

## **Public Abstract**

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Graduation Term: SS 2013

Department: Textile & Apparel Management

Degree: MS

Title: Exploration of the unique firm resources described by the Indian apparel export firms for their competitive advantages

The study explored the key competitive advantages and resources of the Indian apparel export firms. According to Porter's (1990) theory of competitive advantage of nations, a nation succeeds in a particular industry if it possesses a competitive advantage relative to the best worldwide competitors. In addition, the resource based theory of the firm defines competitive advantage as a value creating strategy being implemented by a firm while other potential competitors do not or cannot (Barney, 1991). These theories formed the theoretical background of the study. The interpretation from a qualitative study approach, which used semi-structured interviews and field observations of eighteen top level executives working in the apparel export industry in Tirupur and Bangalore revealed four competitive advantages: (a) product advantage; (b) price advantage; (c) delivery advantage and; (c) service advantage. The study also revealed four key firm resources: (a) human resources; (b) product quality standards; (c) physical infrastructure resources; and (d) product development and design. Implications derived from the results offer several important opportunities. Through an in-depth understanding of the key resources of the Indian apparel export firms, the findings help the Indian apparel export firms in realizing their actual key resources and competitive advantages. Government policy makers may want to utilize the study findings to develop more flexible and effective policies that may be more fruitful in the long term.