences, size distributions, and brand affinities.
- **Flexible Terms:** Offering payment terms and supply commitments aligned with your growth trajectory and working capital availability.
- **Ongoing Support:** Providing market insights, operational guidance, and responsive customer service throughout our partnership.

The second-hand apparel market opportunity in Sierra Leone is real, quantifiable, and within reach. Importers who align with quality suppliers, invest in operational sophistication, and pursue multi-channel strategies will capture substantial value during the 2026-2030 period.

We look forward to partnering with you to capture this opportunity.

APPENDIX: MARKET DATA SUMMARY

Market Size Data (USD Billions)

Market Segment	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Africa Second-Hand Apparel	5.2	6.4	7.8	9.6	11.8	14.5	17.9
Africa Textile Market	39.21	41.45	43.82	46.34	48.75	49.41	—
West Africa Share (31% of Africa)	1.6	2.0	2.4	3.0	3.7	4.5	5.5

Employment Data

- Total Africa SHC Employment: 1.28 million people
- Jobs per Tonne Imported: 6.5
- Tax Revenue Impact (5 countries): USD 73.5 million annually
- GDP Multiplier Effect: 2.2x (Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique)

Sierra Leone Baseline Data (2025)

- Population: 8.6 million
- Urban Population: ~43%
- Textile Imports 2023: USD 75.4 million
- Estimated SHC Market Size 2025: USD 275 million
- Estimated Market Growth 2025-2030: 16-18% CAGR
- Projected Market Size 2030: USD 440-520 million

Grade A Apparel Unit Economics

- Wholesale Cost: USD 16-20 per item
- Typical Retail Price: USD 4-6 per item
- Retail Inventory Turns: 8-10 annually
- Retail Gross Margin: 35-45% of retail sales
- Wholesale-Only Margin: 18-22%

Hissen Global Profile

- Factory Size: 20,000m²
- Export Markets: 110+ Countries
- Customer Repurchase Rate: 80%
- Product Standard: A-Grade Apparel
- Quality Assurance: Mechanized sorting, multi-stage inspection, comprehensive documentation

For inquiries regarding partnerships with Hissen Global, please contact:
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