

Identification and Assessment of Constraints to Growth and Development of Cricket Bat Industry of Kashmir, India

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Abstract:

The cricket bat industry of Kashmir assumes the title of being one of the oldest wood based industries of Kashmir. However, the potential that this industry enjoys could not be capitalized fully, for being faced with some serious constraints and challenges and as such this paper aimed to analyze the barriers in the path of growth and development of this industry and suggest measures, as how to overcome them. The study has been conducted on a sample of 55 cricket bat manufacturing units of Kashmir. The analysis of the primary data has been done with the help of mean scores to assess the severity of these barriers and factor analysis to group them. The study has identified six barriers with the help of relevant tools and techniques namely Infrastructural and Administrative, Financial, Technological, Raw Material, Market and Production Constraints.

Keywords: Cricket Bat industry, Growth Constraints, SMEs, Factor Analysis.

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Introduction:

Research in both developed and developing countries has revealed that SME's provides viable opportunities for fledging entrepreneurs to participate effectively in the economy and provide economic benefits to nations beyond commercial initiatives (Moktan, 2007). Small scale enterprises in India have played a vital role and as such, occupy a prominent place in the Indian economy. During 50 years or so, small scale industrial sector has achieved a phenomenal progress in diverse activities, despite the zooming mortality rate (Butt, 2000). This crucial sector of Indian industrial economy accounts for approximately 40 per cent of the country's domestic production, almost 50 per cent of India's total exports, 45 per cent of India's industrial employment and account for more than 90 per cent of all industrial enterprises (MSME 2011-12). In absolute terms, it employs 60 million which is only next to the agricultural sector. All is not well with this crucial sector of Indian industrial economy. It is confronted with number of challenges and constraints. Given the contribution of small scale industries to the Indian economy, the need is to have an equal focus on this sector rather put in place policies and programmes which will address the challenges and constraints confronting this sector so as to drive the maximum, to push the economic growth in the country.

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Small scale industries dovetail well with the economic imperatives of Jammu and Kashmir. It is in view of this fact that the developmental priorities set up by the local governments in Jammu & Kashmir have focused more on the development of small scale industries, in particular, the modern small scale industries. The small scale sector has an incredible and fantastic potential to contribute to the economy of Jammu and Kashmir in terms of higher volumes of output and employment generation. Knowing the importance of this sector in mitigating various socio-economic problems, the government has gone in a big way to boost this sector of crucial importance to the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. As a consequence of various initiatives taken by the local and the central govt. from time to time, small scale industries recorded significant growth and development in all parameters. The number of small scale industrial units which were just 8428 in 1980-81 has grown to 74071 in 2012-13 with an annual growth rate of 7.78 per cent which compares well with the national averages. The small scale sector accounts for nearly 99 per cent of the total industrial units in Jammu and Kashmir in the private sector as on 2012-13, providing employment to around 300 thousand people. The large scale industries are nearly absent in the region for the obvious reasons. The peculiar geo-physical conditioning of the region like extreme location in the national setting, difficult mountainous terrain, extreme climatic conditions, etc limits the scope for industrialization in the areas where it does not enjoy the advantage of natural resources. However, on the positive side, this area of the country is well endowed with some proven natural resources like limestone, gypsum, coal, lignite, quartzite, white clay, borax etc. It is also rich in some industrially important agricultural and horticultural products. The willow (*salix alba*) is grown only in Kashmir after Essex (England) to manufacture the cricket bats. The comparative advantage in these and other natural resource endowments, certainly provide sufficient scope for industrialization based on these natural resources. Though Jammu and Kashmir could not witness industrial take-off, yet some of the local industries of the region occupy a place of pride not only in the national markets but also in the international markets. One such industry is the cricket bat manufacturing industry which is one of the most important and oldest wood based industries of the Kashmir. This industry promises a great potential to the regional economy, however it needs to be properly developed.

Sports Good Industry:

Sports have become an integral part of modern civilizations and is taking its roots in all societies irrespective of geographical location, race, religion, colour etc. In today's modern world, sports have become a market of identity for different nations of the world. To the individuals, it has turned to be one of the lucrative careers. Every youth irrespective of the economic class to which he/she belongs, engages itself with the sports either out of love or to make a future out of it.

Hockey is the national game of India, however the game of cricket is more famous in the country. In fact, the game of cricket is so famous in the sub-continent and more so in India, with a population of more than 1.25 billion, it has achieved a status of a "Religious Being" followed and preached by everyone. One of the most expensive sports events in the world is Indian Premier League (IPL) which attracts millions and millions of followers of the game of cricket. Besides, the people in India have achieved a phenomenal economic prosperity, as a result youth today afford modern sports accessories and equipments. Given the scenario as stated above, the sports good industry, in particular the industry related to the game of cricket enjoys huge prospectus in India.

Willow trees are the only species which are suited for the manufacturing of cricket bats. The bats made out of willow are known for desired stroke and durability. As a matter of fact, Kashmir valley is the only place in the country for that matter in the whole sub-continent where the willow is grown in abundant quantities. The willow in Kashmir valley is grown in the plains and can be found on the road sides, river banks etc. The total annual yield of willow is estimated at 150 thousand cubic meters. The availability of willow in large quantities offers huge potential for this industry in the region.

The origin of the cricket bat industry of Kashmir, can be traced back to the British rule in India, during which the technical knowhow was imported from England. As early as in 1938, the local govt. established a factory under the title “Kashmir Willow Works” at Miran Sahib Jammu, to manufacture cricket bats, stamps and hockey sticks, which was later on taken over by the Jammu and Kashmir Industries Ltd (JKI). At present, there are many private concerns which are actively engaged in the manufacturing of cricket bats in Jammu and Kashmir province, however, the majority of manufacturing units are located in Kashmir valley which are mainly concentrated in area from Awantipora to Bijbehara. The number of manufacturing units which were 25 in 1975-76 has grown to 250 in 2009-10 with a total output valued at more than Rs. 100 million. It provides direct or indirect employment to thousands of people.

Statement of the Problem:

Given the historical legacies and the comparative advantage that the industry enjoys in natural resources endowments, the industry possesses tremendous potential both in the national and international markets whose size is to be estimated worth billions of rupees. But the administration has grossly failed to capitalize its potential fully. Even though the willow is grown in Kashmir only, but most of the business is done by the manufacturing units located in Jalandhar and Meerut. The fact is that without value addition, raw bats in the form of cleft are surreptitiously exported to the units in Jalandhar and Meerut. Besides, the local industry is involved in contract manufacturing only and as such has failed to develop their own brands. As a result, the manufacturing firms in Jalandhar and Meerut have been enjoying the export business of Kashmiri willow. More intriguing aspect of cricket bat industry in Kashmir is that the willow is exported without value addition and is exported back by the manufacturing units in Jalandhar and Meerut and sold in our market in the name of Kashmiri willow at a premium. Although sufficient production capacity has been created in the industry here, however most of these units are ill-equipped both in terms of technology and other resources. There is immense potential for developing this industry to meet the country’s requirements but also to tap the export potential. To make the best use of this national economic advantage, there is a need to investigate why we have failed to utilize the potential that the industry enjoys fully. It is in view of the fact, the present study has been undertaken to explore the factors that inhibit the growth and development of this industry having immense potential.

Barriers to Growth: Perspectives from Literature

All is not well with the small scale industries in India and elsewhere. This industrial sector is confronted with some unnerving challenges and the problems which are acting as barriers towards attaining more growth in this sector. The literature about barriers to growth in micro, small and medium size enterprises (MSMEs) is very limited. The important studies on the subject includes: Butt (2004),(Moktan,

2007)(Quader, 2009)(Alam, 2011)(Bukvic, 2003)(Aftab, 1989)(Arinaitiwe, 2006)(Aftab, 1989)(Coad, 2012), Sherazi et al. (2013).

While studying the rate of failure in SMEs, Arinaitiwe (2006) found higher rate in developing countries than in developed countries. In India, small scale industries though have contributed much to the economy, yet it suffers from widespread sickness. As on 2013, the number of sick small scale industrial units stood at about 250 thousand units accounting for nearly 99 per cent of total sick industrial units in the country, having 128 billion INR, outstanding with commercial banks (Source RBI). Butt (1998) has argued that industrial sickness is a universal phenomenon and more so in growing economies, but when the problem of sickness becomes widespread and reaches to serious dimensions, then it is not to be treated as normal economic phenomenon rather a serious economic problem, thus calling for immediate action. Similar views were held by Bhat K.S et al. (1988), Gupta Inderjit (1992), Panda R.K et al. (1992) and Mohrana et al. (1995). Small scale industries across all developing economies face problems and many of the problems are common. Quader & Abdullah (2009) on the basis of their study held that there is no doubt that SME's play a vital role in the development of an underdeveloped economy yet this sector is facing multifarious problems relating to raw materials, power, marketing, transport, technical facilities, and finance, etc. Sherazi et al (2013) studied the barriers to growth in SMEs in Pakistan and have found that financial problems like inability to access finance, difficulty in borrowing, lack of trust of financial institutions and insufficient govt. support and encouragement hinder the growth of SMEs in Pakistan. The other obstacles identified by the study includes corruption in administrative set up and technological backwardness. Financial barriers have also been found to impede the growth and development of SME's in Malaysia (Alam, 2011). (Bukvic, 2003) has reported financial barrier as the most serious barrier to growth in SMEs in Slovenia which include high collateral requirement, high cost of capital and bureaucratic procedures in banks. In Bhutan, Moktan (2007) has found that constraints related to restrictive business regulations, finance and infrastructure are the serious barriers to growth of SMEs in the country. Quader (2009) on the basis of his detailed study has identified high lending rate, Govt. regulatory constraint, smallness of domestic market, requirement of collateral for financing and lack of technically skilled workers as the major barriers to growth in SMEs of Bangladesh.

Difficulty in adopting new technologies and crossing over to modern sector impedes the growth of small firms in the developing countries (Aftab, 1989). However in India, Coad (2012) has found a host of factors like lack of demand, shortage of working capital, non-availability of raw materials, power shortage, labour problems, marketing problems and management inefficiencies which have constrained the growth and development of small industries. In line with these findings, Butt (2004) reported that small industries development in J&K is constrained more by political, entrepreneurial, infrastructural bottlenecks and less by other extremes operating in the environment of small scale industries. A special task force constituted in 2010 by then prime minister of India, to look into the problems faced by MSMEs in India has highlighted six major areas of concern which include marketing, labour, rehabilitation and exit policy, infrastructure, taxation and technical skill development.

The studies reviewed above have identified a total of 17 barriers to growth in SMEs. These include:

- Shortage of raw material

- Power shortage
- Difficulty in marketing
- Transportation
- Financial problems like inability to access finance, high collateral requirement, high cost of capital and shortages of working capital.
- Insufficient and inefficient govt. support system
- Bank bureaucracy and lack of trust from financial institutions
- Corruption
- Technological Backwardness
- Restrictive Business Regulations
- Infrastructural deficiencies
- Taxation
- Rehabilitation and exit policy
- Entrepreneurial bottlenecks

For the present study, we studied the above stated barriers except taxation, rehabilitation and exit policy, entrepreneurial bottlenecks and restrictive business regulations. These barriers have been omitted for the reason that these barriers are considered to bear no impact on the industries operating in Jammu and Kashmir except entrepreneurial bottlenecks.

Rationale of the study:

The present study aims to identify the barriers inhibiting growth and development of cricket bat industry of Kashmir, India. It will highlight as to how these constraints are impeding the functioning of the firms in this industry. It will eventually help us to suggest a policy framework that will be helpful in overcoming these barriers.

Materials and Methods:

The study is mainly based on the primary data which has been collected from the owners of the sample firms. The study consisted of 60 units selected through a process of simple random sampling which accounted for 24 percent of the total population. Out of 60 questionnaires, 55 were received back thereby indicating a response rate of 91 percent. Questionnaire method was used to generate the data about the barriers to growth. The barriers were selected on the basis of review of related literature and pilot study. The questionnaire developed on the basis of review of literature consisted of 21 items regarding the problems faced by the cricket bat manufacturers. However after pretesting, four items were dropped leaving 17 items relating to financial, infrastructural, raw material and governance problems. A five point likert scale was used to relate the statement on the constraints the industry faces with 1- very small extent and 5-very large extent.

Reliability of the scale:

To test the reliability of the instrument, the cronbach (1981), the most widely used index for determining the internal consistency was used. The high alpha score of 0.76 confirms the homogeneity of the items and indicates an acceptable level of reliability of the instrument.

Data analysis:

The data so collected was analyzed statistically using relevant tools and techniques. In the first instance the descriptive analysis of 17 variables under study was done to assess the severity of various barriers inhibiting the growth of the industry. This was followed by the factor analysis which was done to extract the principal component factors using varimax normalized rotation method. For the suitability of the data for factor analysis, two tests namely Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Barlett's test of sphericity were used. The KMO measures whether there are sufficient number of variables which should be greater than 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis. For the present study, KMO measure is 0.5 which signifies that factor analysis is useful with the data. Further the chi-square value for the Barletts test of sphericity is 357.788 with 136 degrees of freedom which is significant at more than 95per cent level of significance. Hence we conclude sample is adequate and fit for factor analysis.

Descriptive Analysis:

The descriptive statistics of 17 variables under study is given in table 1. On the basis of mean score, the different variables have been classified into three groups viz, first group includes barriers with a mean score of greater than 4 and are assumed to have inhibited growth to a large extent. These barriers are labeled as severe or critical barriers to growth. The 2nd group consists of barriers with a mean score of 3.5 to 4 and is considered to have constrained growth to moderate extent only and the last group includes the barriers with a mean score of less than 3.5 which are believed to have caused very small impact on growth. The data present in table 1 reveals that severe or critical barriers to growth in the cricket bat industry of the kashmir are role failure of promotional agencies in timely delivery of incentives and services (4.8), followed by inadequate incentives(4.8), lack of industry friendly policy (4.6), poor quality of electricity (4.63), corruption in government machinery (4.61), absence of marketing (4.58), inadequate power supply (4.27), need to carry huge inventory of raw materials (4.03).

Four other variables namely high cost of cane handles (3.94), high rate of interest, high cost of willow (3.61) and high labour cost (3.56) have also been found to inhibit the growth of the industry but to amoderate extent only. While as the remaining five variables namely difficulty in getting finance, unavailability of modern technology, technological backwardness, unavailability of technical staff and the problems of raw material have beenfoundto have impeded the growth of the industry to a very small extent.

Table-1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
✓ Role Failure of Prom Agencies.	55	4.8727	.33635
✓ Inadequate Incentives	55	4.8727	.33635
✓ No Industry Friendly Policy	55	4.6545	.47990
✓ Poor Quality of Electricity	55	4.6364	.70353
✓ Corruption in Govt. Machinery	55	4.6182	.68017
✓ No Marketing Support of Govt.	55	4.5818	.59910
✓ Inadequate Power Supply	55	4.2727	1.09637
✓ Need to Carry Huge Inventory	55	4.0364	.42876
✓ High Cost of Cane Handles	55	3.9455	.22918
✓ High Rate of Interest	55	3.9455	.70496
✓ High Cost of Willow	55	3.6182	.62334
✓ High labour Cost	55	3.5636	.87694
✓ Complex Procedures in loan	55	3.4000	.89443
✓ Unavailability of Modern Technology	55	3.2364	.76893
✓ Unavailability of Technical Staff	55	3.1636	.71398
✓ Technological Backwardness	55	2.9818	.84964
✓ Unavailability of Willow	55	1.3091	.69048
✓ Valid N (listwise)	55		

Factor Analysis:

Factor analysis was done using principle component analysis with varimax rotation to reduce variables to few underlying factors and to delineate the variables which account for the most of the variance, the results of which have been detailed out in table 2. The principal component analysis reduced the 17 variables to 6 factors accounting for more than 70per cent of the variance. It retained those factors having Eigen value greater than 1 which is the default criterion for estimating the number of factors. The

Eigen value associated with each factor represents the percentage of variance explained by that factor. As we can see in table 2 under the name, “Total Variance Explained” factor 1 contributing to 20.64per cent of the variance, factor 2, 13.67per cent of the variance and so on.

Table-2: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	per cent of Variance	Cumulative per cent	Total	per cent of Variance	Cumulative per cent	Total	per cent of Variance	Cumulative per cent
1	3.509	20.640	20.640	3.509	20.640	20.640	3.068	18.050	18.050
2	2.325	13.679	34.319	2.325	13.679	34.319	2.212	13.009	31.059
3	1.966	11.562	45.881	1.966	11.562	45.881	2.108	12.398	43.457
4	1.681	9.889	55.771	1.681	9.889	55.771	1.805	10.617	54.074
5	1.314	7.730	63.500	1.314	7.730	63.500	1.449	8.523	62.597
6	1.229	7.228	70.729	1.229	7.228	70.729	1.382	8.132	70.729
7	.993	5.840	76.569						
8	.781	4.594	81.163						
9	.673	3.957	85.120						
10	.612	3.603	88.722						
11	.470	2.763	91.486						
12	.406	2.385	93.871						
13	.376	2.212	96.084						
14	.247	1.454	97.538						
15	.205	1.205	98.743						
16	.135	.795	99.538						
17	.078	.462	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotated component matrix was used for grouping the different variables based on a threshold correlation co-efficient of (>0.6).

The results of which have been presented in table 3. As it is shown in the table that factor 1 has a positive correlation (>0.6) with variables like inadequate power supply, inadequate incentives, poor quality of electricity, corruption in government machinery , and role failure of promotional agencies and

therefore can be named as, “Infrastructural and Administrative Constraints”. In other words, it means that factor 1 is explained by these variables. It is the topmost barrier accounting for 20.64per cent of the variance as it also contains the variables which are critical constraints as explained in the descriptive analysis. This validates our earlier results of descriptive analysis. Factor 2 explains variables, High rate of interest and complex procedures in loan sanctioning and disbursements and therefore can be named as “Financial Constraints”. Factor 3 explains variables Technological backwardness and unavailability of modern technology and therefore named as “Technological Constraints”. Factor 4 explains unavailability of willow and need to carry huge inventories and therefore can be named as “Raw material constraints”. Factor 5 explains Lack of marketing support from government and high cost of acquiring imported cane handles” Market constraints”. Factor 6 explains High cost of willow and high labour cost and are named as “Production constraints”. The rotated component matrix is shown in table 3:

Discussion:

Industrial development in effect is the role play of different role players. The role play of the govt. and its sponsored agencies is even more pervasive in the promotion of industries that too small scale industries. A close introspection of the role performance of the govt. and its sponsored agencies in the promotion and development of the industries in the region including the cricket bat industry has brought to light the role failure of their past (Butt,1997).

Indeed, the various promotional organizations suffer from various forms of ill health like more paper work, inordinate delays, procedural wrangles and wide spread corruption which have had the dampening effect on the industrial development and the spirit of entrepreneurship. Though the package number of incentives and subsidies offered to different industries in the region are the best in the country but what defeats their purpose is the failure by the concerned agencies to deliver the incentives with ease and in time. More importantly, the cricket bat industry needs customized package of incentives and the specific strategic action plan which the administration has failed to formulate. Even though there is an ban on exporting raw bats but the govt. has miserably failed to implement the ban. Exporting of willow clefts to Jalandhar and Meerut is reported to continue unabatedly which in turn has adversely affected the development of this industry on desired lines. The industry continues to be dominated by the entrepreneurs to whom the skill of bat manufacturing has transcended from their fathers and fore fathers. Majority of them have no formal education, training and lack entrepreneurial skills. As a result, these have failed to organize their units on modern lines and modern technology and knowhow. The failure

Table-3: Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
High Rate of Interest	.139	.804	-.222	-.076	.032	-.046
Technological Backwardness	.094	.011	.812	.085	-.156	.096
Unavailability of Technical Staff	.260	-.041	.436	.186	.584	-.275

Inadequate Power Supply	.808	.256	.197	.094	-.073	.298
Complex Procedures in Loan	-.110	.837	-.004	.011	.068	-.010
Unavailability of Willow	-.053	-.103	.122	.832	.006	-.001
No Industry Friendly policy	.150	.529	.531	-.140	-.096	.182
High Cost of Willow	.166	.330	.109	.171	-.104	.720
Need to Carry Huge Inventory	-.065	.019	-.096	.830	.043	-.007
Inadequate Incentives	.827	.010	.069	.229	-.021	.046
Poor Quality of Electricity	.837	.166	.025	-.285	-.051	.021
No Marketing support of Govt.	.068	.337	-.142	-.017	.683	.168
High Labour cost	.072	.336	.050	.142	-.181	.753
Corruption in Govt. Machinery	.674	-.251	.138	-.112	.271	-.052
Unavailability of Modern Technology	.069	-.254	.876	-.040	-.044	-.087
High Cost of Cane Handles	-.121	-.112	-.190	.017	.684	.015
Role Failure of Promotional Agencies	.618	-.063	-.027	-.389	-.067	-.216

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

by the industry to develop their own brands and to explore the export market reflects nothing but the sad state of affairs of this industry. The govt. and its sponsored agencies are well aware of these problems but has grossly failed to devise a strategic action plan to promote and develop a value chain of the industry in the region.

The game of cricket is the most popular sport in the Asian sub-continent particularly in India, thereby promising huge potential. In order to capitalize on this huge potential in today's competitive business landscape that spans the whole globe, small scale enterprises must possess the essential following features :Modern technology, modern products, modern marketing practices and professional management cadre with outward and forward looking approach (Butt, 2005). But the entrepreneurs involved in this industry lack appreciation of this fact and as such have failed to organize their own such

basis,infact theyconsider it as a skill passed from previous generation rather than true entrepreneurial pursuits. Lack of entrepreneurial character and competencies are also major contributing factors for failure to capitalize the potential that this industry promises. This in ultimate analysis is the failure of the govt. and its sponsored agencies to attract the enterprising youth towards this industry and take other needed steps to develop this industry.

Lack of uninterrupted power supply and the quality of power are the other critical barriers to growth in the industry. Industries in the whole region and more particularly the Kashmir division suffer significantly for want of adequate and proper quality of electric power. Although industrial estates are being given some priority in the supply of electric power, yet the problem of shortage is of electric power continues to be the one of the serious problems confronting industries in the region. The other fact is that the most of the cricket back manufacturing units are located outside the industrial estates, where there is no priority in the supply of power. In terms of per capita consumption of electricity in 2008, J&K ranks 18th in the country. The industries here are not only constrained by power shortages but also by poor quality of power, e.g., instead of providing 400-440 volts, the voltage generally ranges between 200-240volts only (Nazim,1999).

The requirement of carrying huge inventory of willow and other items is another major barrier as it requires to arrange huge working capital which at times becomes difficult to arrange and also costly. The main raw material used in the production of bats is the willow, besides cane handles rubber grip and stickers. The willow extracted from the willow trees has to go through a series of processes before bat is produced. The willow cleftshave to undergo a seasoning process in which the clefts are dried in the open air which takes 10-12 months to complete. As a result,there is a need for more working capital. Besides,cane for handles is imported from neighboring state of Punjab (Jalandhar) who themselves import from Indonesia or Andaman. Not able to import directly adds unnecessary expenditure to the material cost. Given the need of more working capital,the banks need to relax the norms for cash-credits and also the govt. to provide some interest subsidy on working capital.

The financial environment and the financial framework within which the firms interact with the financial institution and others have profound influence on firm's performance and growth.(Bukvic, 2003). Most of the studies conducted elsewhere have identified financial barriers as the most serious obstacles to growth(Alam, 2011)(Coad, 2012)(Quader& Abdullah, 2009)(Bukvic, 2003). High rate of interest (3.9) on bank loans and complex procedures (3.4) involved in sanctioning and disbursement of loans has been found to have inhibited the growth to a moderate extent. Unlike other parts of the country, these financial constraints as we see are not critical constraints for the reason that difficulty in getting loans from banks due to complex procedures compels them to turn to informal sources of finance, which is in no way good for the industry. It is also that since due to the smallness of majority cricket bat manufacturers, their bargaining power is weak when it comes to negotiating with the banks for loans and as such are not able to seek loans at lower reasonable rates of interest.

The barriers like high labour cost (3.5) and high cost of willow (3.6), though not critical barriers but certainly have some impact on the performance of industry. Among the variables which has received a very low score is unavailability of willow(1.3), is due to the fact that though the willow is locally

available in adequate quantity as of now, but is reported to be depleting fast as no major efforts have been made to undertake the drive of planting of more and more willow trees. This is evident from the rising cost of willow acquired by these firms. If steps are not taken to plant more and more trees, the survival of this potential industry will be under a great threat in future.

In today's highly competitive market, better quality at affordable price matters the most. To be able to deliver superior value, enterprises need to search for new processes/technology, new materials, new vendors, new shop floor designs, new channels to deliver products etc.(Thakkar, 2012). However, technological backwardness (2.9) and non-availability of modern technology (3.2) are not one of those critical constraints but the fact is that these are involved in contract manufacturing only. If these would have been involved in the value chain to the fullest of their own brands, these would have certainly felt a great need for the use of modern technologies. The fact is that the industry in the region is technologically backward to a great extent, as such the need for the promotional agencies is to devise a plan for the technological up-gradation of the industry which will enable it to produce variety of modern products of standard quality and consequently to explore markets fully both at the national and at the international levels.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

The present study has highlighted some core issues facing the cricket bat industry of Kashmir (India). It concludes that the government has not been serious enough towards solving the various problems being faced by the industry. This was highlighted from the fact that the infrastructural and administrative constraints were highlighted as the top most barriers to the development of this industry. These were named as critical constraints owing to their severity level. There is no industry friendly policy and corruption prevalent in the government machinery is hurting this industry as it leads to illegal export of clefts and willow logs outside Jammu and Kashmir. The industry needs immediate attention from the government and other promotional agencies, so that it is ensured that the bat manufacturers get assistance from them at every level of value addition like procurement of raw materials or sale of bat and also the ban of the sale of willow clefts is adhered strictly in practice. There is no subsidized finance available to this industry and as such banks are charging very high rates of interest on their loans. Other issues like technological, production and raw material issues need attention. This industry is an agro based industry, the willow is available at a very high cost suggesting that the demand is too high and supply too short. Cricket bat industry of Kashmir needs modernization on account of technology and marketing, as quality manufacturing and a descent marketing push will land these bats in the international market.

The Kashmiri willow is second best in the world after English willow. The English willow enjoys the quality of being lighter and having straighter grains/blades. The Authorities should take steps to plant willow on a mass level. This requires a coordinated effort of industry people, experts from social forestry and agricultural scientists, so that the availability of willow is ensured both quantitatively and qualitatively. The restarting up of industrial/Sports complex is need of the hour, so that these units can avail the facilities of seasoning plant for the immediate drying of clefts which otherwise takes almost year to dry up. The government has to come forward to help this industry to come out of the technological backwardness as they are in need of modern technology and equipments. There is a need

to start a technology up gradation scheme in which governments facilitates them to import the machinery from outside of India. One of the important recommendations of our study is that there should be direct import of cane handles and providing to these units at subsidized prices. The JK SICOP can step in to support the cricket bat manufacturers by importing directly the cane handles that would be having some positive impact on their profitability.

Limitations and Future Research:

Since the focus of the present study was only the cricket bat industry, the generalization of the findings to the overall SMEs should be made cautiously. The study was based on a small set of respondents, future research should include a larger sample. The present study highlighted the importance of government and allied agencies in promoting industrial development. Since the current sample of respondents involved only the industry people, that is, the entrepreneurs, future research should include respondents from both the industry and the promotional agencies. This will give a clearer picture of the barriers facing the industry and the remedies thereof.

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