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The Mauritius Apparel Manufacturing Industry: Explorations of the Past to the Present

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Abstract

This study examines the history and major changes of the Mauritius textile and clothing industries. Development of the small island, its culture, and resources are explored as they relate to the textile and apparel manufacturing industry. The paper compares and contrasts the conditions under which Mauritius developed its industry, current status and challenges and future strategies. The short history of the Mauritius textile and clothing industry is impacted by world events as well as singular activities particular to the island and its mixed society. Five interviews were conducted of senior level personnel in leading textile and apparel firms, government positions and export associations over a four month period of time in 2011 in the country of Mauritius. The nation faces a decline in apparel production and exportation and has developed strategies, such as marketing themselves as eco-friendly manufacturers and contractors to gain better positioning in the global textile and clothing market.

Keywords: *Textile and Apparel, Multi-Fiber Agreement, EPZ Companies, Southern African Development Community.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Almost every country in the world depends on the textile and apparel sectors as important contributors to their economy. Textile and apparel are leaders in industrialization and trade in nearly all parts of the world (**Dickerson, 2003**). The textile and apparel industries are the world's largest source of industrial employment (**Dickerson, 1999**).

As countries' economies grow and intertwine, they create a world system of international economies known as globalization. Globalization is the integration of markets, nation-states and technologies (**Friedman, 2000**). The growing interdependence of the world's people is a process integrating not just the economy but additionally culture, technology and governance.

In the globalization of the textile-apparel-retail complex there occurs patterns of growth and migration within one or more countries and across countries. Textile and apparel (T & A) growth migrated from Europe to the United States, and then to countries in Asia (**Dicken, 2003**). Within a country the pattern or development of T & A is known to have a life cycle of birth, maturity, and decline (**Toyne *et al.* 1984**). Countries understanding their timeline in the T & A life cycle are better able to direct their activities to affect favorable outcomes in their markets. Understanding when, why, and how an industry began forms a proven, solid, historical base helping to form industry decisions and future strategies.

This research study investigates the relatively short history of the Mauritius T & A industry. The acronym "T & A" in this paper is generically used to refer to the manufacturers of fiber, fabrics, and clothing products. The objectives of this study are to (a) understand the natural and cultural events that impacted the T & A industry in Mauritius, (b) examine the inception of the T & A industry and the development of that industry for four decades, (c) understand the current situation of the industry, (d) explore possible strategies for future competitive advantages.

The Mauritian T & A complex is a unique industry of study because of its short history of 40 years, its size and geographic location. The country of 800 square miles (2,000 square kilometers) is located 500 miles east of the large island of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. Population is 1.3 million people comprised of Hindu (51%), Creoles (African or Malagasy descent-23%), Muslim (17%), Chinese (5%), Mixed (3%) and Christians (1%). Mauritius has one of the highest per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US$9,496 in Africa. Textiles and clothing is the country's primary export (http://travel.state.gov, 2012). The globalization of apparel manufacturing, the impact of fast communication, advanced technology and changes in import/export regulations have all been experienced on the island of Mauritius.

2. RELEVANT LITERATURE

Researchers of the global T & A industries have attempted to describe past events and characteristics to better predict future activities. Much has been written of the industry in Europe, the United States, and Asia. The goal of industry evolution is to predict the next phase in the cycle to make decisions favorable to success (**Ha-Brookshire and Lee, 2010**). Events within a country impact the evolution of the industry, but equally important are global events that have a profound affect on a country's industry.

Generally, the number of firms in the industry increases when the industry is new (**Abernathy and Uttervack, 1978**). Countries in the early stages of economic development usually have the comparative advantage of low labor aiding the growth of the industry. As the number of firms increases the output, prices, and market shares change (**Klepper and Graddy, 1990**). Internal resources, such as the level of employee knowledge, their competencies and learning abilities as well as external resources, such as supporting universities, research tanks, government, and financial institutions affect life cycle success (**Cohen and Levinthal, 1989**).

Trade quotas and tariffs have also impacted the T & A industries. Of singular significance was the Multi-Fiber Agreement (MFA), established in 1973, which set up an elaborate system of quotas organized by product and country. In practice, the agreement limited exports of textiles and apparel from developing countries. The dismantling of the MFA in 2005 threatened manufacturers who previously enjoyed privileged access to the European and North American markets by putting them in direct competition with highly competitive exporters from Asia (**Cammett, 2007**).

Domestic firms exhibit higher commitments of acquiring and absorbing innovative technological capabilities via supply linkages when faced with market survival in world trade deregulation. Domestic firms also developed local technologies to survive discontinuation of preferential trade agreements (**Peerally and Cantwell, 2011**).

Countries have established export processing zones to aid in developing, distributing and competitively manufacturing goods for export. Export zones can be domestic, foreign or joint venture, public or private, and specialize in manufacturing for export. They provide countries with foreign exchange earnings by promoting non-traditional exports and allow duty-free imports of raw and intermediate goods

3. METHOD OF RESEARCH STUDY, SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

A primary goal of this research study was to gain a better understanding of the T & A industry in Mauritius as little research had been conducted previously. With nothing written down about an industry in narrative format it is more difficult to form strategies of competitiveness for global success. Mass media, government reports, and speculation provide information on an industry, but people immersed in the T & A industry can bring specific data and focus on the industry's development.

This study collected, organized, and analyzed data from personal interviews following a process of inductive logic research (**Creswell, 2003**). Interpretive analysis provides an appropriate and timely method by obtaining a deeper understanding of transitioning industries via personal experience, texts, and narratives (**Ha-Brookshire and Dyer, 2008**).

Five key leaders were individually interviewed in Mauritius over a period of four months in 2011. The individuals were involved and committed to the T & A industry in Mauritius as "founding fathers," government officials, high level managers, or firm presidents. The in-depth interviews ranged from one to three hours in length.

Broad questions were asked of each expert to commence, lead, and further the interview. Examples of questions asked were: What influenced and impacted the T & A industry? What were the primary products? Where did the supplies and linkages come from? What global changes affected the industry? What do you believe the future of the Mauritius T & A industry to be?

Interpretative analysis based on philosophical hermeneutics has been applied throughout this research taking on the position of **Martin Heidegger (1989-1976)** and **Hans-Georg Gadamer**

(1900-2002) who proposed that human experience is realized through language and this dialog seeks to discover meaning and structures through a person's life experiences (**Hultgren, 1989**).
The data collected was culled and fused with collaborative interviewee comments and published written data. The following narrative is the resulting story of the Mauritius Textile and Apparel Industry and its competitive future.

4. HISTORY OF THE MAURITIUS APPAREL/ TEXTILE INDUSTRY

4.1. Background of the Country of Mauritius

The Arabs, Malays and Phoenicians knew of the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean as a safe port on their sailing routes since the 10th century. The island was a natural stop in the Spice Route. The Dutch were the first settlers in Mauritius and occupied the island in the 17th century bringing in slaves from Madagascar and convicts from Java to work to work in the newly introduced sugar cane fields (**Wright, 1974**).
The French East India Company claimed the island for France in 1715 and sold the island to the French government in 1767. Mauritius' sugar production increased with slaves brought in from East Africa and fostered by Governor Mahé de LaBourdonnais.
The French culture and customs remained after the British amicably took over the island in 1810. In 1835, when slavery was abolished, freed slaves refused to work in the cane fields and the government brought indentured labor from China and India. This change of culture and population became the base of the textile-apparel industry on the island, as they brought their basic skills of sewing (**Wright, 1974**).
Mauritian society was formed unofficially with wealthy English or French at the tip of the social apex, followed by poorer whites, light skinned Creole (those people of dark African skin color genetically blended with white skin colored people), darker skinned Creole, Chinese, darkest African looking Creoles, and at the lowest level the Indians. The social hierarchy was related to wealth and job status (**Lim Fat, 2010**).
In the early 1960s a devastating cyclone destroyed much of the island and James Meade, Economics professor from Cambridge, was consulted for economic advice since 97 per cent of the economy was dependent on sugar exports and there were employment concerns. Due to Meade's recommendations there was fast development of limited local market imports such as soap, tea, fish, and clothing in the mid 1960s (**Mohit, 2011**). The University of Mauritius was founded in 1965 supporting the agriculture, administration and industrial technology faculties. Courses offered were in engineering and technological subjects. Many students were sponsored by local industries leading to trained manpower.
In 1968 Mauritius attained independence, became a member of the British Commonwealth, and Mauritius' social hierarchy began to change. With the new constitution all people born in Mauritius were full fledged citizens. Much emigration occurred in the late 1960s; many whites left for economic reasons and personal concerns regarding governance by dark skinned Indians; richer Creole civil servants left as they feared discrimination. The Chinese in Mauritius prompted by their loyalty to their new country, their European education, and the political and societal changes in China and World War II began buying homes and businesses in the country. They no

longer wished to return to China, having found a pleasant economy for their garment and food products. A harmonious and prosperous nation persevered (**Lim Fat, 2010**).

4.2. 1970: The Beginning of Mauritius Textile and Apparel Industry, A Decade of Growth

Sir Edouard Lim Fat, of Chinese descent, born in Bon Accueil, Mauritius in 1921, educated at Imperial College, United Kingdom in chemical engineering, senior civil servant in Mauritius, entrepreneur, and professor at the University of Mauritius is generally acknowledged as creator of the Mauritius Export Processing Zone (EPZ) in 1970 (**Lim Fat, 2010; Mohit, 2011; Tang, 2011; Wong, 2011**). He modeled the structure after studying EPZs in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan, among others. There were similarities among these destinations with regards to circumstance, background and geography. One significant difference from other countries' "fenced" export processing zones was that the entire island of Mauritius would be within the EPZ, an unfenced free zone, bounded by the Indian Ocean. The Mauritius EPZ was based on manufacturing for exports only. EPZ businesses would: 1) have no taxes for the first 10 years, and would then pay 15% on dividends; 2) have no applicable custom duties, enjoying duty free imports of raw materials and equipment; 3) have no customs controls; 4) pay rent only on tax free factories and buildings built by the Mauritius government and developed by the Bank of Mauritius. Five factories were in the EPZ within the first few months, with over 500 employees.

An additional incentive to join the EPZ was that 10% dividends would be paid to shareholders. The original and majority of the textile/apparel stakeholders were from Hong Kong. Mauritius' EPZ was a good nearby location country for a number of reasons: 1) Arson in Hong Kong factories was prevalent in the 1960s; 2) Military clashes in China and Taiwan were experienced; 3) Hong Kong families and firms had been forced out of Shanghai, leaving all possessions behind, when the Communists invaded in 1949; 4) Hong Kong had an established garment industry complete with equipment, technicians, and marketing strategies (**Lim Fat, 2010**).

There was a fear of "no security" left for Hong Kong businesses with the impending reversion of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Business owners in China were concerned what to do before this happened; they didn't want to again experience financial losses from a government change as they did in 1949. They wanted to protect their investments made thus far and were worried when they became under Chinese domain if they could hold on to their financial earnings (**Lim Fat, 2010; Mohit, 2011; Tang, 2011**).

Many Hong Kong textile industry people came to Mauritius and brought apparel and textile machinery with them. Mauritius had the labor and women preferred the factory work over working outside on the sugar plantations; the factory work day was only 8 hours compared to sugar plantation work which was 12 hours per day; factory work paid 3-5 rupees per day; sugar plantation work paid 2-2.5 rupees per day. These ideal situations influenced other Hong Kong firms to locate in Mauritius (**Lim Fat, 2010**).

In 1973 five (23%) of the twenty two companies under the Mauritius EPZ umbrella were textile-apparel companies: 1) Vettex Limited [garments]; 2) Floreal Knitwear [garments]; 3) Textiles Industries Limited [garments]; 4) Compagnie Mauricienne Commerciale (CMT) [garments]; 5) Orkay Synthetics [fiber processing]. This early period of growth was in alignment with a period of political and social stability, availability of capital, previous sugar capital transferred to EPZ ventures, enthusiasm and faith locally and abroad (**Lim Fat, 2010**). The very active T & A companies were knitwear companies formed from the French-Hong Kong- Mauritius liaison formed in Paris at the exhibitions (**Mohit, 2011; Wong, 2011**). 1973 also marked the year of the inception of the MFA.

The first half of the 1970 decade was one of fast development for Mauritius export companies. The latter 1970's forced firms to acknowledge world finances, the oil crisis, Mauritius labor, services, the need for public transportation connecting rural to urban, and political and economic uncertainty (**Lim Fat, 2011; Mohit, 2011**). No growth was realized in the apparel/textile industry, among others. Mauritius received help from the International Monetary Fund and devalued the Mauritian currency (rupee) first by 30% and a second time by 20%. In 1975 the Mauritius Export Development Authority, under the Ministry of Industry, with representatives in England, France and India helped to export Mauritian products (**Lim Fat, 2010; Mohit, 2011; Wong, 2011**). Mauritius and benefitted by the Lomé convention (signed in 1975 in Lomé, Togo) that provided added advantages to ACP (African, Caribbean, Pacific) countries (via the Georgetown Agreement of 1975), stating that it be given preferential access to European markets. No duty would be paid if Mauritian goods were going to Europe. This duty-free preferential agreement impacted the attraction of foreign investors to Mauritius (**Peerally and Cantwell, 2011**).

In 1976 the Mauritius Export Zone Association (MEPZA, changed in 2006 to MEXA) was formed and led by Mr.Lim Fat. MEXA would be the facilitator linking Mauritius EPZ enterprises with government to economically advance the country in the global market (**Lim Fat, 2010; Mohit, 2011; Tang, 2011; Wong, 2011**).

Danielle Wong was living in France and attended exhibitions promoting the Mauritius EPZ. She and her brother, a secretary to the Mauritius Embassy in France, were both Mauritius citizens. Textile producers from Hong Kong also attended the exhibition in Paris looking for alternative places to live and work, as they were concerned about the future of their businesses in Hong Kong as soon it would no longer be under British control. Due to her knowledge of textiles, law, key players in Hong Kong, France, and Mauritius she was hired by MEXA in 1978, became Secretary in 1980 and has directed MEXA continuously and presently (**Wong, 2011**).

4.3. 1980: A Decade of Expansion

In 1980 there were 100 enterprises in the EPZ expanding to nearly 600 by the end of the decade. Many factors and situations contributed to this high growth.

When Hong Kong firms realized that they could retain their assets in China, many left Mauritius, leaving behind their equipment and the trained Mauritians. Local Mauritian investors took advantage of this situation and many from the sugar industry provided capital for the continuation of, or the formation of new textile and clothing firms. A civil war in Sri Lanka, where textile/apparel production had been increasing, shifted more production to Mauritius (**Lim Fat, 2010**).

In 1987 EPZ companies were allowed to sell their products in the local market with a small tax. The government reduced the 70% tax structure to 35% which promoted the development of more businesses by Mauritians. Forty five percent of the EPZ equity capital was from Hong Kong, 44% from Mauritius, 6% from France, with the remaining 5% from Germany, India, U.S., Singapore and Switzerland. The smallness of the government executive committee boosted the development of the EPZ; decisions and implementation could be made quickly creating an advantageous situation for exports (**Wong, 2011**).

4.4. 1990: A Decade of Change

In 1994 the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa group (COMESA) which included Mauritius was signed as one of five Economic Partnership Agreement groups (EPA) providing special trade arrangements for goods between COMESA countries and the European Union (EU). In 1995 Lomé IV gave Mauritius special attention in its trade arrangements, aiding exports.

Many of the Hong Kong investors relocated their businesses to Viet Nam and China because production costs and labor were lower. More local investors brought their capital from the sugar boom to the textile/apparel arena. Mauritians had gained experience and time from their Hong Kong guidance and the T & A factories survived because of their automation and production of higher quality garments.

Almost unique in the world, Mauritius reach full employment and the EPZ faced labor shortage. The Mauritius textiles and clothing industry experienced an employment peak in 1999 and outsourced to nearby Madagascar, where labor was cheaper. Factory laborers shifted to the newly formed tourism industry preferring the work of cleaning and waiting in relaxed and enjoyable accommodations and garnering generous tips. Laborers in the apparel/textile area were brought in from Sri Lanka, India and China. The decade ended with 500 EPZ firms; 58% were T & A firms. There was speculation that Mauritius' exports were too heavy with T & A industries (**Wong, 2011**).

4.5. 2000: A Decade of Challenges

The first years of the new millennium brought many challenges to the Mauritian textile and apparel industry. Quota privileges and duty free entry of Mauritian goods were phased out with the end of the Lomé agreement, but was replaced with the COTONOU Agreement (signed in Cotonou, Benin in 2000); the agreement continued a trade benefits package between ACP countries and the EU.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) signed in 2000 offered tangible incentives for African countries to continue their efforts to open their economies and build free markets. It allowed duty free garments to the United States if made from local African or United States yarns or origination from U.S. or Africa. However, Mauritius was excluded from this agreement until 2006. AGOA promotes organic products, but a lot of water consumption is needed for organic products and Mauritius is promoting their ability to be eco friendly in the world marketplace (**Wong, 2011**).The Southern African Development Community (SADC) signed in 2000 stated that those member countries (included Mauritius) would operate as a free trade area.

Problems encountered in the T & A sector were addressed. Sea freight was very high; departing planes were full, but empty coming back; the cost of doing business was too high even though clothing is light weight and less expensive to ship. Arrangements were made to air freight garments to France and bring back French goods to Mauritius, avoiding empty planes (**Wong, 2011**).

In 2003 much of Mauritius' apparel production moved to Madagascar because labor became too expensive in Mauritius. All of Hong Kong left and gave their facilities to Mauritians (**Lim Fat, 2010; Mohit, 2011; Tang, 2011; Wong, 2011**).

Mauritius manufacturers were used to the protection of trade agreements and continued to make products as always. The items became stagnant and inferior. If exporting in free trade areas, then there is competition and the product becomes better quality (**Wong, 2011**).

Mauritius immediately felt the impact with the dissolution of the MFA in 2005. Mauritius' "cut-make-trim" contracts went to China, India and Vietnam. Mauritius' exports to the U.S. decreased 49% from 2004 to 2007. T & A contractors were becoming involved in alternative strategies such as eco friendliness, carbon foot printing, and increasing equipment and system technologies (**Tang, 2011; Wong, 2011**).

The world recession of 2008 impacted Mauritius and the EPZ was boosted with a one billion Mauritian rupees grant and successive reduction of interest rates prompting stabilization. The decade ended with 400 firms in the EPZ; 47% were T & A firms (**Lim Fat, 2010**).

4.6. Current Status

Two U.S. government agencies, USAID and COMPETE financed Origin Africa in 2011. It is an ongoing campaign and initiative dedicated to improving African trade. The organization is comprised of producers, designers, small businesses, exporters, buyers and retailers working to develop, guide and promote textiles/apparel and complementary products from Africa. Origin Africa held its first world conference in Mauritius in 2011.

The majority of MEXA's official 78 member enterprises are Mauritian-owned; fifty-seven per cent are textile and clothing firms. Sixty seven per cent of Mauritius export currency is from textiles and apparel; the industry accounts for 77% national employment. The United Kingdom comprises 30% of Mauritius' exports, followed by France [18%] and the United States [14%] (Wong, 2011).

As of May 2012 there are now 354 firms in Mauritius' EPZ, now referred to as EOE (Export Oriented Enterprises). The EOE is comprised of all enterprises operating with an EPZ certificate and those enterprises manufacturing foods for exports and holding a registration issued by the Mauritius Board of Investment. Forty eight percent (170) of EOE firms are textile and clothing firms and 61% of EOE exports come from those firms.

The T & A industry continues to contribute to Mauritian economy. T & A accounts for 5% of the GDP, 8% of total employment and accounts for 50% of total domestic exports. The major garments produced are t-shirts, pullovers, men's shirts and trousers which account for 90% of the total textile and clothing exports. The four major countries for exports are the United Kingdom (32%), U.S. (17%), South Africa (16%) and France (16%) (www.gov.mu, 2012).

5. Results and Discussion

The first objective of this study was to understand the natural and cultural events that impacted the T & A industry in Mauritius. Mauritius was favorably positioned in the Indian Ocean for import and export by virtue of established trading routes. The country was dependent on the one source of sugar cane until the 1960s. To produce manpower for the sugar cane industry many Asians were brought to the country.

In the late 1960s Great Britain financially endowed Mauritius to venture in the production of alternative goods to sugar cane (**Mohit, 2011**). Simultaneously, there were Hong Kong investors that needed to ensure their assets safely in another country; there were French textile investors that met with the Chinese in Europe; there was Mauritius independence with government vision and leadership, a labor pool, and the formation of an EPZ. All was in place for the embryonic stage of T & A development. Literature supports the findings of this first objective of labor availability in the developing country of Mauritius and economic shifting of production to Mauritius (**Dickerson, 1999; Kildduff, 2006**).

The second objective of this study was to examine the inception of the T & A industry and the development of that industry for four decades. The number of firms in the industry grew immensely in the decades of 1970 and 1980. In 1990 the EPZ had the greatest number of enterprises in its history (568) with T & A firms comprising over 80%. Literature supports the findings of this second objective which was growth of expanded apparel production and exports during the embryonic stage (**Toyne, *et al.*, 1984**).

After three decades of development Mauritius' T & A industry was still strong contributing 45% of the nation's manufacturing and 10% of the GDP. Growth had slowed some, but was still averaging 6 % per year (**Lim Fat, 2010**).

The fourth decade in Mauritius' T & A industry growth was challenging due to world economic reasons, cost of Mauritius labor, and the change of trade agreements. Like many other countries in the world concessions were made as China took the lead in T & A world exports.

The third objective of this study was to understand the current situation of the industry. Initiatives are in place coming from the U.S., Europe, and Africa to aid Mauritius in their apparel manufacturing.

A final objective of this study was to explore possible strategies for future competitive advantages **Shen's study (2008)** showed that trade restraints were not the main problem for many Chinese textile and clothing companies; they had faced similar problems for decades and developed newer strategies such as concentrating more on quality rather than quantity and brand development. The elimination of preferences compelled Mauritius enterprises to modernize, upgrade to higher value added products and move into the upper segments of the market in order to remain competitive (**Kildduff, 2006**).

Zhang's research (2008) concluded that quota removal is a most important factor influencing strategic decisions. The larger companies have also undergone a process of restructuring through vertical integration. The sector has evolved from lower to intermediary and higher market segments. Many companies are adopting good governance, eco- friendly production processes, fair trade and social compliance (**Kildduff, 2006**).

Inflexibity is a persistent and deep rooted problem in the U.S. textile and apparel industries. Determining factors to promote flexibility could return production to firms (Kim and Rucker, 2005). Mauritius firms consider themselves to be flexible (**Lim Fat, 2010; Mohit, 2011; Tang, 2011; Wong, 2011; Domun, 2012; Ittoo, 2011**).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The future of the Mauritian textile and apparel industry is dependent on a number of factors: 1) Labor and Productivity, 2) Marketing Strategies, 3) Trade Agreements, and 4) Agility.

The cost of labor in Mauritius is higher than in many other third world countries and the laborers do not want to work in a "24/7" environment or overtime. Absenteeism is high around 10% and workers are not motivated. Turnover can be as high as 40% (**Mohit, 2011**). All youth who desire a college education are aided and supported by the government in obtaining that education. Factory work is less desirable to college educated people and is less favorable than working in other service oriented industries (**Lim Fat, 2010**). With low unemployment of 1%, Mauritius may again have to seek foreign labor or seek alternatives to labor costs. **Leseure, *et. al.* (2009)** states that "catching-up" [with China] is about learning and developing absorptive capacity in the workplace. Mauritius' past strategies of low labor cost, productivity and low cost service are no longer applicable. The greater need is for consumer orientation, quality service, quality focus and response focus (**Ittoo, 2011**).

Strategies for production of higher quality garments will advance Mauritius in the global marketplace. Marketing Mauritius' contractors as "green" and eco-friendly should impact world sourcing of their services**.**

Peerally and Cantwell (2011) concluded that a developing sub-Saharan African country like Mauritius could be an important source of innovative technological capabilities to domestic and foreign subsidiaries and their learning strategy was a consequence of their need to continue, thrive and expand after preferential trade agreements. Mauritius companies are sustaining competitiveness through state of the art technology and vertical integration.

Ha and Dyer point out that although price matters in T & A production, the consideration of time and quality were more pressing in apparel import intermediaries (**Ha-Brookshire and Dyer, 2008**). Mauritius has earned the trust of world buyers. Companies are producing high end quality products for niche markets. They are competing on the basis of non- price factors such as creativity in design and ability to meet tight lead time (**Domun, 2012**).

The Mauritius textile industry intends to fully immerse itself in the EU and the US markets, via AGOA, COMESA, COTONOU, SADC and other Economic Partnership Agreements as these tools provide preferential access to large global markets. Memos of understanding are being developed with South Africa, Madagascar and India (**Tang, 2011; Wong, 2011**).

Mauritius' strengths are its small size, agility, responsiveness, and quality and customer-orientation, sustainable and creative. Its textile and clothing manufacture future lies with its ability to make adjustments and advancements.

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