

# The Role of a Buying House in Readymade Garment Industries of Bangladesh

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## Abstract

Inception of JDK Fashion Ltd. dates back to almost 40 years back when JDK Fashion was set up. This study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from ten (10) employees of JDK Fashion Ltd. through the use of questionnaires. An interview was also taken of the owner of JDK Fashion to comprehend the future plans of JDK Fashion for the future. The secondary data was collected from annual report of JDK Fashion Ltd, other publications, research papers and website. Employee satisfaction of JDK Fashion Ltd. is quite impressive in terms of other RMG groups. Their techniques and procedures and facilities provided to the employees are quite competitive. Through the use of different impressive benefit schemes, JDK Fashion has managed to satisfy its employees. JDK Fashion has huge plans for the future regarding their marketing efforts. Overall, the growth of JDK Fashion over the years has been very consistent and satisfactory. The organization has proved that it has developed a good rapport with its clients, who relies on them and trusts them with their work.

## Keywords

Buying House, Readymade Garments, Employer, Employees, Export Turnover, Bangladesh

## 1. Introduction

In Bangladesh, garment export sector is the biggest foreign currency-earning sector. The success of this export sector, to a great extent, depends on the buying houses as they perform vital role in this export marketing process. As a significant part of this export process, buying houses work as a representative of the buyers by selecting competent suppliers, inspecting the quality of the garment products and ensuring on time delivery. In order to execute the buyer's order properly, they provide necessary guidance and support to the suppliers (Jasim 2017).

In the path of performing their important roles in this export marketing process, they face some obstacles from the macro and microenvironment factors. Macro environment of buying houses constitutes with the industry they supply their materials and the industry of their suppliers, whereas microenvironment consists of the internal environment of buying houses. Buying houses face these daily challenges and comes out with effective strategies and policies to

combat them. Buying houses develop effective marketing strategies to ensure that their operation is never hampered and also they can maintain their goodwill in front of the buyers and thus assist in further development of the sector (ibid).

Study of Mahmud (2015) investigated the importance and effect of marketing activities in the garments industry of Bangladesh. The analysis showed that product planning, pricing, promotion, distribution, market research and marketing planning related activities are important for the garment business. It was also found from the study that pricing and promotion have significant positive relationship with the overall performance of the garments business.

Masud, Razu and Masuma (2014) analyzed the prospects, problems and solution of problems of readymade garments industry in Bangladesh. Findings of the study showed that Bangladesh has a great opportunity to earn a great foreign currency through developing readymade garments industry. It also suggests some measures for the removal of ongoing crisis of garments sector.

Another study (Sadique and Das, 2017) looked at the organizational and leadership factors in the context of sustainable of RMG sector in Bangladesh. The study was based on case oriented research design.

Akterujjam (2013) observed that customers are satisfied towards readymade garment products of Bangladesh, the quality of readymade garments products of Bangladesh are good where as employees of RMG sector of Bangladesh are not well trained to the customers and RMG manufacturers of the country do not deliver the products in due time.

Saddam, Jesmin and Meer (2016) made a comparative analysis the policies adopted by both Bangladesh and Vietnam in the ready-made garment industry through an analysis of FDI and export activities for the garment industry from the period between 2005 and 2015. The study concluded that RMG of Vietnam is comparatively progressive than in the RMG of Bangladesh due to more attractive location for FDI investment.

Kazi, Aslam and Tarik (2011) revealed that the most of the respondents are conscious about the issue of the changing climate and they are worried about the RMG sector of Bangladesh may face some problems like increase in materials, labours and other costs of producers resulting a threat to the international competitiveness and FDI of this sector. It concluded that the Government of Bangladesh along with BGMEA and BKMEA should move on immediately in their pursuit to strive for alternative approaches to respond to their challenges.

It has been focused (Working procedure of a garment buying house, 2013; Role of buying house 2018) the existing situation in garment factories and identifying major challenges with possible recommendations. It was derived from the study that existing situation in training duration, payment during temporary employment, working hour, payment time, weekly holiday, bonus, absence fee, salary system and promotion etc. of workers etc. in garment sector of Bangladesh. Furthermore, it identifies major challenges and some future recommendations collected from workers.

It was addressed in Farhan, Bishwajit and Mamun (2014) a conceptual supply chain management model for readymade garments industry. It observed that suppliers, manufacturers, buyers, etc. are involved in different phases of supply chain of their industry though these phases are conflicting with each others in the order to achieve their goals. This study provides some proposals with a view to reduce such problems for the betterment of the RMG in Bangladesh.

The academicians have given much emphasis on this sector so lots of research works have been performed on various issues of RMG sector in Bangladesh (Mahmud, 2015; Sharmin 2016). This is proven from the above discussed literatures; however, the objectives, locations, methods etc. are different from each others. Therefore, it is not easy to pinpoint the differences of the previous studies. It is assumed that number of publications about the buying house in RMG industry of Bangladesh is quite rare. Buying house is an indispensable part for the survival and growth of business organizations in the modern business world like in

RMG. This is not important just to satisfy the customers rather than this is also important to compete with the competitors. The nature and practice of marketing in RMG firms is different from other firms but the importance of marketing activities for RMG firms is not small.

This study is devoted to roles and responsibilities of buying houses, and the effective marketing strategy carried out by JDK Fashion, which has made them one of the leading buying houses in the sector.

## 2. Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to determine the present activities of buying houses and the significance of their role for smooth, efficient and effective marketing process of garment products overseas and also to identify and analyze the effective marketing strategies of JDK Fashion.

However, the specific objectives of the study may be described as:

1. Analyzing the garments sector and identifying the key role played by buying houses for the development of the sector.
2. Identifying the effective marketing strategies implemented by JDK Fashion which has led to their success.
3. Trying to identify some additional marketing policies JDK Fashion can undertake to make their business grow.
4. Analyzing the employee satisfaction survey for JDK Fashion through a survey.

## 3. Methodology

This study is a type of case study but descriptive in nature. JDK Fashion Ltd. has been selected purposively in order to conduct the study. This study is based on primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected from employer and employees (10) of the selected JDK Fashion Ltd. It was done through interviews. For interview, prestructured questionnaires were prepared. It was prepared on the basis of employee benefits survey format which is available in (Employee benefits-Wufoo) and marketing planning survey format that is also available in (Marketing planning survey-Wufoo).

Selection of employer and employees were done as per census method of the study. The survey period was September-November, 2017. Secondary data of garment turnover during the period of 2013-2017 were collected from the record file of the JDK Fashion Ltd. purposively.

## 4. History of Readymade Garments Buying Houses in Bangladesh

Buying House (BH) is one of the most distinguished business fields in Bangladesh RMG sector. It is well understood that Bangladesh achieved second highest RMG exporters' position in the world, because the sector produces

high quality product with a competitive price than other competitor countries. Bangladesh has created a big place in the world's apparel market, where garments buying houses play a vital role for this significant contribution. Considering minimum 5 percent buying services commission, it could be said that at least 1.4 billion dollars have mutually been shared by garments manufacturers and buying houses in last FY 15-16 (Hasan and Mahmud, 2007).

The export oriented RMG sector in Bangladesh started its modest journey as a small non-traditional sector of export in late the 1970s. After the liberation, especially from the 1990s the RMG industry started to surge at a formidable pace as the country was gaining political and social stability. Within three decades, RMG has transformed itself as the country's highest revenue generating sector, contributing 82% (USD 28.094 billion FY 15-16) of country's total export. 70's or 80's there have no BH in Bangladesh. The early 90's some entrepreneur brings the buying house concept to fulfill the industrial demand (ibid).

Now according to reports from BKMEA and BGMEA there are more than 1000 enlisted buying houses, 1500 export oriented textile industries and more than 6000 (4000 under BGMEA and 2000 under BKMEA as of 2015-16 FY) RMG industries operating in the country. It is to be mentioned that real number would be bit less as there are companies who are members of the both BGMEA and BKMEA. Through last 2 decades' this number was growing very fast. Industry insiders said, buying house is a hub for sellers comprising of leading manufacturers, exporters and suppliers, displaying their latest and trendiest collection of apparels to a huge audience round the year (Hasan and Mahmud 2007; Akterjiman 2013; Jasim 2017).

Buying house plays an important role in the garments manufacturing sector of Bangladesh. Bangladesh RMG sector is 100% dependent on foreign buyers and foreign buyers depend on garments buying house. Because many times they don't have enough idea of the production of country, way of communication, culture, nature and so on, whereas buying house provides them strong support by supplying garments products according to their demands. To reduce buying house dependence, some of the most famous buyers opened their own office in Bangladesh which is very costly. That is not possible for all foreign buyers. So that the new buying houses are increasing day by day.

## 5. An Overview of JDK Fashion Ltd.

JDK Fashion Ltd. is an apparel buying house & manufactures specialized in providing customized service to

buyers with sourcing, merchandising, quality control, product development and assuring compliance issues for products manufactured for USA and EEC market. The success of the organization is the reflection of dedicated teamwork and proper delegation of authority with a clear mission and vision (JDK Fashion Ltd. 2017).

With such team synergy, JDK Fashion Ltd. is experiencing tremendous growth in terms of expanding the operational capacity and building up a strong marketing network all over USA, EEC and the Far East. JDK Fashion Ltd. has a combined 40 years experience in the apparel industry. Such an extensive background has established them as a highly capable apparel sourcing company with the ability to meet all customer requirements.

JDK Fashion Ltd. has strong links with an extensive network of apparel factories in Bangladesh, and also owns a manufacture sweater unit. They also have strong link with manufacturers of textile, yarns and other accessories, both in Bangladesh and abroad, enabling them to source the best combination of products to meet the customers' requirements at the most economical price.

Their links with multiple factories and sources allow the suppliers to supply their product at a price they want, without compromising quality.

## 6. Findings and Analysis of Country-Wise Turnover Data-The Case of JDK Fashion Ltd. from 2013 to 2017

### 6.1. Highest Turnover Country

JDK Fashion Ltd has experienced the best growth in Spain (Table 1). The main reasons for such growth are:

1. Buyers from Spain are namely branded groups like Zara, Pull & Bear, Bershka, Lefties, Cortefiel, Spring Field, Mango, etc. These groups have a huge number of shops dealing with huge customer base. In order to meet the increasing demand every year, they order more, which results in bigger orders.
2. JDK Fashion has their own office in Coruna, Spain, which also helps making big deals with big companies.
3. It is easier to manufacture Spanish designs for JDK Fashion.
4. JDK Fashion can deliver at a very competitive rate in Spain compared to other countries in Europe.
5. The delivery date and terms with Spanish buyers matches with JDK Fashion.

Table 1. Country-wise turnover data.

Countries	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
France	\$251,324	\$-	\$-	\$-	\$542,993
Brazil	\$2,402,688	\$2,596,612	\$2,797,080	\$3,078,367	\$3,401,374
Turkey	\$384,039	\$416,086	\$-	\$479,459	\$-
Spain	\$6,762,829	\$7,501,934	\$8,299,795	\$8,971,360	\$9,880,313
Germany	\$513,555	\$326,780	\$358,337	\$393,777	\$423,155
Italy	\$241,807	\$460,562	\$503,500	\$555,485	\$530,997

Countries	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
USA	\$349,023	\$376,346	\$708,627	\$442,862	\$487,119
Grand Total	\$10,905,265	\$11,678,320	\$12,667,340	\$13,921,310	\$15,265,950

Source: Author's collection from the record file of the company. 1\$=88BDT (approximately).

## 6.2. Lowest Turnover Country

JDK Fashion Ltd has experienced almost no growth in France (Table 1). The main reasons are:

1. The main company JDK Fashion deals with in France is GEMO. The buyer is not very popular brand, and hence does not have much demand. This is why the order level is also very low.
2. JDK Fashion does not have any local office in France, thus making it difficult for them to reach more potential buyers.
3. The delivery date and terms with GEMO also creates some difficulties for JDK Fashion.

## 6.3. Moderate Turnover Country

JDK Fashion Ltd has experienced impressive growth in Brazil (Table 1). The main reasons are:

1. JDK Fashion has big buyers in Brazil, who operates a huge number of retail outlets and who has regular demand for their products. One of the brands Riachuelo not only has market inside Brazil, but also in USA and other Latin American countries.
2. It is easier to manufacture Brazilian designs for JDK Fashion.
3. JDK Fashion can deliver at a very competitive rate in Brazil compared to other countries in Latin America.
4. The delivery date and terms with Brazilian buyers matches with JDK Fashion.

## 7. Findings of the Turnover Trends Analysis Based on Year

### 7.1. Highest Turnover Year

According to JDK Fashion Ltd, the best year so far has been 2017 (Table 1). The main reasons are:

1. In 2017, the combined efforts of top management of JDK Fashion Ltd and the Director for Marketing of JDK Fashion Ltd have resulted in superior performances.
2. JDK managed to make deals with big brands like Mango and Costco, which resulted in bigger turnover.
3. JDK set-up a new office in Spain, thus helping in more effective marketing.
4. Buyers are satisfied with the quality and delivery dates of JDK Fashion.
5. The increased turnover in Spanish markets also led to highest turnovers.

### 7.2. Lowest Turnover Year

According to JDK Fashion Ltd, the worst year so far has been 2013 (Table 1). The main reasons are:

1. The fire that broke out in Tazreen Fashion factory in Ashulia on 24th of November 2012 led to many potential buyers providing their orders in other countries. This fire killed around 117 people and affected almost 200 more.
2. The Rana Plaza collapse in 24th of April 2013 had an huge negative impact on the RMG sector of Bangladesh as a whole. Around 1134 people died and 2500 people were injured. This also led many potential buyers putting their orders in other countries, which also had an impact on JDK Fashion Ltd.

### 7.3. Moderate Turnover Year

According to JDK Fashion Ltd, the average year so far has been 2015 (Table 1). The main reasons are:

1. After two devastating accidents in 2012 and 2013, ACCORD, ALLIANCE and ILO took initiatives to build up the capacities of the RMG manufacturers and their factories to ensure structural, electrical and fire safety precautions. This helped increase the total demand, and thus helped JDK Fashion as well.
2. JDK Fashion managed to make deals with some more big brands, which eventually led to good turnover in 2015.
3. Buyers of JDK Fashion was satisfied with the quality and delivery dates.

## 8. Findings of Employee Satisfaction

A survey was undertaken on employee satisfaction of JDK Fashion Ltd. A total of 10 employees were selected for the survey.

### *Q1. How comfortable is work environment?*

Work environment is one of the biggest factors that can have an impact on the motivation level of the employees. A good work environment will motivate employees to take the extra step for the organization and will lead to more dedication. Whereas an awful work environment will not only de-motivate employees, but also will never encourage them to work hard for the organization.

Out of 10 employees surveyed, it seemed that most of them were comfortable with the work environment provided by JDK Fashion Ltd (Table 2). Only 3 of the respondents seemed a less comfortable with the work environment, but the rest 7 of the respondents were happy with the work environment. This provides an indication that JDK Fashion do not need to worry much about the work environment as most of the employees are quite happy with it. But they can always look into making the work environment more comfortable for the employees in future.

### *Q2. Are employees satisfied with their opinions for getting to and from work?*

One of the best ways to motivate employees is to value

their opinions regarding any official matters. It is not necessary to accept any suggestion from the employees by the management, but providing a positive feedback to the employees always can make a huge difference. Employees tend to be more satisfied when their supervisors value their opinions and praise them for their valuable contribution.

From the survey, it was found out (Table 2) that JDK Fashion Ltd. has a tendency to listen to their employees' suggestions. Not all the time they implement their ideas and suggestions, but they have a very open policy where employees feel free to speak their minds out. In case of good opinions, they are praised, and in case of not-so-good opinions, they are being thanked, and are encouraged to come out with better solutions and recommendations. Overall, the satisfaction levels of the employees are good.

*Q3. How fair is employees' employer's sick day policy?*

Sick Day policy is also a very vital aspect for employee satisfaction. A well-defined sick policy will make the employees feel that the organization understands their needs and problems, and thus provides the right support to deal with such issues. Whereas, an ill-developed policy will de-

motivate employees as they do not feel part of the organization, as they believe that the organization is not looking out for their employees.

The employees of JDK Fashion Ltd. are very much satisfied (Table 2) with the Sick Day policy of the organization. No one seems dissatisfied with the policy, and everyone likes the way the policy has been designed for them.

*Q4. How is employer's health insurance plan better, worse or about the same as those of other employer?*

Organizations carrying out health insurance plans for the employees are always a motivating factor. This also builds up confidence on employees' mind that the organization cares about the employees and is willing to provide necessary support when they need medical support.

Based on the survey, the health insurance plan for the employees seems to be ordinary for the employees (Table 2). They provide very minimal health coverage for the employees, which do not cover their families. As per most of the respondents, the organization can work on this issue, and improve this service, when compared to other organizations in the same sector.

**Table 2. Opinions of Employees.**

Inquires	Opinions	Frequency (%)
Q1. How comfortable is work environment	Extremely comfortable	0(0%)
	Very comfortable	4(40%)
	Moderately comfortable	3(30%)
	Comfortable	3(30%)
	Not at all comfortable	0(0%)
Q2. Are employees satisfied with their opinions for getting to and from work	Extremely satisfied	0(0%)
	Moderately satisfied	1(10%)
	Satisfied	5(50%)
	Neutral	2(20%)
	Dissatisfied	2(20%)
	Moderately dissatisfied	0(0%)
	Extremely dissatisfied	0(0%)
Q3. How fair is employees' employer's sick day policy	Extremely fair	0(0%)
	Very fair	2(20%)
	Moderately fair	6(60%)
	Fair	2(20%)
	Not at all fair	0(0%)
	Much better	0(0%)
	Somewhat better	0(0%)
Q4. How is employer's health insurance plan better, worse or about the same as those of other employer	Better	3(30%)
	About the same	6(60%)
	Worse	1(10%)
	Somewhat worse	0(0%)
	Much worse	0(0%)
	Extremely satisfied	0(0%)
	Moderately satisfied	2(20%)
Q5. Are employees satisfied with their employer's catered meals	Satisfied	2(20%)
	Neutral	4(40%)
	Dissatisfied	2(20%)
	Moderately dissatisfied	0(0%)
	Extremely dissatisfied	0(0%)
	Extremely satisfied	1(10%)
	Moderately satisfied	2(20%)
Q6. Are employees satisfied with their employer's benefits	Satisfied	3(30%)
	Neutral	4(40%)
	Dissatisfied	0(0%)
	Moderately dissatisfied	0(0%)
	Extremely dissatisfied	0(0%)

Source: Field Survey: 2017

*Q5. Are employees satisfied with their employer's catered meals?*

In organizations where long working hours are a necessity, providing food facilities to the employees becomes a vital factor. A well balanced meal not only assists employees to have the required energy for their work, but also keeps them mentally satisfied and more attached with the organization.

Based on the survey, the food quality provided at JDK Fashion Ltd. needs improvement (Table 2). They provide very ordinary food for lunch for the employees with little or no variations. The organization also provides snacks in the evening, which can also be improved.

*Q6. Are employees satisfied with their employer's benefits?*

Besides the basic salary, certain other employee benefits also encourage employees to be more attached with their organizations. A well-diversified plan for employee benefits will certainly lead to more motivated workforce for any organization.

Based on the survey, it seems (Table 2) that the employees of JDK Fashion Ltd. are very much satisfied with the employee benefits the organization is providing them. Facilities like two festival bonuses, flexible working hours, well-defined employee assessment system, etc. is already present in JDK Fashion Ltd.

## **9. Findings of Employer Discussion for Future Marketing Strategies**

The Managing Director of JDK Fashion Ltd. was interviewed to know the future marketing strategies of JDK Fashion. Based on the interview, it seemed JDK Fashion has versatile plans for future to market their products and also enhance reach into new markets which can be summarized below:

### **9.1. Growth Rates**

JDK Fashion Ltd. is planning to start on woven clothing and jackets in their production line. With such an addition to the existing production line, they plan to increase the production by 15% to 20% in the year 2018, with an overall growth in turnover of 15% and a revenue growth of 10%.

### **9.2. Marketing Activities**

JDK Fashion Ltd. spends more than 10% at present on different marketing campaigns and other marketing activities. They are planning to increase the current marketing activities by 5% in 2018, which they believe would bring in more business for the organization. They would be concentrating more on participation in different industry associations, which they believe can act as the prime source for attaining new clients.

### **9.3. Successful Marketing Efforts**

1. JDK Fashion Ltd. employs local people as local agents

in different countries they are dealing with. In order to deal with their clients effectively, they recruit some expert local personnel, who deal with the clients on behalf of JDK Fashion.

2. JDK Fashion believes strongly on customer satisfaction. They maintain regular communication with their clients providing them updates on their orders. They believe in transparent operations, which have helped build trust of their clients.
3. JDK Fashion also believes that it is very important to build a personal relationship with the clients. This assists them to make the communication with the clients more effective, and thus they can better understand their needs and work accordingly.

## **9.4. Effective Research and Development Initiatives**

JDK Fashion believes in research and development. They continuously carry out research and development on the fashion industry and try to find out new trends, and thus improving their capacities accordingly. They are attending famous yarn, fabrics, and accessories exhibitions all around the world throughout the year. This gives them an upper hand on the foreseeing the upcoming trends, and helps them to attract new clients with new demands. For the coming years, they have bigger plans to attend more exhibitions to improve their capacities further.

## **9.5. Exploring New Markets**

There are still many untapped large markets where JDK Fashion believes they can work in. countries like Russia, Australia, and some eastern European countries are not yet reached out by many organizations, and a move to these markets will lead to more business for the organization. JDK Fashion is planning to set up local offices in few of these countries in 2018 to get more clients.

## **10. Conclusion**

JDK Fashion has been working as one of the most successful apparel buying house and also manufacturing house for the past decades. The organization has been contributing to the economy through dealing with huge number of overseas clients and bringing in business. This ultimately also has a positive impact on the economy of Bangladesh.

This research has been conducted an employee satisfaction survey of JDK Fashion and found out that the organization has been successful in keeping their employees happy and satisfied. By providing well-defined policies and practices, JDK Fashion has managed to keep its employees motivated, which in turn has also helped them to grow.

JDK Fashion has huge plans for the future regarding their marketing efforts. They have planned to open up new offices in new untapped markets, and are also planning to attend

more exhibitions, which will improve their knowledge about the fashions trends and provide them an opportunity to get into new markets with new clients.

Overall, the growth of JDK Fashion over the years has been very consistent and satisfactory. The organization has proved that it has developed a good rapport with its clients, who relies on them and trusts them with their work. By following the following the strategies of marketing, employees' satisfaction and trend of export of JDK Fashion Ltd., others buying houses either in Bangladesh or elsewhere should improve their garment buying house business.

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