Abstract—Globally, small firms are considered to have an important role in the economy serving as agents of change by their entrepreneurial activity. They are considered to be the sources of considerable innovative activity, stimulating industry evolution and creating an important share of the newly generated jobs. In India, micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs) helps in industrialization of rural and backward areas, thereby, reducing regional imbalances, assuring more equitable distribution of national income and wealth. In this context, it is interesting to note that the garment production units alone in India provide 40% of jobs in the small scale sector, besides offering ample opportunities for entrepreneurs to sprout and flourish. With a high value associated with the MSMEs and the potential fashion and apparel sector, the study is focused to list the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. A primary test questionnaire was used to identify the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs for the study were classified into four categories of success based on the profit generated. The means were compared to find the most critical challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. The study helps in identifying the variables that are more challenging to the women entrepreneurs which need to be addressed for the sustainable development of the women entrepreneurs of the region. The findings could help the educational institutions to develop an educational strategy for training the women entrepreneurs.

Keywords—Fashion and apparel business, Micro, small and medium scale enterprises, Women entrepreneurs

I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of entrepreneurs as the engine for the economic growth is well recognized globally. In India, entrepreneurship is considered as one of the best means of triggering economic and social development (Venkatsubramaniam, 2003). The better we understand the determinants of successful entrepreneur ventures, the higher will be our standard of living and the brighter our future (Harold and Loren, 2009).

Entrepreneurship has been a male-dominated phenomenon from the very early age, but time has changed the situation and brought women as today's most memorable and inspirational entrepreneurs. It is estimated that women entrepreneurs presently comprise about 10% of the total number of entrepreneurs in India, with the percentage growing every year. If the prevailing trends continue, it is likely that in another five years, women will comprise 20% of the entrepreneurial force (Saidapur et.al, 2012). In almost all the developed countries in the world, women are putting their steps at par with the men in the field of business. Recent statistics confirm that women’s economic activities play a crucial role in the growth of many of the world economies (Minniti et al., 2005 as cited by Roomi etal.). Most of the work conducted considered women’s motivations to start a business and the subsequent effect of those motivations on growth (Lerner et al., 1995; Buttner and Moore, 1997), the effect of their location, urban or rural, on business performance (Merrett and Gruidl, 2000), and the effect of the size and sector on business development (Du Reitz and Henrekson, 2000).

Studies reveal that small businesses in creative areas like fashion are considered as the depository of the traditional skills and creativity necessary to penetrate or/and extend markets and can provide stable employment and income generation to the diverse communities and to those with different levels of education (UNIDO Report). The usage of the term, 'fashion' in India is mostly associated with the upwardly mobile, the elitist group, Bollywood or fancy catwalks. On the contrary, apparel and fashion business is found to be one of the small and medium scale enterprises which could contribute largely towards the nation economy.

Keeping in view the importance associated with fashion apparel business as one of the micro, small and medium scale enterprises for the development of the economy, it is intended
Presently, there is a growing body of research on entrepreneurship in the fashion and apparel sector. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs operating micro, small and medium scale enterprises with reference to fashion and apparel business.

II. CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The literature review emphasizes on the following critical problems faced by women entrepreneurs.

A. Access to Finance

It is considered as a key issue to women. Accessing credit, particularly for starting an enterprise, is one of the major constraints faced by women entrepreneurs. Women often have fewer opportunities than men to gain access to credit for various reasons, including lack of collateral, unwillingness to accept household assets as collateral and negative perceptions of female entrepreneurs by loan officers. Sometimes, credit may be available for women through several schemes but there are bottlenecks and gaps, and the multiplicity of schemes is often not adequately listed nor is there networking among agencies. As a result, clients approaching one institution are often not adequately listed nor is there networking among agencies. A study by Das (2000) shows that more than 50 per cent of the women used their own funds or funds borrowed from their spouse or family to set up their business. Another study done among women entrepreneurs in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu points out financing the enterprise as major problem faced by the women entrepreneurs (Mangai et.al, 1992). Most of the entrepreneurs rely on family finance or at the maximum on partners and friends. Lack of access to capital has been a primary obstacle for women entrepreneurs. Research suggests that the primary source of finding for women has been through family loans, personal savings, credit cards and home equity loans.

B. Problem of Labor

Study conducted by Jayammal, observed that the women entrepreneurs in the selected group face various labor problems in their units.

C. Lack of Relevant Education and Experience

Women tend to have an educational background which is less relevant in preparing them for business ownership. More women have training in ‘non-practical’, traditional ‘female’ subjects such as arts (Watkins and Watkins, 1984) and they lack more directly professional qualification. They also lack relevant managerial and entrepreneurial experience. Women also tend to be less likely to have had education and experience relevant to starting and managing a business and thus less potential for success. Gaining relevant skills and knowledge can also be more difficult for women since they frequently have double work burden and childcare responsibilities, thus making them less able than men to attend formal and informal trainings. The analysis of the research done on women entrepreneurs in India (Anil Kumar, 2007) with reference to education-wise information reveals that 58% women entrepreneurs possessing metric level of education face this problem to a great extent, one-fourth women entrepreneurs possessing graduate level of education and 36% post graduate level face the problem of getting information up to a great extent. Low-level education provides low-level self-confidence and self-reliance to the women folk to engage in business, which is continuous risk taking and strategic decision making profession.

D. Conflicts between Work and Domestic Commitments

Women's family obligations also bar them from becoming successful entrepreneurs in both developed and developing nations. “Having primary responsibility for children, home and older dependent family members, few women can devote all their time and energies to their business” (Starcher, 1996). It has been suggested that many women enter self-employment to gain more control over their time and to achieve greater personal autonomy (Belcourt, 1991). For all small business owners, running a business involves long hours, but because domestic duties and child-care are frequently seen as women’s responsibility, many business women face conflicts in their roles as wife, mother, and business owner (Carter and Cannon, 1992). It is common to find the female business owners, particularly those who are mothers, displaying the feeling of guilt because they do not fulfill the traditional female role. Domestic responsibility may mean that the female entrepreneurs face problems allocating sufficient time to the business. The demands associated with running the business and home may therefore restrict the growth and potential success of many women-owned businesses (Fischer et al., 1993 as cited by Wendy Ming-Yen, 2007). Lack of family support worsens the problem.

E. Access to Training

Women have limited access to vocational and technical training in South Asia. UNIDO report suggests that women are often unaware of the training opportunities.

III. MEASURE OF SUCCESS

The independent variable for the study is the success of the enterprise which could be measured on the basis of the employment growth and the economic success. The most common method people use to measure business success is financial worth. The more the entrepreneur and business are worth; the more successful the entrepreneur is considered to be. This measure of worth is given great weight by society. Dafna (2008) suggests longevity, turnover from sale and increase in size as measured by the number of employees for measuring the success of the business. Based on the literature the financial aspect of the business in terms of the sales
turnover is considered for measuring the success of women entrepreneurs.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The criteria for inclusion in this study were that the fashion and apparel entrepreneurial business is one that is owned and managed by women. The reason for adopting this definition is based on the literature review which suggests that enterprises defined as being run by women (that is, enterprises in which women hold the controlling share) are in fact run in their names by men who control operations and decision making. The study area for the research is Coastal Karnataka and hence the enterprises should operate in geographical proximity of the Coastal Karnataka. The sample for this study focuses fashion and apparel business owned and operated by women. They were identified from the data collected from District Industrial Centre. A questionnaire was developed for the study indicating the specific problems faced by the women entrepreneurs. The options were asked to be ranked from 1 -5 depending on the intensity of the constraint in operating the business. The demographic questions included: location, marital status, level of formal education, previous experience in the business, and specific training received. The questions pertaining to the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs were related to the different stages in the life cycle of the business. Accordingly the data was collected and analyzed to list the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in running fashion and apparel enterprises.

V. DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

The questionnaire developed was administered for a sample of 69 entrepreneurs spread across Coastal Karnataka. The first section of the questionnaire was on the demographic details and the second section was pertaining to the specific challenges in running the business with reference to different stages in the life cycle of the business. The problems faced during the establishment of the enterprise, during day to day operations and the critical success factors for the future growth of the business was collected and analyzed. The entrepreneurs for the study were classified into four groups of success based on the profit generated by the enterprise in comparison to the profit during the establishment stage of the business. Data collected were tabulated and processed using SPSS software.

VI. RESULTS

The results would be discussed in two sections: the first section details the demographic information and the second one the challenges faced. Descriptive statistics is used for analysis. The entrepreneurs were classified into four groups of success for detailed analysis using Delinious Hodges Cumulative Method.

Table I shows that the women entrepreneurs (88%) fall into very high to medium level of success. Only 11.9% of women entrepreneurs were considered to be less successful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Very High</th>
<th>High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Uneducated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Fashion Training</td>
<td>Up to 10</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Previous experience</td>
<td>Graduated</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
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A. Demographic Details

Cross tabulation was done to compare the different demographic details and the success of the women entrepreneurs. Table II shows the distribution of the enterprises at the urban and the rural areas which was almost the same. The success of the enterprises as per the table is not dependent on the location of the firm. As shown in the table II, married women (86.4%) were the largest percentage running the enterprises with majority of women entrepreneurs ranging from high to medium level of success. Most of the women entrepreneurs (64.4%) had formal education and also had training in fashion design (37%). There were about 22% women entrepreneurs who had training in entrepreneurial aspects also. The education and training has an impact on the success of the women entrepreneurs which ranged from being highly successful to the medium level of success. About 66% also had previous experience which also is found to be a contributing factor for the success of the women entrepreneurs; the success level ranging from very high to medium level of success.

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B. Challenges Faced

Table III shows the important constraints faced in establishing the enterprise as listed by women entrepreneurs with the ranking from 1-5. The most important problem perceived for starting the enterprise was considered to be finance, increased competition and lack of skilled labor.
expanding the business. Women entrepreneurs had rated finance, good location, lack of family support as main constraints in establishing and growing the business. The important challenges faced by women entrepreneurs need to be addressed by the educational institutions especially in terms of business planning and inculcation of managerial skills.

### VII. Conclusion

The results reveal that success of women enterprises depends on the formal education and the training received. Most the women entrepreneurs surveyed were married women who feel confident in running and expanding the business with the support from the family members. The work-life balance is not given priority as the challenge in establishing or diversifying the business. The important challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in establishing and growing the business were finance, finding the skilled labor and increased competition. Women entrepreneurs also rated the assistance in business planning as a crucial factor for the success of any business growth and expansion. The challenges faced by women entrepreneurs need to be addressed by the educational institutions especially in terms of business planning and inculcation of managerial skills.

### REFERENCES


Ms Veena Rao is Coordinator, Department of Design, working with Manipal University, Manipal, India. She has over 11 years of experience teaching Fashion Design through conventional and distance mode. She holds post-graduation in Textiles and Clothing from Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore and has excelled as a topper for the academic year. Currently, she is pursuing doctoral degree from Manipal University, Manipal. Her area of research is focused towards women entrepreneurs in fashion and apparel design. She has guided several graduate students in their project and portfolio development. She has presented research papers in several national and international conferences and also has published research papers in several national and international journals.