HANDLOOM INDUSTRY ON THE WAY OF EXTINCTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OVER THE PRE- DOMINANT FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

Handloom industry in Bangladesh is having glorious past, questionable present and blurry future due to a lot of internal and external factors that are acting behind the scene. In this paper, we have identified those predominant factors that are moving the wheels of this industry slowly. And among them, shortage of working capital, high cost of raw material procurement, lack of organizing capability, inadequate technology and efficiency, and lack of policy support are major forces which are bitterly hit the handloom industry.

Key words: Handloom Industry, Working Capital, Technology, Weavers.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Handloom industry is the ancient, the biggest and the most important cottage industry of Bangladesh. This industry has lots of future prospects as well as glorious past. This sector is responsible for a very high percentage of the nation's economy, as Handloom industry is the biggest handicraft industry in our country (Ahmed, 2001). This sector contributes 24% in the total clothes production of Bangladesh. (Chowdhury, 1989). This sector provides employment to more than 18 million people. (Bakht, 1998) This sector has a great potentiality to meet substantial requirements of fabrics in the export oriented garment industry. But this prospective industry now faces threat of extinction because of various tribulations and barriers which made us to develop this study over the handloom industry of Bangladesh.

Our broad objective is to find out the barriers and problems of the Handloom industry of Bangladesh, to provide a solution to these problems and to identify the potentiality of this sector.

Specific Objectives:

- To identify the problems lie in the production process.
- To identify the problems associated with working capital.
- To identify the tribulations in distribution of handloom products.
- To identify the problems associated with level skill.
- To identify the problems associated with the promotional campaign.
- To identify the problems associated with government support.
- To identify the reasons behind lack of interest of private sector to enter in this industry.
- To identify the problems associated with the organizing capability of weavers.
- To identify the most demanding product of this industry.
- To identify the level of demand of these products in international market.
- To identify the immediate competitors of this sector.
- To identify the potential market.

II. METHODOLOGY

Our target population is the people engaged directly and indirectly in the Handloom Industry of Bangladesh. We have segregated our entire population into 5 (five) stratum: Weavers, Handloom Board, Exporter, Retailer & Wholesaler and Private organizations, and these are sample units from which sample elements have been collected. The study has been conducted over 100 samples and as a method 'quota sampling' has been used for selecting sample elements. Here we have divided our entire population into 5 (five) stratum/groups and samples picked from these stratum/groups on judgmental and/or snowball and/or convenient basis. Our data collection method was cross-sectional, and our data collection technique was personal interview. For data analysis, initially we have used factor analysis for identifying predominant factors and then we have tested each factor by parametric procedures to reach decisions.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The handloom industry in Bangladesh is having a glorious past, questionable present and confusing future. The art of weaving is perhaps as old as human civilization. Bangladesh can proudly claim to have many branches of this ancient art, of which the best known and most popular is the specialty Jamdani, which is one of the varieties of the famous Dhaka Muslin or Mul-mul (Zohir, 1996). For over ten centuries, the Dhaka area has been renowned for this fine fabric. So fine was its texture and quality that it was said to be woven with the "thread of the winds" and the Greek and the Roman texts mention the "Gangetic muslins" as one of the most coveted luxury items. Woven from superfine cotton or silk yarn, Jamdani fabric is embroidered or inlaid on the loom with silk, gold and silver threads (Mandal, 1989). Over the years, the weavers simplified the designs making them more stylized and geometric. Handloom products have shown decisive upward trend in the export market since 1972 and Bangladeshi handloom products with their distinctive design and superior quality have created a niche for themselves in overseas markets (Sobhan, 1989). An international expert's study reveals that the technical skill of the weavers of Bangladesh is second to none in the handloom-producing world. So if we can build a platform for them, it is possible to construct an ambitious future for this industry.

The Handloom industry is still a very important part of the textile industry of Bangladesh, is responsible for a very high percentage of the nation's economy. As Handloom industry is the biggest handicraft industry in our country, it is the second largest source of rural employment after agriculture (Ahmed, 1999). Though employment opportunity in this sector has been squeezed in the last 15 years, this sector is still offering employment to nearly 0.9 million weavers in rural area (ADB, 2002). Moreover, in general near about 18 million people are involved in this industry. Though there is a downward trend, this industry still has a significant amount of share in our total cloth production. According to the data available in June 2004, this sector contributes 24% in the total clothes production of Bangladesh. (Handloom Board, 2004) The product range of handloom is simply amazing and includes Muslin Jamdani Sharees, Bedcovers, Bed sheets, Tapestry, Upholstery, Place mats, Rugs or Blankets, Satranji, Crochet, Muslin, Tribal textiles, Silk fabrics, Sofa covers, Block Prints, Table cloth and Napkins, Towels, Dusters, Kitchen towels, Gents, Ladies and Baby Wear and Shirts, Punjabis, and other household linen in printed, plain or embroidered Khadi (Basu,2001). This sector has a great potentiality to meet substantial requirements of fabrics in the export oriented garments industry. One of the major problems in this case that is noteworthy is inadequate distribution channel which is failing to match between demand and supply. (News Today: Feb 2005; 10)

But we have come to know that, this ancient and most important cottage industry of Bangladesh is now on the way of extinction because of various problems and barriers adjacent to this industry. Weavers in our country don't get quality raw materials at right time and at right price (Ahmed, 1999). Besides, Weavers are suffering from inadequate contemporary technology and scarcity of working capital which are mandatory to maintain the smooth flow of production (ADB, 2002). Although skills of our workers are up to the expectation level, they are lagging behind in capturing the modern technology due to lack of infrastructural support from the government (Sobhan, 1989). The major competitors of handloom products are 1) Cloths come through

legal and illegal ways and 2) Power loom produced cloths (Ahmed, 1999). In our next discussion, we are going to illustrate a comprehensive scenario of this industry of last 15 years (from 1989 to 2004) to reveal the past and present situation of this industry.

Table: Domestic cloths production, 1989 to 2004

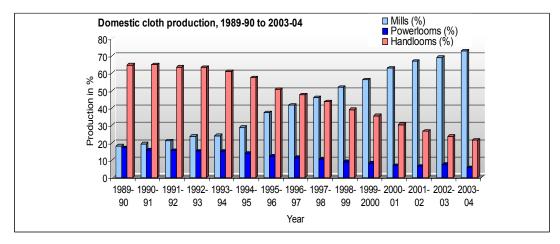
Year	Mil	lls	Power	looms	Handlooms		Total	
	Qnt.	Percent	Qnt.	Percent	Qnt.	Percent	Qnt.	Percent
1989-90	231.8	18.1	220.0	17.2	826.8	64.7	1278.6	100.0
1990-91	238.6	19.3	195.0	15.8	808.1	64.9	1234.7	100.0
1991-92	258.3	21.1	190.0	15.5	775.5	63.4	1223.8	100.0
1992-93	290.0	23.6	185.0	15.1	752.2	63.3	1227.2	100.0
1993-94	288.0	24.0	180.0	15.0	729.6	61.0	1197.6	100.0
1994-95	254.2	28.8	170.0	13.8	707.0	57.4	1231.2	100.0
1995-96	502.4	37.2	165.0	12.2	684.4	50.6	1351.8	100.0
1996-97	584.1	41.5	161.0	11.4	663.9	47.6	1409.0	100.0
1997-98	677.5	45.9	155.0	10.5	642.7	43.6	1475.2	100.0
1998-99	827.9	51.9	145.0	9.1	623.4	39.0	1596.3	100.0
1999-00	954.6	56.2	141.0	8.3	604.1	35.5	1699.7	100.0
2000-01	1207.4	62.8	130.0	6.8	584.8	30.4	1922.2	100.0
2001-02	1425.7	66.8	142.0	6.6	567.3	26.6	2135.0	100.0
2002-03	1590.0	69.0	170.0	7.4	543.2	23.6	2302.2	100.0
2003-04	2000.0	72.7	160.0	5.8	590.0	21.5	2750.0	100.0

Source: ('The Daily News Today', February 08, 2005, Page- 10)

Since 1989-90 fiscal year to until 2003-04 fiscal year, the share of the cloth production in the handloom sector dropped sharply while the share

of cloth production in mills jumped up tremendously.

Figure-1 Domestic Cloth Production

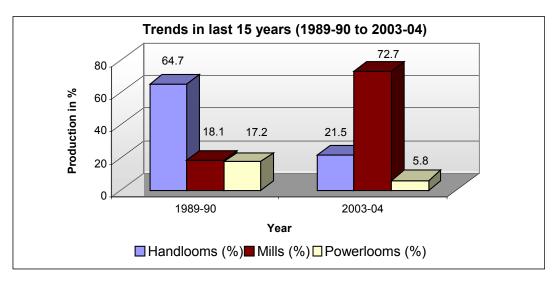


Source: ('The Daily News Today', February 08, 2005, Page- 10)

Figure 1, clearly shows the upward trend of the share of cloth production in mills and the downward trend of the share of cloth production

in the handloom sector during the last 15 years from 1989-90 to 2003-04. (News Today: Feb 2005; 10)

Figure-2 Trends in Last 15 years

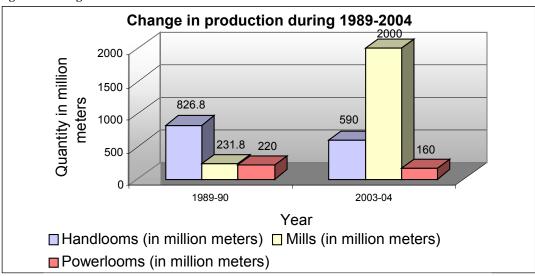


Source: ('The Daily News Today', February 08, 2005, Page- 10) (Appendix-2)

From the above Figure, we can see, in 1989-90 fiscal year the textiles mills had a share of about 18 percent cloth production as against handloom sector's about 65 percent and power-loom sector's 17 percent. However, the share of cloth

production in textile mills jumped to over 72 percent in 2003-04 fiscal year while the share of handloom and power-loom sectors slide to 21 percent and 5.8 percent respectively. (News Today: Feb 2005; 10)

Figure-3 Change in Production



Source: ('The Daily News Today', February 08, 2005, Page- 10)

From the figure- 3, we can see that the handloom production has been decreasing significantly from 826.8 million meters to 590.0 million meters

during the last 15 years. On the other hand, the mill production registered a subsequent increase in cloth production during the last 15 years. The total

cloth production in 1989-90 was 231.8 million meters that shot up to 2000 million meters in 2003-04. (News Today: Feb 2005; 10)

Now we might have a clear idea from this trend analysis, about how much the handloom industry suffers from the threat of extinction. Various news articles, journals, report of handloom board have identified a number of key problems and barriers, which play a key role to demolish this important sector. Shortage of working capital, high cost of raw material procurement, lack of organizing capability, inadequate technology and efficiency, smuggling of Indian cloths and lack of policy support hit the handloom industry (Chowdhury, 1989).

So we might predict how the most ancient and most important cottage industry of Bangladesh has been suffering from various diseases. But no full fledged research work has been done on this sector yet to find out the barriers and problems of this sector in depth, to provide a solution to these problems and to identify the future potentiality of this sector. Though from our previous discussion, we can assume the dire need of a research work on this sector to save this sector from extinction. Thus, we are interested to continue our research project on the handloom industry of Bangladesh.

IV. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

H1: The declining productivity of handloom industry is caused by simultaneous activation of internal and external factors.

- H 1.1: weavers don't get quality raw materials
- H 1.2: weavers don't get quality raw materials at right time
- H 1.3: weavers don't get quality raw materials at right price
- H 1.4: Weavers are suffering from inadequate contemporary technology.
- H 1.5: Government supports are not adequate.
- H 1.6: Weavers are facing scarcity of working capital
- H 1.7: Promotion programs are not effective
- H 1.8: The industry faces competition from mill and power loom sector
- H 1.9: Weavers face lack of skills
- H 1.10: High level of skills are needed to produce quality products
- H 1.11: Weavers' association is not efficient
- H 1.12: Production is not enough to meet the demand.

Empirical findings:

Here, we have used Factor Analysis to analyze hypotheses ranging from 1.1 to 1.12 under H1.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sam Adequacy.	bling	.590
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square df	304.678
	Sig.	91 .000

From the above table it is clear that our factor analysis is appropriate as KMO test result is greater than .50 and it is valid as Bartlett's test

indicates .000 probability (.000) which is less than the significance level (.05).

Total Variance Explained

Compo- nent	Initial Eigen values		Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings			
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.796	19.970	19.970	2.796	19.970	19.970	2.311	16.510	16.510
2	1.994	14.242	34.211	1.994	14.242	34.211	1.926	13.756	30.266
3	1.540	10.997	45.209	1.540	10.997	45.209	1.668	11.916	42.181
4	1.241	8.865	54.073	1.241	8.865	54.073	1.381	9.864	52.045
5	1.133	8.092	62.165	1.133	8.092	62.165	1.201	8.578	60.623
6	1.058	7.556	69.721	1.058	7.556	69.721	1.137	8.124	68.747
7	0.856	6.114	75.835	0.856	6.114	75.835	0.992	7.087	75.835

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

From the above table, 7 factors have been extracted as cumulative frequency is greater than

70% that indicates the adequacy of the analysis through the derived factors.

Component Matrix a

				Component			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Weavers dont get quality raw materials	.686	.255	340	.131	064	076	079
Weavers dont get raw materials in time	.630	.347	188	307	2.E-02	169	3.E-02
Weavers dont get raw materials at right price	.619	.434	251	122	2.E-02	235	.121
Suffers from inadequate contemporary technology	.589	.156	.175	246	6.E-02	.172	345
Government supports are not sufficient	316	.806	.117	.309	110	8.E-02	8.E-02
Government supports are not effective	392	.739	6.E-02	.291	200	9.E-02	1.E-02
Weaver's faces scarcity of working capital	208	.488	7.E-02	289	.410	333	.104
Promotions are not effective	.321	.189	.704	.279	.140	069	147
The Industry faces competition from mill & powerloom sector	.321	158	.688	.117	190	258	.157
Weaver's have lack of skill	.370	021	401	.511	228	.263	158
Distribution channel is not efficient	.440	133	.115	.422	.586	9.E-02	175
High level of skill is needed to produce handloom products	.355	.061	.341	349	574	.253	066
Weaver's Association is not efficient	023	.245	.122	323	.350	.753	.104
Production is not sufficient to meet demand	.489	138	2.E-02	.183	3.E-02	.184	.762

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

7 factors have been extracted from the component matrix on the basis of factor loadings to encounter our first hypothesis (H1) that is, the declining productivity of handloom industry is caused by simultaneous activation of internal and external forces.

Extracted Factors under H1:

- Weavers don't get quality raw materials at right time and right price
- Government supports to Handloom Industry are not sufficient and effective.
- Promotion of handloom products is not effective.
- Weavers have skill deficiency.
- High level of skill is needed to produce handloom products.
- Weavers Association is not efficient.
- Production of handloom products is not sufficient to meet demand

V. Analysis of Factors under H1 and other core hypotheses through T-Test

Factor-1: Weavers do not get quality raw materials at right time and right price

The hypothesis is accepted, as probability (.000) is less than the significance level (.05). So we can conclude that weavers do not get quality raw materials at right time and right price. (Seetable:1)

Factor-2: Government supports to Handloom Industry are not sufficient and effective

The hypothesis is accepted, as probability (.000) is less than significance level (.05). So, we can conclude that Government supports to Handloom Industry are not sufficient and effective (See table: 2).

a. 7 components extracted.

Factor-3: Promotion of handloom products is not adequate

The hypothesis is accepted, as probability (.000) is less than significance level (.05) So we can conclude that Promotion of handloom products is not effective. (See-table: 3)

Factor-4: Weavers have skill deficiency

The hypothesis is accepted, as probability (.000) is less than significance level (.05). So, we can conclude that weavers have skill deficiency. (Seetable: 4)

Factor-5: High level of skill is needed to produce handloom products

The hypothesis is accepted, as probability (.000) is

less than significance level (.05). So, we can conclude that high level of skill is needed to produce handloom products (See-table: 5)

Factor-6: Weavers' Association is not efficient

The hypothesis is accepted, as probability (.000) is less than significance level (.05) . So, we can conclude that weavers' association is not efficient (See-table: 6)

Factor-7: Production of handloom products is not sufficient to meet demand

The hypothesis is not accepted, as probability (.423) is greater than the significance level (.05). So we can not conclude that Production of handloom products is not sufficient to meet demand. (See-table: 7)

Factors	Probability	Significance level
Weavers don't get raw materials in time	.000	.05
Govt. supports are not sufficient	.000	.05
Promotion s are not effective	.000	.05
Weaver's have lack of skill	.000	.05
High level of skill is needed to produce handloom products	.000	.05
Weaver's Association is not efficient	.000	.05
Production is not sufficient not meet demand	.423	.05

We have extracted seven factors from the factor analysis; moreover, with these factors, there are also some significant factors that are also important to find out the reasons for which the Handloom industry of Bangladesh is now on the way of extinction. So, in the following, we will analyze these factors.

- H2: Weavers are suffering from inadequate contemporary technology.
- H3: Weavers face scarcity of working capital.
- H4: Existing distribution channel of handloom products is not efficient.
- H5: Handloom industry faces intense competition from mill and power loom sector.

Hypotheses	Probability	Significance level
H2: Weavers are suffering from inadequate	.000	.05
contemporary technology.		
H3: Weavers face scarcity of working capital.	.000	.05
H4: Existing distribution channel of handloom	.000	.05
products is not efficient.		
H5: Handloom industry faces intense	.000	.05
competition from mill and power loom sector		

Testing of other core hypotheses:

H2: Weavers are suffering from inadequate contemporary technology.

The hypothesis is accepted, as probability (.000) is less than significance level (.05). So, we can

conclude that weavers are suffering from inadequate contemporary technology. (See table: 10)

H3: Weavers face scarcity of working capital

The hypothesis is accepted, as probability (.000) is less than significance level (.05). So, we can

conclude that weavers face scarcity of working capital..(See-table:8)

H4: Existing distribution channel of handloom products is not sufficient.

The hypothesis is accepted, as probability (.000) is less than significance level (.05). So, we can conclude that existing distribution channel of handloom products is not sufficient. (See-table:9)

H5: Handloom industry faces intense competition from mill and power loom sector.

The hypothesis is accepted, as probability (.000) is less than significance level (.05). So, we can conclude that handloom industry faces intense competition from mill and power loom sector. (See-table: 11)

VI. MAJOR FINDINGS

- Weavers do not get quality raw materials at right time and right price.
- Government supports to Handloom Industry are not sufficient and effective.
- Promotion of handloom products is not effective.
- Weavers don't have skill deficiency.
- High level of skill is required to produce handloom products.
- Weavers Association is not efficient.
- Production of handloom products is sufficient to meet demand.
- Weavers are suffering from inadequate contemporary technology.
- Weavers face scarcity of working capital.
- Existing distribution channel of handloom products is not efficient.
- Handloom industry faces intense competition from mill and powe

VII. RECOMMENDATION

After analyzing our all-major and associated findings, we recommend the following steps, which we believe, will provide a direction for further improvement of this sector.

 We have found that weavers don't get raw materials at right time and at right price. In this case, our recommendation is that government should have a monitoring cell under Handloom Board of Bangladesh to monitor activities of those wholesalers and retailers who are engaged in selling raw materials for handloom products to prevent any unfair advantage. In addition, all tax and levies should be waived on all kinds of raw materials which will ensure the right price.

- We have found that weavers suffer from inadequate contemporary technology. So, government should take necessary steps to make available these technologies in local market and should waive all taxes on these technologies so that weavers can afford these technologies.
- Another major finding is- weavers suffer from scarcity of working capital. Most of the time, weavers acquire their working capital from their own money and sometimes they acquire capital from various institutions like govt. banks, private banks and some other financial institutions. Both government and private sectors should work to solve this problem of working capital.
- We have found that high level of skill is needed to produce handloom products, but there is no development program for weavers. So various specialized trainings program should be launched for weavers that will keep them updated. Both private and public sectors can work for this.
- We have found that government supports to this industry are not sufficient and effective. Government should be more responsible and should provide more policy support to save this ancient industry. Our neighboring county, India, provides approximately 20% incentives to their handloom industry and these create problems like lots of handloom products enter in our market through illegal ways as these products are cheaper than our local products. To eliminate this problem, government can provide incentives to those weavers who produce those handloom products which have high demand in national and international market, such as Sharee, Lungi, Bed sheet etc

- We have found that existing distribution channel of the handloom products is not adequate and effective. This problem can be eliminated if we can catch the attention of private organizations and NGOs to participate in the growth of this industry.
- We have found that existing promotional campaign is not adequate. So intensive promotional programs like trade fairs, public relations, sales promotions and advertising should be undertaken.
- We have found that handloom industry faces intense competition from mill and power loom sector. So government can create a quota system for handloom industry, under which, some special products such as Sharee, Lungi, Bed sheet etc which have high demand in national and international markets, can exclusively be produced by handloom.

VII. CONCLUSION

All recommendations are to boost up the sales and market share of handloom industry in Bangladesh. This industry is facing a lot of problems that have been highlighted through our discussion and made necessary recommendations to bring the handloom industry at the blooming stage of development. We should extend our helping hand to the government and NGOs to pave the way of development for our poor weavers.

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APPENDICES

Table: 1

One-Sample Test

		Test Value = 3						
			Sig.	Mean	95% Cor Interval Differ	of the		
	t	df	(2-tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper		
Weavers dont get raw materials in time	-6.224	99	.000	9000	-1.1869	6131		

Table: 2

One-Sample Test

		Test Value = 3						
			Sig.	Mean	95% Conf Interval Differe	of the		
	t	df	(2-tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper		
Government supports are not sufficient	-9.811	99	.000	-1.0900	-1.3104	8696		

Table: 3

One-Sample Test

		Test Value = 3						
			Sig.	Mean	95% Co Interva Differ	l of the		
	t	df	(2-tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper		
Promotions are not effective	-15.626	99	.000	-1.5300	-1.7243	-1.3357		

Table: 4

One-Sample

		Test Value =						
		95%						
					Interva	ıl of		
					Diffe	renc		
	t	df	(2-	Difference	Lower	Upper		
Weaver's have of skill	494	99	.622	-7.E-	3510	.2110		

Table:5

One-Sample Test

		Test Value = 3							
			Sig. Mean		95% Confide Interval of t Difference	he			
	t	df	(2-tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper			
High level of skill is needed to produce handloom products	-10.780	99	.000	-1.2600	-1.4919	-1.0281			

Table: 6

One-Sample Test

		Test Value = 3							
			Sig.	Mean	95% Confi Interval o Differe	of the			
	t	df	(2-tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper			
Weaver's Association is not efficient	-6.259	99	.000	8300	-1.0931	5669			

Table: 7

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3					
			Sig.	Mean	Interva	nfidence al of the rence
	t	df	(2-tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper
Production is not sufficient to meet demand	804	99	.423	1200	4162	.1762

Table:8

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3					
			Sia	Mean	95% Col Interva Differ	l of the
	t	df	(2-tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper
Weaver's faces scarcity of working capital	-13.947	99	.000	-1.3500	-1.5421	-1.1579

Table: 9
One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Mean		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper
Distribution channel is not efficient	-9.381	99	.000	-1.2000	-1.4538	9462

Table: 10

One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3					
			Sig.	Mean	95% Con Interval Differe	of the
	t	df	(2-tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper
Suffers from inadequate contemporary technology	-6.969	99	.000	9600	-1.2333	6867

Table: 11 One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3					
			Sig.	Mean Difference	95% Conf Interval Differe	of the
	t	df	(2-tailed)		Lower	Upper
The Industry faces competition from mill & powerloom sector	-13.709	99	.000	-1.4500	-1.6599	-1.2401