

Bangladesh's Detergent Market

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Over the past half-century, Unilever has been at the forefront of category evolution, pioneering market development from soaps in the 1970s and 1980s to detergent powders in the 1990s, and now introducing liquid detergents to Bangladeshi consumers,” explains Md. Shadman Sadikin, the Marketing Director for Homecare at Unilever Bangladesh Limited.

The prolonged summer heat and escalating pollution levels in urban areas have further spurred demand for detergents. As vital everyday products, the detergent market boasts an annual value ranging between Taka 3,500 to 4,000 crore.

“As the population continues to grow, so does the demand for laundry services, providing a significant boost to the detergent powder industry. While some consumers still rely on traditional ball cloth soap for tackling tough stains, detergent powder has become the preferred choice for regular washes. Moreover, in urban settings, liquid detergents are gaining popularity, particularly among those who use washing machines, as they are regarded as more compatible with machine washing,” states Fazal Mahmud Roni, Head of Marketing at Radiant Care.

At present, both multinational and local companies play a significant role in the detergent market in Bangladesh, expecting ongoing growth as they provide simplified solutions for daily laundry—an essential yet labor-intensive household task.

A significant transformation in the laundry landscape has been the shift from bar soap to detergent powder in households. Industry insiders indicate that detergent powders now account for over 95 percent of household usage, owing to their user-friendly and convenient attributes. This trend is further evolving, with liquid detergents gaining traction as they steadily replace traditional powder options in the market.

The rise of liquid detergents can largely be attributed to the increasing prevalence of washing machines in urban areas, where they are not only preferred for machine washing but are also becoming popular for hand washing due to their gentler formulations and ease of use. Liquid detergents offer enhanced cleaning power while being softer on fabrics, catering to the diverse needs of consumers.

This growing reliance on detergents has been particularly beneficial for women, who have traditionally

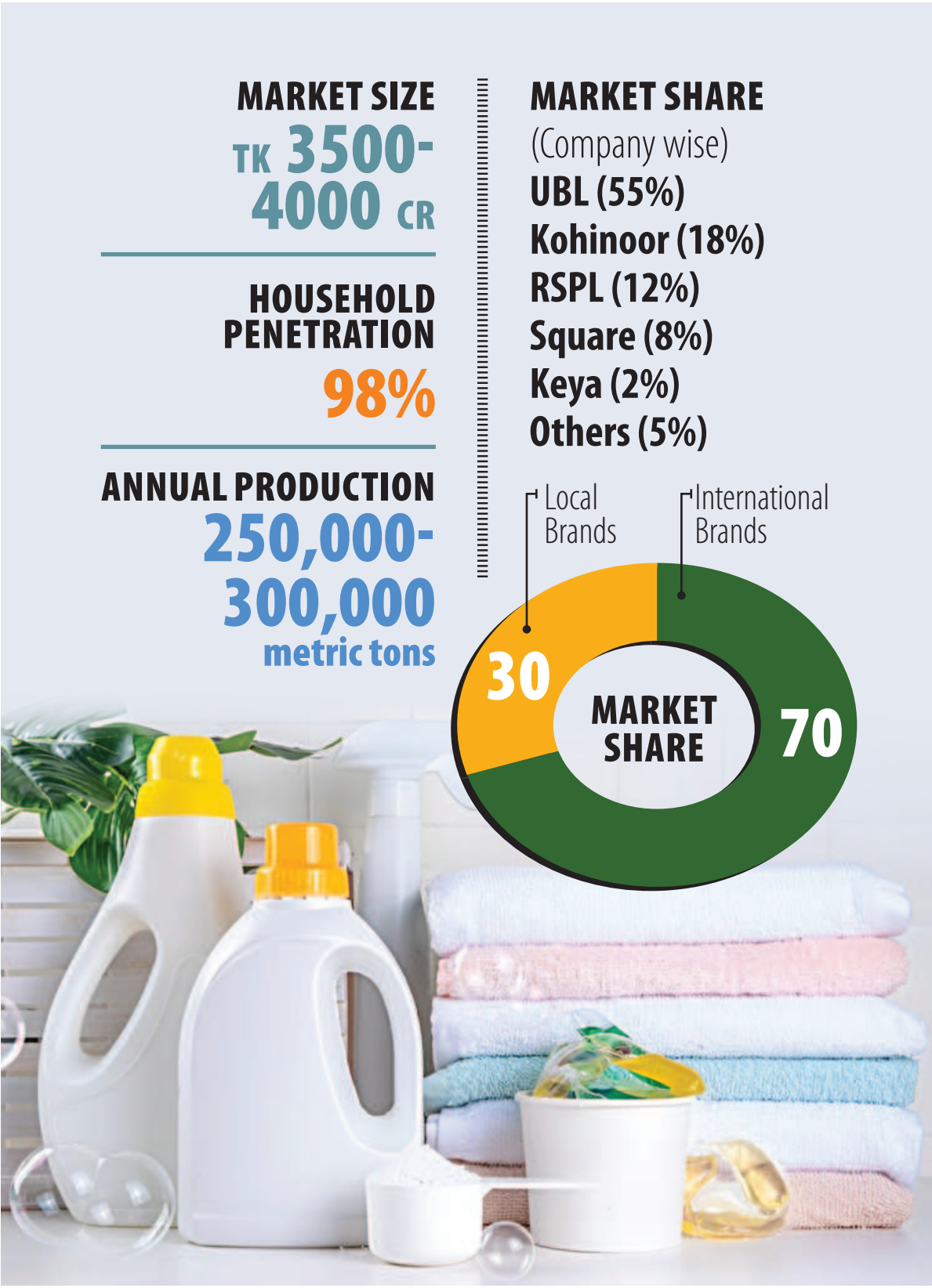
shouldered the burden of laundry tasks in households. The advent of detergents with health-conscious formulations and innovative cleaning mechanisms for stubborn stains has greatly alleviated this burden. Many products now feature eco-friendly ingredients, appealing to a rising awareness of sustainability and personal health. Additionally, the convenience of pre-measured liquid pods and easy-dispensing bottles simplifies the laundry process, making it more accessible and less time-consuming. This shift not only reflects changing consumer preferences but also signifies a broader movement towards more efficient and effective cleaning solutions in everyday life.

On the production side, the ingredients used in powder detergents have historically been primarily imported, particularly the key ingredient LABSA (Linear Alkyl Benzene Sulfonic Acid). Recent global price increases for raw materials have pressured companies to find ways to maintain affordability for consumers. In response, many manufacturers are implementing gradual price adjustments to keep the market vibrant and competitive.

However, the landscape is changing. Over the past year and a half, several local companies, such as United Group and Liberty, have begun producing LABSA domestically, effectively meeting the entire local demand, shares Md. Quamrul Hassan, Business Director of ACI Consumer Brands.

This shift towards local production not only helps reduce reliance on imports but also supports the growth of the domestic chemical industry, potentially leading to more stable pricing and availability, shares

Despite these positive developments, there are concerning practices within the market. Some unrecognized companies produce detergents without adhering to Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) regulations, resulting in the proliferation of low-quality products that can pose significant health risks. These products sometimes mimic well-known brands, misleading consumers and further complicating the market landscape. Industry insiders are advocating for stricter oversight and regulatory enforcement to protect public health and ensure that consumers receive safe, effective products. Strengthening quality control measures and increasing awareness among consumers about identifying reputable brands can help mitigate these issues and foster a healthier market environment.



Detergent dilemmas?

From delicate to denim - choose the right detergent for your wardrobe

Colour wheel and detergents are closely intertwined, as dark and vibrant colours may fade if not cared for properly. Detergents specifically formulated for colours can help maintain their vibrancy.

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With the vast variety of detergent products on the shelves, it's natural to wonder why so many options exist. The answer lies in the unique needs of different fabrics. Choosing the right detergent for each type of fabric is essential not only for effective cleaning but also for maintaining the fabric's longevity, protecting its fibres, preventing colour fading, and ensuring overall quality.

In Bangladesh, cotton and denim clothing are popular choices, not just for their durability but also for comfort in the humid climate. Though not widely known, the human body releases components such as sweat, minerals like salt, sebum, and dead cells, all of which contribute significantly to soiling clothes. The scorching sun during the daytime further intensifies these discharges. Additionally, the dusty conditions contribute to regular wearables becoming soiled, sometimes with persistent stains. Notable brands



While highlighting consumer preferences, Shadman Sadikin mentioned how Unilever addresses the changing wardrobe patterns. “Over the last decade, we have seen a shift in consumer wardrobe preferences; consumers are now choosing bright colours over plain white,” he said.

The colour wheel and detergents are closely intertwined, as dark and vibrant colours may fade if not cared for properly. Detergents specifically formulated for colours can help maintain their vibrancy. Moreover, maintaining the brightness of whites is challenging in weather like ours. However, detergents with whitening

agents can work wonders in preserving a pristine look. Unilever's two major product lines, Wheel, which offers freshness and fragrance, and Rin, which enhances brightness, cater to these needs. ACI Supreme, Redy and Orix Crystal Wash Detergent Powder, a relatively new option in Bangladesh by Remark HB Limited, highlight the need for whitening and brightening.

The market provides a balance of cleaning options favoured by people for removing dirt and grime gently, while covering a wide range



of fabrics with a single detergent. Wheel, ACISmart, and Redy can be used on all fabrics, ensuring a broader range of choices for various laundry needs, including colour guard, anti-bacterial protection, and fresh fragrances to keep clothes hygienic and pleasant-smelling. These options can also be effectively used for synthetic fabrics like rayon, polyester, nylon, and spandex—common in activewear—to remove oils and odours without breaking down the fibres,

thanks to moderate and low levels of active ingredients.

Products available in the market cater to delicate and synthetic fabrics, offering coverage beyond sturdier fabrics. Silk, wool, georgette, muslin, chiffon, and cashmere—known for their delicacy—require gentle detergents to maintain their texture, appearance, and durability. Regular detergents can be too harsh, potentially causing loss of softness and damage. Specially crafted detergents are the best options for these fabrics. Available in the local market are Rin Liquid, Surf Excel Matic Liquid Detergent, Jet Liquid, and Orix Fabric Shampoo.

“Unfortunately, there's a lack of understanding about this issue in Bangladesh. Many consumers still use alternatives like shampoo, which isn't formulated for laundry and may cause damage,” says Md. Quamrul Hassan, Business Director, ACI Consumer Brands. Hassan also mentioned that some consumers understand the importance of choosing the right detergent for their fabrics, while many are still learning. “I believe that, over time, awareness will increase, especially among younger generations who are more informed and adaptable,” he notes.

Fazal Mahmud Roni, Head of Marketing of Radiant Care, also emphasises the importance of consumer education on this issue. “Although fabric-specific detergents are not yet widely used, demand is gradually growing. Additionally, we are working on educating our customers on recommended detergent usage to enhance a healthy laundry experience and prolong garment lifespan,” he said.

