



www.aarong.com

Aarong, an iconic Bangladeshi brand and the country's largest retail chain, offers customers over 100 fashion and lifestyle product lines, including designer clothing, household items and jewellery, all of which bear the promise of exceptional quality and value. The rich tradition of Bangladeshi craft and folk art returned to prominence through Aarong, which, for the last 32 years, has been creatively blending traditional and ethnic craft-skills with contemporary styles and trends. Aarong works with over 1,600 artisan groups, ensuring the livelihood of over 65,000 artisans and directly benefiting 320,000 people across Bangladesh.

Market

A pioneer in the country's craft industry, Aarong's unique product designs have brought consumer attention back to crafts and materials indigenous to Bangladesh, as its designers blend the traditional with the contemporary in a way that continues to win consumer appeal. Its success revolutionized trends and virtually created the market that has now been taken up by countless other boutiques and brands. Aarong caters to this growing urban consumer base through outlets in every major city in the country.

Their discerning style and high-quality craftsmanship make every Aarong product unique and demand for them has been consistently rising due to Aarong's focus on innovation, quality, value-based pricing and superior in-store customer service. All these elements, backed by a robust distribution network and strong supply chain, have made Aarong a true household brand in Bangladesh.

Just as Bangladeshis living abroad look to Aarong for products that connect them to their heritage, the Aarong experience is an essential part of any trip to Bangladesh by foreign visitors - a phenomenon chronicled in the "Lonely Planet" guide to Bangladesh. Aarong products are not only the gift items of choice for every occasion for local

and expatriate Bangladeshis but also the quintessential cultural mementos for these visitors.

Aarong's growing presence outside Bangladesh - through fair-trade networks in Europe as well as a retail franchise in London - continues to broaden the market for Bangladeshi craft globally.

Achievements

From its inception as a small initiative protecting livelihoods in one rural community, Aarong has transformed into Bangladesh's biggest retail chain, with 10 stores spread across the major metropolitan cities - Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Khulna.

While Aarong's trendsetting designs and attention to quality continues to win the loyalty of millions of satisfied customers each year - it has experienced unprecedented sales growth, averaging 20% per year over the last eight years - its greatest achievement has been the transformation in the lives of the hundreds of thousands of poor artisans and their families it supports. In addition, as the most successful social enterprise of development organisation BRAC, one of the world's largest development organisations, Aarong has contributed over one billion Taka to BRAC's various poverty alleviation initiatives since 1984.

industry - sales as a career choice for women was popularized by the female Aarong store sales associates.

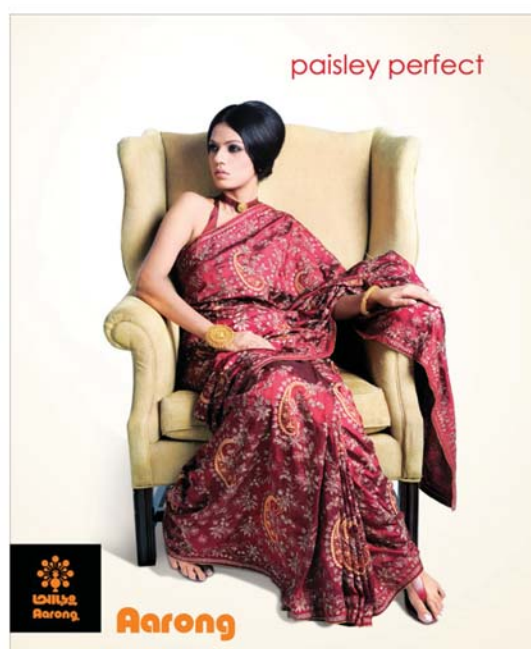
Aarong's contribution to Bangladeshi craft heritage goes beyond its retail functions. It is a proactive protector and promoter of traditional craft and designs, housing an extensive design and craft library that preserves age old patterns and motifs. It single-handedly revived the traditional art of Nakshi Kantha by establishing it as a sustainable livelihood for rural women and also brought back many traditional Jamdani patterns.

Aarong's consumption sustains numerous artisan communities in Bangladesh - 75% of cotton produced in Madhabdi, the core cotton production area, and over 70% of silk produced in Maldaha, is consumed by Aarong.

In 2009, Aarong received the 'Best Brand Award' in the boutique category and 'Most Effective Outdoor Communication Award' from Brand Forum, one of the country's leading authorities on branding and communication. A number of Aarong products have also received the UNESCO Seal of Excellence for Handicrafts.

Product

Aarong sells everything from clay pots to diamonds! A great deal of research goes into creating even the simplest Aarong product.



It was Aarong that institutionalised large-scale female participation in the Bangladeshi retail





Innovation and creativity are at the heart of its product design - creating uniquely contemporary looks with traditional materials and designs - while quality and attention to detail underline every aspect of production. By moulding traditional craft into non-traditional uses, Aarong continues to create trends in every product category.

Through its fusion fashion brand, Taaga, Aarong created a distinct category of clothing for urban youth. Developing unconventional uses for crafts such as Nakshi Kantha and the like has aided in the revival of these crafts. Aarong continues to set trends with jewellery, first popularising the use of silver jewellery. The use of candles as home decoration was also first popularised by Aarong in Bangladesh and it now leads the market in this segment. Aarong's research developed a new technique for producing Endi fabric using the wastage cocoons of Mulberry silk, known as Endi.

Aarong works with a vast and diverse range of materials from silk and cotton fabric to terracotta, bamboo, jute, brass and leather; and consumers have come to expect new and unexpected uses of these traditional materials every time they enter an Aarong store.

Recent developments

One of the most exciting recent developments at Aarong is the creation of its flagship outlet in Uttara, Dhaka. This 36,000 square feet store will be the largest retail store in Bangladesh and promises customers an entirely new shopping experience. Among the many new products developed at Aarong, one of the most distinct is its diamond

jewellery. The stones, sourced from Belgium, are polished and set entirely in Bangladesh by women artisans.

Promotion

As it is in other avenues, Aarong is a trendsetter in promotional activities as well. Having been one of the first Bangladeshi brands to use professional models and create sophisticated ad campaigns, Aarong continues to set the style and quality standard for promotion by achieving greater levels of class and elegance with each campaign. Aarong also selects its promotional mediums carefully to ensure accurate reflection of the brand's values. Aarong's promotional events - such as its carefully orchestrated fashion shows, unique and detailed exhibitions and highly popular sales events - have become a significant part of popular culture in urban Bangladesh. Aarong also focuses on in-store promotional activities such as its 'My Aarong Rewards' programme to enhance customer experience.

Brand value

Aarong stands for a unique mix of design, quality and convenience, of the traditional and the contemporary. Aarong is one-of-a-kind - globally positioned as a highly successful Bangladeshi craft-

based retail chain and brand of pride. It also carries the distinction of being BRAC's most successful social enterprise. Aarong's responsibility is therefore two-fold - delivering unique products with the highest level of quality and service to its customers and the strongest level of support and protection of artisans and their craft. To its consumers, Aarong is a household name - a one-stop shop and a trusted brand that inspires pride, promises quality and sophistication, and helps to keep cultural roots alive in everyday life. For the artisans, Aarong represents the endurance of both their age-old art as well as their livelihoods. For consumers and artisans alike, Aarong has become a part of the cultural fabric of their lives.

Things you didn't know

- In Bengali, 'Aarong' means 'village fair' and 'Taaga' means 'thread'
- Half of the profit from every purchase you make at Aarong goes towards supporting schools, health services and specific interventions targeted to the ultra poor segment by BRAC.
- 3 people enter an Aarong outlet every second
- The amount of fabric consumed by Aarong in a year can wrap around Bangladesh 8 times.



History

1978

Aarong opened its first retail outlet in Dhaka

1982

Established the Ayesha Abed Foundation, a network of production centres aimed at supporting rural artisans

1983

Opened its first retail outlet in Chittagong

1985

Opened its first retail outlet in Sylhet

1987

Entered into the export market

1995

Opened its first retail outlet in Khulna

1999

Participated in its first international fashion show

2001

Launched a retail franchise in London

2003

Launched its sub-brand 'Taaga', range of women's western wear fused with traditional elements of Bangladesh

2008

Celebrated Aarong's 30th Anniversary with an Exhibition Series and gala Fashion Show

2010

Opened its flagship outlet in Dhaka