TECH-DRIVEN TRANSFORMATION

The Changing Landscape of Washing Machines in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is now at the primary stage of adopting artificial intelligence. The appcontrolled washing machines help manufacturers track when customers use the devices. the duration of their usage, and the load placed on the machines.

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Sales of electronic home appliances have significantly increased in Bangladesh over the last decade, thanks to the growing income of the general population.

Each year, approximately 2-2.5 lakh units of washing machines are sold in Bangladesh, and local manufacturing plays a significant role in this sector, which has been expanding by 10 percent annually for the past five years.

Semi-automatic washing machines were the first electric cloth cleaning devices to enter Bangladesh in the 1990s period, as imported washing machines dominated the market at that time.

These devices were expensive and considered luxury items.

Around a decade later, between 2001 and 2004, top-loading washing machines started gaining popularity, loading machines after 2010.

Since then, Bangladesh has made significant progress in the field of washing machine technology.

Budget-friendly top-loading washing machines are now being sold in large numbers, while front-loading devices come with a higher price tag, said Md Khairul Bashar, in-charge of the research and innovation department at Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC.

However, sales of front-load machines have been growing at a rate of 10 percent annually over the last few vears due to the increasing per capita income of Bangladesh's population, he

"What we are doing now in terms of manufacturing washing machines in Bangladesh, advanced countries had already accomplished nearly 10 years

In an exhibition held in Germany in 2018, one of the exhibitors presented

followed by the introduction of front- an advanced washing machine for and how many times the machine has a higher sales this year, as we have which images captured by a mobile phone were sufficient to determine the required amount of detergent. the fabric's color and quality, and the necessary wash duration. Bashar said.

They had employed WiFi and appcontrolled systems in such machines five years ago.

"Bangladesh is now at the primary stage of adopting artificial intelligence. Walton has been producing appcontrolled devices for the past year."

The app-controlled washing machines help manufacturers track when customers use the devices, the duration of their usage, and the load placed on the machines.

Different areas of Bangladesh experience varying schedules of power cuts, which provide vital information for operating a washing machine, Bashar added.

"Through the app, we inform customers about the pattern and quality of electricity in their locality."

The app also sends weather information, which is also very important for washing machine usage, he said. People normally consume less

electricity and use a lower number of heavy devices, such as air conditioners and irons, on cloudy and cooler days, which frees up space for the washing machine to be used, he said.

People should avoid peak load times and turn washing machines on at times when the electricity supply remains uninterrupted.

App-controlled washing machines are of great use, and Walton has already launched these kinds of products for the Bangladesh market, he said. Many have elderly parents or young

kids at home who can hardly operate the machines. Here, app-controlled devices can work wonders. "Customers can turn on/off the

washing machines through the app at any time from anywhere."

energy the device has used this month 2022. But we are hopeful of achieving

been used, along with showcasing the already sold 40,000 units in the first device's most-used features and some tips and tricks.

"Around 90 percent of the Walton products sold in Bangladesh are manufactured locally, and the remaining 10 percent are assembled."

The company produces top-loading and semi-automatic washing machines in its Bangladesh plant, while the frontloading devices are assembled here.

At present, the company manufactures some parts of the frontloading machine, and it plans to start full-fledged manufacturing of the front-loading machine within a year.

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 came as a blessing for washing machine sales in Bangladesh.

Many local manufacturers, like Singer and Walton, experienced stockouts in that year.

Manzurul Karim, General Manager of Esquire Electronics, the distributor of Japanese brands General and Sharp in Bangladesh, previously said the demand increased three to fourfold in 2020 from the regular level.

Karim said the demand for cloth cleaning devices hit 4.5 lakh units in 2020, up from the previous year's 1.20 lakh units.

An official of Transcom Digital, which retails Whirlpool, Hitachi, Transtec and Samsung products, said they had no clue that the demand for washing machines would suddenly increase in the market. Md Shorif Sarkar, the manager of a

Transcom Digital outlet, said that their July stock of every brand of washing machines had been sold out in the first 10 days of the month in 2020.

Walton sold 75,000 units of washing machines in 2020, which declined in the next two years due to multiple global factors, including Covid-19, the Ukraine war and the US dollar crisis, said Bashar of Walton.

"We sold 70,000 units of washing The app will also show how much machine in 2021 and 65,000 units in

six months of 2023."

Local manufacturers face uneven

competition from imported devices. There is no quality regulation for importing washing machine-like

devices to Bangladesh, Bashar said. Any importer can bring in a washing machine of any quality.

The problem is that lowquality machines perform poorly and discourage new clients from continuing to use such devices, he

Walton exports around 5,000 units of washing machines a year to different countries, including India, some African nations and the Middle East, he said.

"For exports, we have to comply with a set of rules and regulations and get some certifications whereas there is no compliance for the products entering Bangladesh."

Washing machine imports should not be banned, but the government should ensure that only quality products are brought in, he said.

The government is providing the local manufacturers of washing machines with some tax, value-added tax and duty benefits under a statutory regulatory order (SRO), which are supposed to end on June 30 of 2025.

The government should continue providing the SRO benefit for a longer period to encourage local manufacturing, Bashar said.

Washing machines manufactured in India enjoy some tax benefits under the South Asian Free Trade Area agreement, which enables them to sell the devices at a relatively lower price,

"That is why Indian manufacturers are a challenge for us."

The government should organise more international exhibitions, so that local manufacturers can exhibit their products regularly and create more export opportunities for the Bangladeshi companies.



