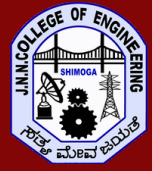




NATIONAL EDUCATION SOCIETY (R)
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU NEW COLLEGE
OF ENGINEERING, SHIVAMOGGA

(Approved by AICTE, New Delhi, Affiliated to VTU, Belagavi)

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE CELL (IQAC)



DEPARTMENT OF
MANAGEMENT STUDIES

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INSTITUTION'S INNOVATION COUNCIL (IIC)



JNNCE - MBA Meets Entrepreneurship:
25 Years of Creativity & Commitment –
A Conversation with Shivamogga's
Rental Costume Pioneer



Mrs. Uma

Background



Mrs. Uma

In the culturally vibrant city of Shivamogga, Mrs. Uma always had a deep interest in fancy dress, dance, and theatre. As a schoolgirl, she would often engage in creative activities. After completing her PUC in the town, Savanoor, she got married and settled down in Shivamogga. A thought kept sparking in her mind – “If our city had a proper rental costume service, it would help so many people.”

With a modest capital and just 50–60 costumes, she started her business from a small room in her home. In the early days, she learned tailoring herself, stitched many costumes by hand, painted them, and even crafted the accessories. This combination of passion, skill, and courage laid the foundation for a journey that has now spanned 25 successful years.

Madam, can you tell us about your journey of starting a rental costume business in Shivamogga 25 years ago?

In the culturally vibrant city of Shivamogga, Mrs. Uma always had a deep interest in fancy dress, dance, and theatre. As a schoolgirl, she would often engage in creative activities. After completing her PUC in the town, Savanoor, she got married and settled down in Shivamogga. A thought kept sparking in her mind – “If our city had a proper rental costume service, it would help so many people.”

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How has your family supported you in this business journey?

My husband has been my backbone and he encouraged me to take the risk, my children help in managing orders and deliveries, and my family assists during festival seasons when demand is high. Without their emotional and practical support, sustaining this business for 25 years would have been difficult.

What do you feel is the secret behind the longevity of your business?

Hard work and commitment. We never compromise on the quality of our costumes or the cleanliness. We also maintain personal relationships with our customers. Many clients have been with us for decades – they trust us because we value their events as much as they do.

How do you handle competition in the costume rental market?

Competition is healthy – it keeps us on our toes. I focus on offering unique costumes, timely delivery, and personalized service. Instead of copying what others do, I try to innovate by introducing fresh designs and rare cultural outfits. Many customers stay loyal because they know they will find something different here.

Running a business for 25 years is no small feat. How do you manage your work-life balance?

I follow a disciplined schedule. Mornings are dedicated to my family and personal work. Afternoons and evenings to my shop. During peak seasons, I work late, but I ensure to take small breaks after busy periods. Balance is not about equal hours; it's about giving full attention to whatever you are doing at the moment.

What challenges have you faced as a woman entrepreneur in this field?

Initially, taking people in to confidence that a woman could run such a specialized business was difficult. But over time, my work spoke for itself. Today, I am proud that my business is recognized and respected.

What advice would you give to aspiring women entrepreneurs?

Believe in your idea, work hard, and be consistent. Family support is valuable, but self-confidence is essential. Also, never shy away from learning – whether it's about customer service, marketing, or financial management.

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In today's fast-changing trends, how do you ensure the sustainability of your business?

Sustainability comes from adaptability. I keep updating our collection based on fashion changes, cultural programs, and festival themes. I also maintain our costumes carefully so they last longer – this reduces costs and waste. Additionally, we invest in multipurpose costumes that can be adapted for different events.

Costume design requires creativity. How do you bring originality into your work?

Creativity is my favorite part. I research historical periods, folk traditions, and even watch movies for inspiration. Some costumes are entirely custom-designed by me, with locally sourced fabrics and embellishments. I also work with local tailors and artisans, which keeps designs authentic and supports the community.

Who makes up your customer base?

Our customer base is diverse – schools, colleges, drama groups, dance academies, event organizers, NGOs, and even families hosting cultural events. We also cater to photographers for themed shoots in and around Shimoga and neighboring districts. Interestingly, many customers are second-generation – their parents rented costumes from me when they were young, and now they bring their own children.

Customer satisfaction is often the key to success. How do you ensure it?

For me, customer satisfaction is non-negotiable. We listen carefully to their needs, suggest suitable options, and ensure the costumes are delivered on time, clean, and in good condition. I also follow up after events to get feedback. Many customers appreciate this personal touch and recommend us to others.

What role do festivals and cultural events play in your business?

Festivals and cultural seasons are the busiest times for us. For example, during School days, Dasara and Independence Day, demand triples. These events also push us to create new designs and expand our collection. They are both a challenge and an opportunity for growth.

We heard your business sometimes handles up to 10,000 orders per day during peak seasons. How do you manage such huge demand?

Yes, during festival seasons and large-scale cultural events, the demand can be massive. We plan months in advance – categorizing costumes, tagging them, and arranging quick delivery and return systems. I have a strong network of assistants and temporary staff who work in shifts to ensure every customer is served. Technology also helps – we use digital booking records to avoid confusion.

What is the price range for renting costumes from your shop?

Our rental charges are quite affordable, considering the quality and detailing of each costume. Prices generally range from ₹500 to ₹2,000, depending on the type, material, and accessories included. For example, a simple fancy dress for a school event may cost ₹500, whereas elaborate cultural or historical costumes with full accessories can go up to ₹2,000. We also offer special package rates for bulk bookings during festivals and school annual days.

How do you balance supply with such high demand?

Supply depends on careful inventory management. I keep multiple copies of high-demand costumes and also maintain tie-ups with tailors for emergency stitching. For large school or organization bookings, we confirm requirements in advance so that no one is left disappointed. Maintaining quality while meeting quantity is the toughest challenge – but with experience, we've mastered it.

Does this high demand affect your customer service quality?

Not at all – in fact, our customers say we are more efficient during busy times because the whole team works with a “festival spirit.” We double-check every costume before it leaves the shop, ensuring customer satisfaction even in the busiest season.

After successfully running your rental costume business for 25 years, what future plans do you have for diversification?

I believe in evolving with the times. Along with our rental services, costume design and sales for schools, dance academies, and theatre groups that want to own their outfits, I am exploring a new avenue to contribute to the society with the support of my family members. However, require some time to concretize. I feel, this way, we can serve a wider community while keeping our creative roots intact.

Glimpses of Interview



Dr. C Srikant
Director, JNNCE-MBA

Dr. Y Vijaya Kumar
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