

Profiling Micro Apparel Enterprises in Botswana: Motivations, Practices, Challenges, and Success

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to develop a profile of micro apparel enterprises in Botswana and to examine the profile for cross-cultural applicability in relation to small business scholarship. Field interviews with 24 businesswomen revealed that the women employed an average of three workers and had operated their firms for three to five years. The profile identified motivations for initiating a business; business practices related to employees, product development, and marketing; challenges faced as the business was initiated and expanded; and factors used in defining success. The businesswomen integrated a broad range of motivational stimuli for business start-up; engaged in rigorous marketing, often through personal networks; faced marketing, finance, and management challenges; and defined success using extrinsic criteria, including improving lives for the people of Botswana. Research findings contributed to a first stage for development of technical assistance that can guide Botswana entrepreneurs in business start-up and growth.

Gobagoba, M. R., & Littrell, M. A. (2003). Profiling micro apparel enterprises in Botswana: Motivations, practices, challenges, and success. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 21(3), 130-141. *Key Words:* apparel businesses, Botswana, challenges, micro enterprises, motivations, success.

In Botswana, small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) create jobs, generate wealth, and provide careers for a growing number of southern African entrepreneurs. Of the estimated 56,000 SMMEs in Botswana, 50,000 are micro enterprises. Micro enterprises are defined as firms with fewer than six workers, including the owner, and annual sales of less than \$11,000. Of the micro enterprises in Botswana, 75% are owned by women, with most businesses operating from residential premises (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 1998). Manufacturing enterprises, comprising 25% of micro firms, vary in their focus, ranging from brick molding, welding, bakery, and carpentry to sewing and knitting. Among the 831 textile-related enterprises, 812 are focused on sewing and knitting (Ministry of Commerce and Industry).

In recognition of the importance for SMMEs, the Botswana government established the Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) program. Launched in 1982, the government's major program of micro business support acted as a cata-

lyst for starting or expanding business ventures that were intended to create employment and diversify the economy in areas other than beef and mining. Assistance, in the form of grants, did not need to be repaid and could range up to 90% of the cost for the proposed enterprise. Criteria for participation included that the applicant be at least 18 years of age and the business must produce or process goods that could be exported or that would replace products that were presently imported.

The Botswana FAP program is part of a multi-national effort in which governments have funneled millions of dollars in order to stimulate economic growth through private enterprise development (Aid To Artisans, 2001). Assistance has centered primarily on providing credit in the form of small loans or grants to micro entrepreneurs. However, in order to achieve broader business and social outcomes, funding agencies are now encouraged to partner their financial support with technical assistance for product development, training in business skills, and creation of market links (Aid to Artisans; Milgram, 2001; SEEP Network, n.d.). These broad-based "Business Development Services" are beginning to appear in the form of a set of "best practices" that can guide new entrepreneurs in start-up and growth (SEEP Network). The importance of identifying "best practices" for women entrepreneurs is underscored in a United Nations study (2000),

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In developing countries especially, those enterprises [owned by women] tend to be concentrated in a few traditional areas and are characterized by low technology and low production levels. Women's enterprises tend to be the smallest of all small and medium-sized enterprises, since women often have less access to the support services which would allow their enterprises to grow. It is therefore of crucial importance to find ways to assist women's enterprises to increase their productivity and thereby their income. (p. iii)

When women are the focus of entrepreneurial training, the impact can be significant. In a project focused on Kenyan women in micro textile enterprises, of 700 women trained, 40% were able to export their products. Additionally, the women doubled their income on average and new job creation stood at 2,240 (de Groot, 2000, p. 60).

The need for research-based data upon which to develop a program of technical assistance for textile-related businesses is particularly critical in Botswana. In 2002, the Ministry of Education mandated that the senior secondary certificate in fashion and fabrics include significant course

Table 1. Motivations for Business Start-up

Research Study	Motivations for Start-Up		
	Opportunity Driven	Internally Driven	Externally Driven
Apparel and Textile Craft Production Enterprises			
Littrell, Stout, & Reilly (1991) -craft producers -USA, women and men		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enjoyment/paying for a hobby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reach financial goals
Craig, Martin, & Horridge (1997) -apparel manufacturers -USA, women		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • freedom • learning and innovation • make money from hobby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flexibility of work/family • respect from friends
Dickson & Littrell (1998) -apparel/craft manufacturers -Guatemala, women		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family well-being, better life for children • provide work for family/friends
Horridge & Craig (2001) -apparel manufacturing -USA, women		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal fulfillment • independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professional achievement • financial, increase income
Other Small Businesses			
Hisrich & Brush (1984) -USA, women		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frustration and boredom • autonomy/independence 	
Brush (1992)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flexibility to balance work/family
Teo (1996) -Singapore, women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perceived presence of business opportunity • desire to put knowledge/skills to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • freedom/flexibility • personal growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognition • financial independence
Buttner & Moore (1997) Moore & Buttner (1997) -USA, women		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desire for challenge and self-determination • experience excitement • enhance self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • block to career advancement • balance work/family • poor organizational dynamics in previous job • respect/recognition
Kuratko, Hornsby, & Naffziger (1997) -USA, women and men		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independence/autonomy/be own boss • prove can do it/excitement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognition • wealth • family security
Maysami & Goby (1999) -worldwide, women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • doing things a better way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for self-determination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • control own future/financial destiny
Feldman & Bolino (2000) -USA, women and men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use my skills/abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater control over life • greater ability to be creative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • live where/how I like

work to equip students with the necessary skills for operating a textile-related small business. Currently very limited research on small businesses in Botswana exists as a basis for technical program development. To date, there has been no follow-up with FAP program recipients in order to assess their experiences. Although existing small business scholarship can be of some guidance, the research is heavily focused on the experiences of business entrepreneurs in North America and Europe. Business researchers caution against unilaterally applying business models across cultures, given that business start-up and growth are synergistic products of specific cultural environments (Claxton, 1994; Dodge, Fullerton, & Robbins, 1994).

This research focused on businesswomen who have received an FAP grant intended for operating a business involved in manufacturing apparel or household textiles. Women were chosen due to their pervasiveness in the Botswana micro enterprise sector. The research was guided by two overarching objectives. The first objective was to develop a profile of women-owned businesses that had received assistance from the FAP program. The profile focused on four major topics: (a) motivations for initiating a business, (b) business practices related to employees, product development, and marketing, (c) challenges faced as the businesses were initiated and expanded, and (d) factors used in defining success for a small apparel firm in Botswana. The second objective was to contribute to small business scholarship by comparing the profile with existing small business research. More specifically, we intended to expand understanding on both the cross-cultural applicability as well as cultural specificity of the research findings. In other words, which insights from Botswana provided support to an existing set of cross-cultural research findings about conducting business and which were unique to Botswana?

Small Business Scholarship

The research was both deductive and inductive in approach. Initially research literature on business motivations, practices, challenges, and definitions of success served as points of departure for shaping our interview questions. However, in addition to addressing the topics singled out in past research, we also attended to other themes that emerged from the interviews as we analyzed the data for developing a profile that would be valid for application in Botswana.

Motivations for Business Start-up

Small business researchers recommend analyzing motivations for business start-up as a way of understanding the goals that entrepreneurs set for their enterprises and the criteria by which they measure their performance (Kuratko, Hornsby, & Naffziger, 1997). Hunger, Korsching, and Peter (2000) contend that motivations for business start-up can be grouped within three broad categories. *Opportunity-driven* motivations are evident when a founder identifies a business opportunity and initiates a business to take advantage of the opportunity. With *internal decision-driven* motivations, the founder starts the business to satisfy an internal

yearning, such as to be one's own boss, and then looks for a business opportunity to satisfy the need. Finally, *external decision-driven* motivations encompass situations, such as losing a job or needing to support an expanding household, that lead to undertaking the new business venture.

Using Hunger et al.'s (2000) framework, motivations among founders of apparel and textile craft production enterprises were judged to be similar to founders of small businesses more broadly in two of the three categories, those of internal and external motivations (see Table 1). The will to achieve, to grow, and to experience fulfillment, autonomy, and independence were common *internally-driven* motivations (Craig, Martin, & Horridge, 1997; Dickson & Littrell, 1998; Feldman & Bolino, 2000; Horridge & Craig, 2001; Kuratko et al., 1997; Maysami & Goby, 1999; Teo, 1996). In addition some founders wanted to express their creativity, feel challenged, and enhance self-esteem through business ownership (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Feldman & Bolino, 2000; Moore & Buttner, 1997). For others, the search for excitement countered a feeling of boredom and frustration (Hisrich & Brush, 1984).

In contrast to internally driven motivations, enterprise founders also described *external conditions* that spurred them to business start-up. Common extrinsic factors included the urgent need to increase income, provide a better life for children, establish long-term security for families, and balance work and family responsibilities (Brush, 1992; Craig et al., 1997; Dickson & Littrell, 1998; Kuratko et al., 1997; Littrell, Stout, & Reilly, 1991). Some owners were driven by a desire to control their financial destiny and increase their wealth (Horridge & Craig, 2001; Maysami & Goby, 1999). For others, unacceptable conditions in a previous job led to business start-up (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Moore & Buttner, 1997). Business founders also wanted to be recognized and respected by friends and professional peers (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Craig et al., 1997; Kuratko et al., 1997; Moore & Buttner, 1997; Teo, 1996).

Finally, although *opportunity driven* motivations were not mentioned by founders of apparel or textile craft enterprises, they were identified by other business owners. Opportunities included recognition of special skills and abilities that were ripe for application in business and the assessment that things could be done a better way through undertaking a new business venture (Feldman & Bolino, 2000; Maysami & Goby, 1999; Teo, 1996).

Business Practices

The limited research on business practices among small apparel or textile craft production enterprises suggested that strategies employed in the hiring of employees, developing new products, and marketing are critical to business performance (Craig et al., 1997; Littrell et al., 1991). In the Littrell et al. study, more and less successful producers were compared on a number of factors. More successful entrepreneurs initiated businesses driven by financial need and employed skilled labor in order to achieve good quality and salable work. Producing original designs and employing a pricing formula were also important indicators of successful entrepreneurs, as were marketing the products in a variety of venues, including catalogs, retail outlets, and wholesale, and using advertising as a marketing tool.

In contrast, the less successful craft businesspersons started their ventures without concrete goals and often to support a hobby. They did not employ skilled labor but often turned to family and friends who might not have the requisite skills. Marketing of products was confined to their locality where personal networks were employed for attracting customers. The target market was not well defined; products were made for any interested customers. Less successful owners also showed lack of innovation in product development; their designs were adaptive and priced according to what the market would bear. Beyond this research with midwestern U.S. businesses, Grimes and Milgram (2000) noted that small craft enterprises worldwide frequently employ family members, who may or may not be trained for the job.

Craig et al. (1997), in their research with Texas apparel manufacturers, provided some confirmation to the Littrell et al. study. Women owners adopted competitive strategies that emphasized product quality, employed advertising, and minimized dependence on a few wholesale customers. The women were skilled negotiators and, as managers, they focused on careful handling of the production more than on business details of accounting, planning, and cash flow.

Challenges

Understanding challenges faced by businesspersons can assist future entrepreneurs in anticipating the problems they may face in order to grow (Littrell, Wolff, & Blackburn, 2002). Dodge and Robbins' (1992) widely referenced life-cycle model included two growth stages and accompanying challenges that were deemed relevant to this research. Critical challenges during Stage 1, *Formation*, were building financial support, developing production capacity, identifying a target market, and providing the target market with selected products. During Stage 2, *Early Growth*, the business established itself with a commercially feasible product. Problems faced at this stage involved increasing sales, stabilizing production, maintaining cash flow, and formalizing the organizational structure. Product reliability and being able to meet the demands of the market also posed problems.

In a second study, Terpstra and Olson (1993) further established that certain challenges may be faced throughout the life cycle of the business, whereas others are unique at certain life cycle stages. Financial backing and cash flow problems characterized early business growth, followed by human resource management and organizational issues in later stages. Marketing problems were intense at start-up, but remained through all the stages. Examples of marketing problems included customer contact, advertising, personal and public relations, market assessment, and defining target markets.

Several researchers have focused specifically on apparel, textile, and craft businesses in less developed countries (Durham & Littrell, 2000; Littrell et al., 2002). Of particular note were production challenges at start-up, including procurement and storage of raw materials, appropriate technologies, design pirating, product consistency, production planning, and market diversification. For craft-related enterprises in Ghana, challenges associated with product design and marketing remained steady across time, while chal-

lenges related to organizational management became increasingly problematic as the businesses grew and entrepreneurs faced the reality that they could not do it all. Still other challenges related to employee training and sourcing of raw materials assumed greater importance at business start-up but declined somewhat as the businesses expanded.

The African context for women entrepreneurs has received specific research attention. A United Nations (2000) survey of six countries, not including Botswana, revealed lack of capital as a critical obstacle at start-up and during development. Other challenges centered on insufficient management skills, lack of market information, limited information on appropriate technology development, acquiring adequate premises, and difficulty in networking.

Business Success

Business owners define their success using objective and subjective criteria. Four major criteria appeared in the small business literature and were closely linked with the motivations cited earlier in this paper. The first criterion was financial and included increasing income, profits, and financial well-being (Horridge & Craig, 2001; Littrell et al., 1991; Moore & Buttner, 1997; Soldressen, Fiorito, & He, 1998). Achieving sales growth and meeting customer demand were also important measures for financial success (Paige & Littrell, 2002). A second criterion was subjective and spoke to experiencing independence, enhanced self-esteem, and general satisfaction (Horridge & Craig, 2001; Moore & Buttner, 1997; Soldressen et al., 1998). The third criterion addressed recognition from others for artistic work and professional accomplishments (Soldressen et al., 1998). Finally, a product-related criterion involved product, name, and market recognition that sustained a business and contributed to regional identity (Horridge & Craig, 2001; Littrell et al., 1991; Paige & Littrell, 2002; Teo, 1996).

In summary, the four areas of research literature provided background and shaped questions for our exploration of the research data. Would Botswana women's motivations for business start-up encompass opportunity-, internally-, and externally-driven motivations? How would the women go about hiring employees and developing and marketing their products? Would issues of production, finance, management, and marketing emerge as challenges during business growth? Finally, how would the women's definitions of success fit with categories identified in the research literature?

The Research Approach

A qualitative, field-based approach was adopted for research with businesswomen in Botswana. This approach involved conducting research in the setting where the business founders carried out their work. By conducting interviews at specific business sites, the authors hoped to expand their understanding of the range of meanings women attached to the topics under investigation (Berg, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln 1994). Interviews offered the researchers an opportunity to observe the respondents, ascertain misunderstand-

ings through facial expressions, and clarify questions. Interviews were appropriate for some respondents who could neither read nor write. As this was an exploratory study, an open-response format allowed the respondents to speak freely and in detail about their business experiences, rather than respond to an a priori set of answers (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Interview Guide

The interview guide was generated based upon the general themes identified from the scholarly literature. The first set of questions addressed business practices and demographic characteristics. Business questions concerned topics such as ownership, location of the business, number and gender of employees, hiring of employees, new product development, and marketing strategies. Demographic questions included marital status, age, number of children, family size, and level of education.

A second set of questions, several per topic, was used to elicit motivations for business start-up, challenges faced in initiating and sustaining the business, and criteria for success. The interview guide also included seven scaled questions for measuring six forms of motivation and for rating success. The scaled items were asked only after the businesswomen had completed open-response questions. The two response formats, open-ended and scaled, were employed as a form of data triangulation to check for consistency in the women's answers (Patton, 1990).

The interview schedule was translated into Setswana, the national language of Botswana, in order that the interviews could be conducted in English or Setswana, depending on the interviewee's preference. A renowned translator, who works with international speakers who visit Botswana, translated the questions. The interview was then back translated into English and checked for consistency by the first author who is also fluent in both languages.

Sample Selection

The target population was businesswomen whose apparel or textile manufacturing businesses were in and near the capital city of Gaborone. The participants had received support from the FAP program, had less than 25 employees, and were in business for a minimum of three years. The sample was drawn from the 1997 to 2001 list of names in the FAP program; names prior to 1997 were not available. The list included 165 FAP program recipients; of these, 139 met the criterion of operating a sewing business. Of the 139 businesswomen, 24 names were selected using a systematic sampling method. In this method every *k*th individual was chosen (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1998). The selection interval was 5.8, with every sixth name chosen to arrive at 24 names.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted at the respondent's workplace so the researcher could observe the work environment and the respondent could supervise her employees during the interview. On average English interviews lasted 1 hour, 30 minutes, whereas Setswana interviews took an additional 30 minutes. Six interviews were conducted in English and eighteen in Setswana; all were audio-recorded.

Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed in several steps. Following transcription, the interviews were read to gain an overview of the data. Responses to each question were then sorted across respondents so that answers to like questions could be viewed together. Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative method was employed for analyzing and interpreting the data. Initial coding of the transcripts involved searching the data for emergent themes, with constant comparison of these themes across all transcripts. The second reading of the data revealed a pattern of larger categories to which the themes could be assigned and a coding guide developed. After the first author finished theme and category development, the second author reviewed the transcripts as the second coder. Continuous changes were made to the coding guide until inter-coder agreement was reached for a reliability score of at least 85% for answers to each major interview question. Percentage of agreement was calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus the number of disagreement. Percentages of agreement achieved between coders ranged from 86% to 95% for the various interview questions. For those narrative units for which there was disagreement, coding was negotiated until agreement was reached.

In addition to qualitative analysis of the narrative data, statistical analysis was used to describe the sample. Frequencies, percentages, and means were calculated for selected business practices, scaled ratings for motivations and success, and demographics.

Botswana Businesswomen and Their Businesses

Botswana businesswomen who participated in the research ($N = 24$) ranged in age from 27 to 64 years; the average age was 40.4 years. All participants had children; 19 were single parents. On average, households were composed of 5.9 people, with 3.6 of those being children. Education varied widely from no formal education ($n = 2$) to high school graduates ($n = 5$), with 10 women having completed seven years of schooling.

The 24 businesswomen operated firms that were small; the average number of employees was 3.3 per business. Twenty-three of the 24 businesses had less than 6 employees. Most of the employees were females (85%) and employed full time (92%). Based on the number of employees, the businesses qualified as micro enterprises, using the Botswana definition of fewer than six workers, including the owner.

Most of the businesses (84%) were solely-owned and had been in operation for three to five years. Nearly all of the business owners (96%) had some work experience before they founded their businesses, with 60 percent working previously as machinists (sewing) or seamstresses. The enterprises produced a range of products. Most common were the national attire of German prints ($n = 13$), school uniforms ($n = 12$), curtains ($n = 10$), wedding gowns ($n = 7$), ladies casual dresses ($n = 6$), and school tracksuits ($n = 6$). Production was diversified with owners active in at least

two product categories. All businesses had industrial sewing machines, sergers, and a cutting table.

Nearly three quarters of the businesses (72%) were located in the home, where manufacturing as well as wholesale and retail trade occurred. Advantages cited for the home location were "not paying rent" and "being able to work until late." Disadvantages centered on "not getting many customers as compared if working outside home." One respondent emphasized, "it is not safe as thieves can pose as customers at night, only to come and rob you." Among the participants whose businesses were outside the home ($n = 7$), the main advantages found included adequate working space, electricity, low rentals, and convenience to customers.

All participants received a start-up grant from the Botswana Government, with the average grant being \$7,396. To receive the grant, participants put in a contribution, which averaged \$3,379.¹ The contribution was funded using personal or family resources. One woman was unique in that her contribution was from a group of women who joined hands pooling their resources together each month in order to enable individual members to start a business or to use the funds for other personal needs. The income from the business was reported by 60% of the participants as their primary household income. Gross sales averaged \$3,262. As with the number of employees, annual sales of less than \$11,000 also qualified the businesses as micro enterprises, using the Botswana criteria.

Motivations, Practices, Challenges, and Success

Motivations

Motivations for initiating the business were measured through interview questions and a rating scale. Three interview questions addressed the choice of an apparel business, life circumstances at the time of business start-up, and motivations for founding the enterprise. Participants varied in their reasons for initiating an apparel business, rather than another type of business, such as a bakery. Reasons cited were textile interests and skills ($n = 15$), followed by business experience ($n = 7$), business being easy ($n = 3$), and national pride ($n = 2$). Some respondents said,

This was the only type of business I had the skill for, especially that of sewing and designing. [# 104]

I wanted to show people and the nation that Botswana also has the people who can make good products. [# 118]

Participants described varied life situations at the time they initiated the business, including economic hardships (low salary, unemployment, poverty), poor working rela-

tionships in other jobs, and preparing for old age. With regard to economic hardships and old age preparation, participants commented,

Yes, lack of jobs—then I said to myself, if there are no jobs as is now, why couldn't I start a business, as I am skilled. [# 111]

There was too much work yet little pay, even though I showed my employer my dissatisfaction concerning the pay. As employees we used to be told to get the garments and go to other villages to sell, so we could get paid. [# 112]

You cannot sit down to beg nor work in this field for someone [else] upon reaching old age, since it would be demanding. You get tired; hence I decided to start my own business where I can have people work for me. [# 107]

In answer to the question, "What really motivated you to start a business?" the most common reasons given were possession of personal skills appropriate to business start-up ($n = 12$) and economic hardship ($n = 11$), followed by making a profit, a desire for family security and to work for oneself, and a sense of national pride (each being $n = 3$). Encouragement by a friend and following a dream also served as motivations for founding a business.

Economic hardship was linked to low income yet too much work, low standard of living, lack of jobs, and limited education. Some businesswomen said,

I hopped from factory to factory because they were being closed. Then I said, why couldn't I start my own business and see how I would go. [# 111]

Where I worked, I witnessed that there was money coming in, yet I was paid only P300 while I did a lot of work. In fact I was the one who used to work on items we submitted for tendering [bidding for government contracts]. I then decided to leave the job to start my own business since I realized that if you work hard you could have profits. [# 119]

For national pride, the respondents explained,

I wanted to see myself being a designer one day, designing for the nation and for myself. [# 109]

I wanted my country to be known that it had people who can produce better things as well. [# 118]

With regard to family security, two respondents offered,

I did not want my children to lead the type of life I am living because of lack of education; therefore I wanted to have money to educate them. [# 101]

My standard of living was very poor; therefore, I thought starting my own business would give me money to be able to feed my children. [# 110]

¹In 2001, the per capita income for Botswana was \$3,380 (U.S. Department of State, 2002).

Using a data triangulation approach, motivations for starting the business were also measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, with 7 being *very important* (see Table 2). Among the six motivations, the desire to initiate a career was the most important, followed by the desire to control one's own future and the need to support the household. The opportunity to make money also had a mean score indicating some importance. In contrast, the desire to be independent was neither important nor unimportant, while the desire to manage one's own time was slightly unimportant.

Table 2. Motivations for Starting a Business

Motivation	Mean	Range	SD
A desire to do this as a career	6.60	5-7	0.577
A desire to control your own future	6.20	5-7	1.041
A need to support your household	6.20	4-7	1.000
The opportunity to make a lot of money	5.76	1-7	1.589
A desire to be independent	4.00	1-7	2.566
A desire to manage own time	3.52	1-7	2.294

Triangulation of narrative and quantitative questions revealed linkage among appropriate skills for initiating a textile-related business, life circumstances, and motivations for business start-up. Women initiated a career that drew upon their skills, allowed them to control their futures, and curbed dissatisfaction with previous employment. Economic hardship drove business initiation as revealed in both the narrative and quantitative data. A need to support a family scored a high mean of 6.20, showing that the welfare of the family was central in women's motivations for business start-up. In addition, national pride was a motivator for several women, with a clothing enterprise selected as a visible indicator of domestic sufficiency.

Business Practices

Employees. Participants were asked to identify the three most important skills they considered when hiring employees. Respondents unanimously agreed they hired employees based on technical skills of sewing, cutting, pressing, and pattern making. Other criteria were good customer relations, dedication to the job, and management skills. For customer relations, participants expressed its importance by saying,

Someone who is able to accept customers with a smile. If someone is not welcoming this might scare away customers. [# 101]

Does she have a good heart for customers to win them to the business, such that during your absence customers could feel at home? [# 107]

Dedication was described as having a passion for the job, being self-motivated, working independently with little supervision, and being careful in what one was doing. For

management skills, employers expected the employee to be economical with the materials and to be conscious, accountable, and respectful of working hours.

When asked, "If you had a choice would you prefer hiring a relative who has limited skill or a nonrelative who is highly skilled?" all participants favored a skilled nonrelative. Reasons cited were that the businesses would flourish with increased profits and growth as respondents believed that skilled people are dedicated in their work and need limited supervision. When citing reasons why they might ask relatives to work for them, respondents said relatives look after the business better; that is, they take care of items and watch for misuse by the employees. Also, in the event of death or illness a relative will be able to continue the business. The disadvantages cited were that relatives could be lazy, not take work seriously, and were difficult to reprimand.

All respondents supported their employees by giving incentives. Tangible incentives ranged from giving a bonus or left over material for the employees' own clothing to offering a salary increment. Intangible inducements included offering employees a day off, free use of machines, timely payment, and verbal encouragement and compliments.

Product decisions. Decisions for what types of products to produce were based on market research ($n = 12$), owners' skills ($n = 4$), and fashion trends ($n = 3$). To gain initial insights on customers' preferences, some business owners wore or exhibited their products and listened to feedback from potential customers; others visited exhibitors' stalls during international trade fairs to see what people bought; and still others moved from house to house to elicit reaction to their products. Respondents elaborated,

I realized people like these types of dresses and that there was profit in them. When I went to the trade fair each year, most people flocked to the Sothos stalls to buy these type of dresses. [# 101]

I copied designs from the shop and bought hair bands to learn the skills. I sewed some and went to sell at the bus rank where there are many people. Black and brown sold fast. From this initial selling, this made me realize there was a potential market. [# 103]

Once the business owners confirmed their product focus, they turned to customers for gleaning preferences in design, color, and details. Customers came to the workshops, gave descriptions of what they wanted, or chose from catalogs the respondents had on display. For school uniforms, the design, color, and product details were dictated by the school administration.

In addition to decisions about the product focus for their businesses, all the participants exhibited some knowledge as to what to include in a costing formula. The participants first considered the prices of all raw materials and notions used in their products. They then added labor, overhead, transport, and profit.

Attracting customers. All respondents identified the general public as their market; however, some businesswomen were specific as to which part of the public they

were targeting. For example, nine respondents targeted nurses, church mates, bank and council employees, office workers, and football teams. Only two of the respondents mentioned the income level of their target market. None mentioned age.

Respondents actively worked to attract customers. Examples included mounting promotional displays at mini-shows and flea markets, telephoning potential customers, bidding for government contracts, advertising in papers and through sign boards, distributing business cards, and writing letters to the government's supply department. Other methods of attracting customers included customer referrals, asking friends or relatives to advertise, and the wearing of self-made clothes. As one woman said, "My garments speak!" Personal marketing involved moving around offices, schools, clinics, and salons showing their products. On customer referrals, respondents stated that their well-cut and stitched garments worn by their customers won them new clients, as these customers directed the potential clients to them.

When asked why customers liked their clothes and what customers believed set their products apart from competitors, business owners identified design ($n = 11$), quality of fabric ($n = 5$) and finished garments ($n = 16$), and competitive prices ($n = 6$). Uniqueness and the fit of the garment were mentioned as well ($n = 2$ each). Respondents said,

Even though we might be making the same item there is always a difference in our finishes, for example stitching and cutting of design. [# 116]

The type of product I make is very rare and the way I trim it is very different from the others. [# 101]

Challenges

As Botswana businesswomen initiated their enterprises and as the businesses grew, finding a market for their products emerged as a persistent challenge ($n = 21$). Management skills ($n = 13$), finances particularly as related to cash flow ($n = 11$), and business skills ($n = 10$) were also mentioned frequently. Management challenges focused on finding good quality materials, locating employees, managing time, and supervising employees. Less common, but important to the businesswomen were challenges of inadequate technical skills, lack of a business place, transportation, and competition.

Different strategies were used to minimize the challenges encountered. To address financial challenges, women borrowed money from friends or the bank or used income from a second job. To address cash flow problems, businesswomen requested a deposit before initiating a service, as they had lost money through sewing items that were never collected. As one woman elaborated on changes she would make if starting again,

I would keep *proper, proper* books and be accountable for every penny taken out for the business and open a different account for the business from that of my household. I have learned from my mistakes. [# 109]

To deal with management challenges, some respondents enrolled in a business course offered by the FAP office, while others self-sponsored themselves for a management course. For marketing challenges, respondents summoned their courage and started either going around to offices or talking with people they knew in order to attract customers.

Success

Respondents' definition of success was measured in two ways, through interview questions and using a rating scale. In response to the question, "In your own words, how will you define success for you and your business?" respondents' definitions fell into three categories of business growth, meeting challenges, and recognition. Two-thirds of the respondents defined success in measurable outcomes, such as greater profits, expanded production, more employees, increased sales, and more customers. Success also was defined as being able to meet and withstand the challenges of initiating a business, a subjective indicator. As one respondent said,

One has to struggle all the time and to get what they want. You persevere and never give up. [# 124]

When discussing recognition, respondents identified that success was felt when one was well known and working hard.

As they reflected on their enterprises, 23 out of 24 participants asserted that their businesses improved the lives of the people of Botswana, by giving employment, which in turn afforded their employees better opportunities to support their families. The businesses also helped reduce transportation costs, save time for customers, and provide good quality products at lower and competitive prices.

Women were then asked to rate how successful their businesses were at the time of the research using a 7-point Likert-type scale with 7 being *very successful*. The mean score was 3.9 (range 1 to 7; SD 1.57) indicating a moderate level of success. The first author assessed that based on her observation of business activity during the field research, she judged that some respondents rated themselves low in success, yet their sales were high. As some women said,

It's not where I want it to be. I would say I am successful when I have a business plot, where I can open a boutique. [#101]

I see it as successful but not to the level I wanted. People are really buying from us, especially the nurses. [# 107]

Although these statements may reflect high expectations set by the business owners, the ratings may also be embedded in Botswana culture where children are socialized that promoting one's accomplishments is considered boastful. Once the child grows up, to openly proclaim one's achievements can continue to be difficult.

Among those who said they were more successful ($n = 9$ with a rating > 5), women supported their ratings by stating they had good sales and profits, large orders, and regular customers. Businesswomen expanded,

I would say my business is successful because there are no days that pass without me sewing as my customers come regularly, plus every time I go out to sell, especially during the weekend, my headbands get finished within a short period of time. [# 103]

Looking back, I nearly closed had it not been for the former FAP staff who encouraged me never to give up. Now I moved from a small room to a big one. I have customers come. From where I began I would say I am successful. [# 111]

When asked what factors helped them to be successful, most respondents attributed their success to the quality of their products, that is the workmanship, designs, choice of colors, and materials. Management skills and marketing were also cited as contributing to the success of the business. Good customer relations, meeting the targeted delivery date for customized products, and the skills of both their employees and themselves were also lauded.

Discussion of Research Objectives

The first objective of this research was to inductively develop a profile of women-owned businesses that had received assistance from the FAP program with special attention to motivations for initiating a business, selected business practices, challenges faced as the businesses were initiated and expanded, and factors used in defining success for a small apparel firm in Botswana. As shown in Table 3, these Botswana businesswomen were driven by economic hardship and a complex set of motivations for business start-up. In running the businesses, the women attracted and nur-

tured a skilled workforce and integrated personal networks with formal advertising in an active system of marketing. Along the way, a series of marketing, management, and financial challenges arose and were addressed. Finally, success was defined with both intrinsic and extrinsic criteria as the women worked to improve the lives of Botswana's citizens through a competitive business strategy of marketing quality products and offering good customer service.

The second objective for the research was to contribute to small business scholarship by comparing the profile with existing small business research. In particular, we were interested in identifying whether businesses in Botswana were unique from those elsewhere or whether business motivations, practices, challenges, and definitions of success identified in the scholarly literature appeared to be cross-culturally relevant.

Motivations

Botswana businesses showed many similarities to the research literature in their motivations for business start-up. First, Botswana businesswomen's motivations encompassed all of the Hunger et al. (2000) motivational categories. Textile skills were seized as an opportunity-driven motivation upon which to found the business, which was similar to women entrepreneurs in Singapore who wanted to put their knowledge and skills to use in commercial activity (Teo, 1996). Second, firm closure or loss of a job gave rise to economic hardship. Poor working relationships were a cause for others to leave their jobs, all of which served as externally driven motivations for business start-up. Additional externally-driven motivations included providing for the family's current needs or establishing a secure future by building a business to pass on in the family (Kuratko et al., 1997). Third, seeking of autonomy, controlling one's future, and establishing a career, all internally-driven motivations, were also salient among the respondents (Kuratko et al.).

Table 3. Profile of Women-Owned Micro Businesses in Botswana

Category	Characteristics
Motivations for Start-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identified start-up motivations of (a) possessing personal skills; (b) working for oneself, establishing a career, controlling the future, and experiencing national pride; and (c) economic hardship, profit, and providing a secure family future
Business Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employed skilled labor • supported employees through tangible and intangible incentives • engaged in market research • employed a costing formula • used limited target marketing • engaged in rigorous marketing through personal networks, trade shows, and bids on government contracts • identified product design, quality, price, and uniqueness as salient features to their customers
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • faced challenges in finding a market at start-up and during growth • confronted management challenges for procuring raw materials, locating and supervising employees, and managing time • experienced cash flow exigencies
Definitions of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defined success in terms of business growth, meeting personal challenges of starting a business, and receiving recognition • attributed success to product quality and good customer relations • perceived they were improving lives for the people of Botswana by providing employment

Although the Botswana women's motivations for business start-up supported those identified in the research literature, what surfaced as unique to the Botswana women was their skill at integrating a broad range of motivational stimuli for business start-up. Although previous researchers have identified a single motivation category (Hunger et al., 2000) or a series of gender-specific motivations (Brush, 1992; Buttner & Moore, 1997; Dickson & Littrell, 1998; Hisrich & Brush, 1984; Maysami & Goby, 1999), these women initiated businesses to serve a complex set of multiple needs that ranged across motivation categories and paralleled motivations identified by both men and women business owners in the United States and other parts of the world (Craig et al., 1997; Feldman & Bolino, 2000; Teo, 1996).

In contrast to similarities, two motivations for business start-up appeared specific to Botswana. First, national pride, which was explained as raising awareness that Botswana has a potential workforce capable of producing high quality products, emerged as a motivation not found in previous research literature. Although Paige and Littrell (2002) identified the importance of U.S. craft retailers reinforcing a region's cultural identity, among the U.S. businesspersons, regional pride served as an outcome measure of success. For the Botswana women, establishing national pride drove the businesses from inception. A second motivation of preparing for one's old age also was not found in the research literature. Some respondents noted that if they opened their businesses now, they would begin to employ people who would work for them as the owners aged. Both of these motivations appeared to be important in a 38-year-old country working to establish a global presence and where many citizens are not privy to retirement benefits upon reaching old age.

Business Practices

The Botswana women engaged in many business procedures similar to successful textile and apparel producers in the United States (Craig et al., 1997; Littrell et al., 1991). Hiring skilled labor, with a preference for nonfamily members, was viewed as critical to business growth. These hiring practices contradicted Grimes and Milgram's (2000) assertion that small producers in less developed countries rely on family members, skilled or unskilled, to operate their businesses. Also similar to U.S. producers, the Botswana women focused on producing high quality, original products; priced them using a formula; and marketed the products through a variety of venues. Attention to financial aspects of the business was identified as needing greater attention in Botswana, as in the United States (Craig et al., 1977).

In contrast to the United States, where marketing through personal networks was linked with less successful producers (Littrell et al., 1991), drawing on a personal network of friends and customers took on multiple levels of importance in Botswana. Initially, business owners, sometimes wearing their apparel and walking door-to-door, turned to neighbors and friends for research on market reaction to the products. As potential customers arrived at the workshop, they were questioned for their preferences on product details. Customers were also counted on to refer other clients and to serve as walking advertisements within their circles of friends and colleagues. The network was

further enlarged as business owners personally marketed in offices, schools, and other businesses. One-to-one telephoning of potential individual, school, or government clients, broadened the network still further.

A review of individualism-collectivism values in African societies sheds light on the business owners' attention to interpersonal networks in their business practices. In African societies with strong collective values, others' opinions are valued, nonmaterial and material resources are shared, and interdependent relationships are cultivated (Hui & Triandis, 1986). For Botswana businesswomen, these values appeared to surface in their business practices as they supported employees' hard work with incentives, sought input from potential clients, and rigorously established interpersonal networks for marketing.

Challenges

Businesswomen in Botswana faced a variety of challenges at start-up and early growth related to marketing, management, and finances. These challenges were consistent with the findings of previous researchers in the United States (Dodge & Robbins, 1992; Terpstra & Olsen, 1993) and, as in the United States, were recurrent during early stages of growth as defined by Dodge and Robbins. In contrast, product and production challenges, identified by other researchers (Durham & Littrell, 2000; Littrell et al., 2002), did not surface for the Botswana women. Perhaps their previous work experience as apparel seamstresses aided them in establishing standards for quality early in the business lifecycle. In contrast, as former employees, they may not have acquired the skills for making management and financial decisions.

Challenges faced by businesswomen in Botswana that were not common to businesses in the United States included transportation and business location. Botswana businesswomen operated in owned or rented homes, or rented business shells, which they claimed did not offer attractive locations for drawing customers and conducting business. Research by Littrell et al. (2002) and the United Nations survey (2000) also identified workshop location and size as a challenge for small business owners in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa. In Ghana, businesses grew more rapidly than the owners anticipated, leaving a chaotic and filled-to-capacity workspace early in the business life cycle. Apparently some of the Botswana owners had reached a similar stage of growth as they identified needing to move out of the household space in order to expand.

Success

When comparing Botswana women's definitions for success with the research literature, similarities surfaced for both extrinsic and intrinsic criteria. Growth in sales and profits and an increase in the number of employees were cited as measurable, extrinsic descriptions of success. These criteria for success were consistent with those of U.S. craft retailers who identified sales growth and exceeding customer expectations as criteria for meeting their goals (Paige & Littrell, 2002). Intrinsic criteria for success, including meeting challenges and receiving recognition, also surfaced (Horridge & Craig, 2001; Moore & Buttner, 1997; Soldressen et al., 1998).

In contrast, a product-related criterion for success that appeared in the research literature was not mentioned by the Botswana women. Although the women believed that their product quality contributed to their success, they may not have identified it as an outcome measure since product development was not mentioned as a challenge to be overcome among these women, already skilled in sewing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the profile of women who operated small apparel and textile businesses in Botswana showed many cross-cultural similarities to businesses operated elsewhere. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivations drove business start-up. Business practices focused on attention to hiring, producing quality goods, and marketing, several of which were also identified, along with finances, as business challenges. As sales and profits grew, and as recognition was accorded, the businesswomen identified that success would be achieved.

In contrast, several characteristics appeared unique for operating businesses in Botswana. Unlike businesspersons elsewhere, these business founders effectively integrated a broad set of motivations in initiating their businesses, cultivated interpersonal networks for marketing, and faced challenges of workshop size and location for future growth. In addition, the women not only contributed to private enterprise development but also provided the citizens of Botswana with personal apparel, school and business uniforms, wedding attire, and interior textiles.

This research provides data upon which to begin development of technical assistance for small business start-up in Botswana. In particular the challenges faced by these entrepreneurs and the business practices they followed for sustaining their businesses across three to five years provide topics for entrepreneurship training programs. However, further research is needed both to monitor future business sustainability and to explore the cross-cultural generalizability as well as cultural specificity for the motivations, practices, challenges, and criteria for success identified in the research. In order to foster continued development of "best practices" that can usefully guide new entrepreneurs in start-up and growth, it will be important to remain sensitive to business skills that cross many societies and to those unique qualities that contribute to a vigorous business environment in specific contexts.

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