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Study on the Current Quality of Available Cricket Bat Willows and Potential Improvement in the Quality of Kashmir Willow Cricket Bat

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Abstract

The quality of the goods manufactured primarily depends upon the raw materials used to manufacture product. The prime raw material of cricket bat is the willow Salix Alba which are used to manufacture these bats. Kashmir willow grown over the extended areas of Kashmir valley is principal element affecting the quality of cricket bat. Apart from willows other factors such as skills of labour, storage facilities, infrastructure and technology also have their influence on the quality. This research paper is written with the objective to understand the existing quality of the cricket bat and to check the measures which can upgrade the quality of cricket bat. For the following purpose data is collected from the 126 respondents who are engaged in production and distribution of Kashmir willow cricket bat by sending questionnaire. Secondary data is also collected from government publications, newsletters and periodicals. The maturity schedule of willows, sharing of latest technology in cluster, labour skills training program and frequent quality checks can help in upgrading quality of existing Kashmir willow cricket bat. Also, government can provide with various monetary and non-monetary aids for improving the quality.

Keywords – Willow, Cluster, Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organization, Technical- Knowhow, Prospect

Introduction:

Study of the Salix is quite engrossing with multiple species and subspecies associated with this category. Approximately 350 breeds and more cross-breeds make this tree widely available across the world. Salix Alba, the primary raw material for cricket bat being deciduous is normally spread over wet lands, high altitudes and polar zones. English (White) and Kashmir willow are the most popular willow for manufacturing cricket bat due to its distinguished qualities. The selection of the willow for cricket bat is made after observing how strong and how compressed the willows are.

The choice of the cricket bat is made after considering the willow used to manufacture the cricket bat. The cricket bats are differentiated on the grading system in the scale on the rankings of 1 to 4 in accordance with the willow cleft.

Standard 1: This type of blade is quite attractive to the eyes but cannot be considered as top performing blade. The edges are quite reddish in colour. Upright dots on the surface are quite visible. The loop on playing edge is acceptable but the playing surface needs to be untampered.

Standard 2: This type of blade is favorably nice with more reddishness on the edge. The reddishness doesn't have any effect on the performance of the cricket bat and just visual. There will be upright dots on the surface with few blots and ties. The uppermost 2% of the butterfly blades are the part of these categories.

Standard 3: This is an average cost-effective type of bat which gives acceptable level of the satisfaction for the price paid. It has 50% colour near the blade and few dots are visible which re not upright. The blots and ties evident with the noticeable fleck.

Standard 4: It has more than 50% colour near the blade and have butterfly taints. The numbers of dots are lower however butterfly taints are quite dark. With large number of taints and flecks, this type has more issues.

Distinction of Kashmir Willows and English Willows

Longevity: As the origin of the willow is from same species, there life expectancy is somewhat similar. However, English willows are comparatively fragile. Kashmir Willows if well maintained can serve for additional five years.

Shade: The ruling character of the both the willows is the shade tone. English willows shine more because of being wispy.

Dots: Dots or marks exist on both types of the bat. English willows marks are seen to the greater extent than Kashmir willows.

Heaviness: Kashmir willow bats are bulkier than English willow. The reason is Kashmir willow has more water content and is quite teeming. Fine quality Kashmir blades are quite healthy and don't have any effect on pace or knock.

Inclination: Kashmir willows are even than English willows, the reason why dots appear less on the English willows.

Selling Price: To buy English willow cricket bat one need to expend ₹3.000 to ₹.100, 000. To get Kashmir willow cricket bat the expenses are around ₹.1000 to ₹.3000

Selection of Right Bat: English than willows are costlier Kashmir willows of same features. They enjoy goodwill in the market. However, English willows are less heavy and supple. Normally coaches recommend Kashmir Willow in the start of the cricket career and English willows when the player becomes more professional.

Review of Literature

"Michael H Ramage and Darshil U Shah" (2021) in "Replacing willow with bamboo in cricket bats" of "Journal of Sports Engineering and Technology" found out bamboo can be replacement of the willows in the cricket.

"Yeates, C. F." (1970) in "An investigation of anatomical differences in the Willows used in the cricket bat industry." printed in "Journal of the Institute of Wood Science 25" found out about qualities of varied willows and which type can be utilized a raw material to make cricket bat.

"Ahmad, N., & Rafeeq, J. (2022).in "Cricket bat Industry in Kashmir Valley: Wood quality parameters of Salix alba var. caerulea and Populus deltoides." compared between two types of timber to know which one is better.

Sonawane, S & Malgaonkar, P. (2023) in "A study on reaction of a cricket bat manufacturers in Kashmir to government of India's proposal to secure GI Tag" wrote in "South India Journal of Social Science" the idea for applying for GI tag for Kashmir willow cricket bat.

Cox, H. A. (1935) in "The use of willows for cricket bats." published in "Empire Forestry Journal" life cycle of cricket bat willows.

Objective

1. To obtain knowledge about the current quality of the Kashmir willow cricket bats produced in Kashmir Valley.
2. To study the features of different qualities of Kashmir willow cricket bat.
3. To analyse the benefits and traits of the current quality of Kashmir willow cricket bat.
4. To find out the ways in which current quality of Kashmir willow cricket bat can be improved.
5. To suggest the cost effective way of improvisation in the quality of Kashmir Willow Cricket Bat.

Hypothesis

H1: There is a substantial chance of upgradation in the current quality of Kashmir Willow Cricket Bat.
H0: There is a no chance of betterment in the current quality of Kashmir Willow Cricket Bat.

H1- Improvement in quality will give competitive advantages to Kashmir Cricket Bat Manufacturers in the Globe.
H0- There will be no quality related significant competitive advantages for Kashmir Cricket Bat.

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H1- Quality refinement will help Kashmir Cricket Bat Manufacturers to utilize its full production capacity.
H0- There will be no major change in production capacity after quality refinement. The
Production capacity more or less remains same.

Research Methodology

Universe: It consists of people who are strongly related to Kashmir Willow Cricket Bat Manufacturing.

Sample Size: For the above-mentioned purpose Data will be collected from 56 people closely connected with the manufacturing and distribution of Kashmir Willow Cricket Bats by issuing questionnaire. Also interviews of 10 manufacturing Unit Owners will be conducted to gain through insight.

Techniques of data collection: The study is based on data collected from primary and secondary sources.

1. Primary Data:

a. Questionnaire Method
b. Interview Method
c. Observation Method

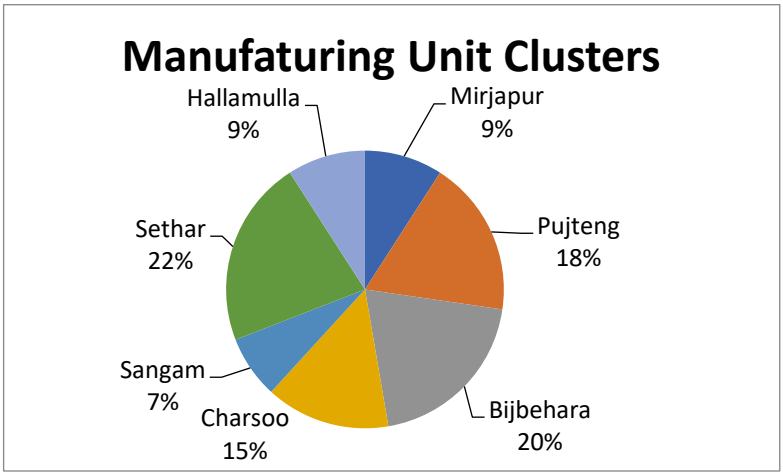
2. Secondary Data –

a. Websites
b. Journal, Magazines and Periodicals.
c. Research Publications

Data Analysis

Analysis of the Sample Size

Clusters in Study



For the above study research, employees from 7 major cricket bat clusters were considered. From the sample size of 56 employees 22% belong to Sethar, 20% from Bijbehra, 18% from Pujteng, 15% from Charsoo, 9% from Hallamulla and Mirjapur and only 7% from Sangam. All the labour force in the sample size is male. This shows almost negligible female employees and female entrepreneurs are part of this industry.

Age

From the sample size, 40% of belongs to the age group of 25 years to 40 years of the age, 27.30% of belongs to the age group of 18 years to 25 years of the age, 18.20% of belongs to the age group of 40 years to 50 years of the age and 14.50% in age group above 50 years.

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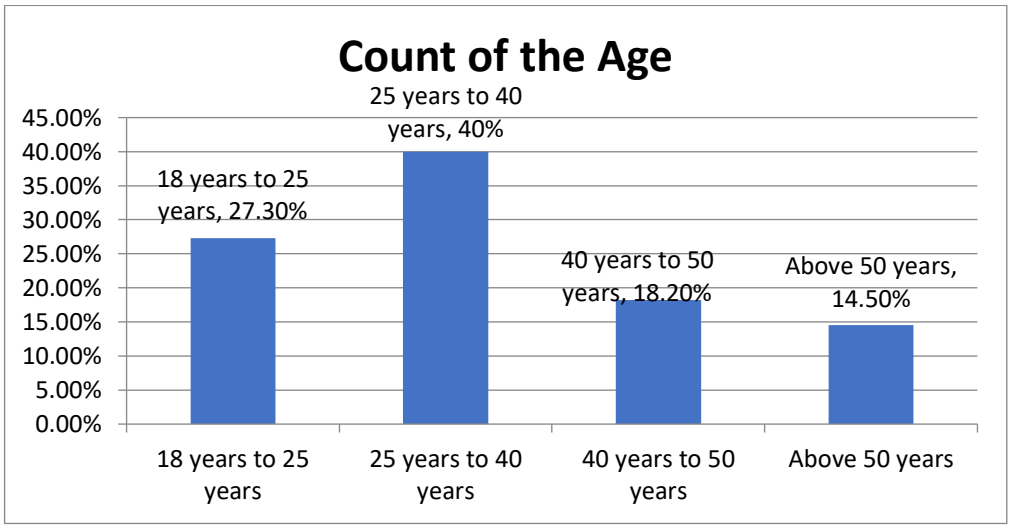
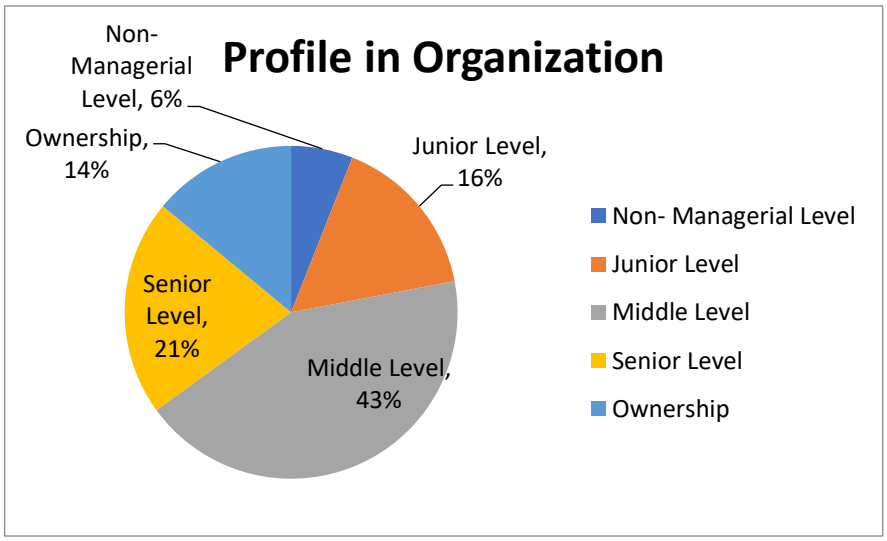
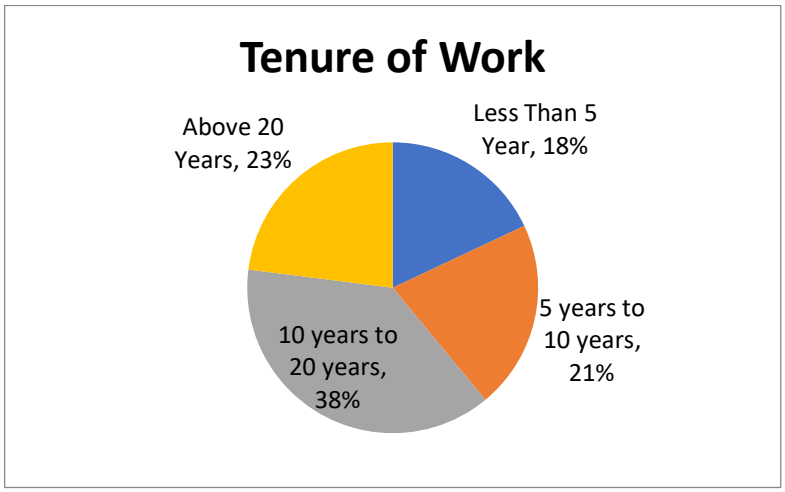


Profile in the organization



Majority of the sample units surveyed belonged to Middle Level (43%) followed by Senior Level (21%). 14% owners were also surveyed. The sample units in Junior Level (16%) and Non Managerial Level (6%) are comparatively less.

Tenure of Employment in Organization



The work experience of the sample units shows the more number of people are working in cricket bat manufacturing units for more than 10 years. 61% of total samples are working for more than 10 years out of which 23% are working for more than 20 years. 21% are working for 5 years to 10 years in cricket bat units.

Current Quality of Kashmir Willow Cricket Bat:

There is the little variation in the quality of Kashmir willow cricket bats and English willow cricket bat. English willow cricket bats produce provides with little more bounce than Kashmir willow cricket bats due to its softness. The Employees of Kashmir willow cricket bats however bet on the durability factor where Kashmir willow cricket bats are more durable than English willows.

Potential Improvement in Kashmir Willow Cricket Bats

The Employees employed in the bat manufacturing units of Kashmir Valley thinks that there exists a chance for improvising the current quality of bats by using certain techniques. There are few uncontrollable factors such as climate and quality of soil which cannot be changed beyond specific limit. However, changing the controllable factors can help to improve the quality. The major factor having drastic effect on the willow's texture is growth. It takes 15-20 year for Kashmir Willow for its full fledge growth. But because of rising demand and shortage in supply the willows are brought down after 10-12 years of the growth compromising its quality. As the demand for Kashmir Willow Cricket Bats is rising day by day, units produced in the single day or the capacity has to be extended to meet the rising demand without compromising on the perfection. This extension is not possible without pumping in the additional capital and purchasing new technologies. It is always expensive for a single unit to make a large capital investment, so the bat manufacturers in Kashmir valley operates in clusters sharing common space, technologies and technical knowhow so that multiple units as a part of single cluster can share cost and manufacture a quality product.

Hindrances affecting quality of Kashmir willow cricket bats

The power shortage is problem faced by half of Kashmir Valley. The supremacy of units produced gets affected by changes in the frequency and obtrusion of electricity. Also the curfew and closure of bat manufacturing units for several days have impact on the quality of cricket bats made in those units.

Government and Forest Department Initiatives

JKTPO is a government initiative to promote products manufactured in Jammu and Kashmir on international level. There are various programs conducted by JKTPO from training, exhibitions, sellers meet and buyers meet. These initiatives are carried out with the intention of the quality improvement of domestic products to compete at international level. Kashmir bat manufacturing units gets regular inputs on quality of bats manufactured in the valley and how they can improvise. Also, training sessions were held by JKTPO to train the work force in handling new technologies to manufacture quality outputs. Also, Jammu and Kashmir Forest Departments are distributing seeds to plan willows in the area of Ganderbal, Pulwama and Anantnag. Keeping constant check on the quality of the existing willows their growth and illegal export of the willows to the other states is its main function. The forest department has also put restrictions on cutting off the willows to protect it from becoming extent and simultaneously growing more willows so the livelihood depending on the willows won’t get affected due to its shortage.

Conclusion

It depends upon the user and preference factor for considering the type of cricket bat. Normally hobby playing cricketers opt for Kashmir willow cricket bat due to low cost and high durability. When it comes to professional level even Indian professional players prefer English willow due to its softness and more bounce. The quality of cricket bat is highly dependent on the factor such as soil quality, moisture content, climatic conditions, growth period and harvesting procedure. By allowing proper time to dwell, the quality of wood can be substantially enhanced. Also, proper power back up and infrastructure facilities can help to avoid normal and abnormal wastage and can manufacture quality bats. The cricket bat clusters in Jammu and Kashmir are together working on new research and technology projects for quality upgradation of Kashmir willow cricket bats.

Government of India is actively participating to work on the quality and are organising training workshop to train working force in delivering better quality products. Also promotional events are organised to promote sales of the manufactured product. The forest department of Jammu and Kashmir is monitoring the growth of willows and quality of willows and are continuously striving for the quality improvement.

Suggestions

1. The forest department must start grading the qualities of the willows which will indirectly motivate cultivators and manufacturers to use best quality willow for their product.
2. The more capital investment can be bought in by market funding which will help manufacturers to use latest technologies.
3. The power and infrastructure projects in Jammu and Kashmir need to speed up to provide better amenities and industrial conditions to manufacture world class quality cricket bats.
4. The clusters can exploit more opportunities in market by pooling their resources together and complementing each other in manufacture of cricket bats.
5. The bat manufacturing units or cluster must establish a protocol or procedure to perform timely quality checks of their product.

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