



# WALTON'S SMART Appliances Get Smarter with AI and IoT

S M MAHBUBUL ALAM, Managing Director, Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC.

**The Daily Star (TDS):** Could you provide an overview of your company's current offerings and market position in the smart home appliances sector?

**S M Mahbul Alam (SMMA):** Walton is currently running its 'Digital Campaign Season 22', offering customers guaranteed cashback of up to one million taka on the purchase of Walton-brand refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners, washing machines, or BLDC ceiling fans from any Walton Plaza or authorised distributor outlet across the country. In addition, the ongoing 'AC Exchange Offer' enables customers nationwide to trade in their old air conditioners for brand-new, energy-efficient, and eco-friendly Walton ACs—now available at a 25 percent discount. Free installation is also provided with every Walton AC purchase.

Recognising the growing demand for smart home appliances in Bangladesh, Walton has strategically focused on producing a wide range of smart products—such as refrigerators, televisions, and air conditioners—integrated with globally advanced technologies like AI (Artificial Intelligence), IoT (Internet of Things), and its proprietary 'AI Doctor'.

**TDS:** How do you evaluate the current performance and competitiveness of local brands in this industry in Bangladesh?

**SMMA:** Local electronics brands in Bangladesh have made impressive strides in recent years. Their ability to deliver high-quality products with cutting-edge features at affordable prices has strongly resonated with consumers. Combined with responsive after-sales service and extensive nationwide distribution networks, this has allowed local brands to secure a dominant position in the market. Walton, as a pioneer in the sector, along with other local players, now commands around 90 percent of the domestic electronics market.

Walton was the first in Bangladesh to introduce the 8-in-1 convertible smart refrigerator and the 3-in-1 convertible smart air conditioner. It also manufactures South Asia's most energy-efficient residential air conditioners, rated 6-Star by BSTI, and is the world's first company to launch a voice-command AC.

Walton also introduced 'AI Doctor', an AI-based diagnostic feature in IoT-enabled fridges and ACs, developed by its in-house R&D team. This feature identifies technical

issues and alerts customer service—often before users detect a problem. The AIoT system further optimises performance by learning user behaviour and adjusting settings to ensure energy-efficient operation.

Additional innovations include washing machines with weather forecasting, thermo heaters, and fabric care features. Walton's leadership has been recognised with the 'Superbrand' title and consecutive 'Best Brand Awards', including 11 years of dominance in the refrigerator category.

**TDS:** What are the key challenges hindering the industry's growth and wider adoption?

**SMMA:** The home appliance market is expanding rapidly, especially in developing countries, driven by rising incomes, urbanisation, and technological innovations like AI and IoT. These advancements are increasing demand for smarter, energy-efficient products. However, global economic uncertainty and inflation have made consumers more cautious about large purchases, leading to greater price sensitivity. Brand loyalty is also under pressure as buyers rely more on online reviews and comparisons. Intense competition in the sector continues to squeeze margins. At Walton, we closely

monitor market trends, adapt our strategies accordingly, and are actively exploring export opportunities to support sustainable national economic growth.

**TDS:** Could you share insights into your company's ongoing initiatives and future plans in the smart home appliances sector?

**SMMA:** Walton upholds customer trust through high-quality products and prompt after-sales service. We invest in advanced technology, R&D, and innovation to deliver AI- and IoT-enabled smart appliances. Expanding further, we've launched a lithium-ion battery cell manufacturing project, with commercial production set to begin by mid-2026.

**TDS:** What policy reforms or government support do you believe are essential for the industry's further development?

**SMMA:** **Refining Existing Regulations** Instead of a complete overhaul, it's essential to identify and eliminate bottlenecks and redundancies within the current regulatory framework. Priorities should include digitalising procedures, enhancing coordination among government agencies,

and resolving ambiguities in existing rules. Any new regulations should align with the core principles of the current system.

**Enhancing Trade Facilitation** Existing trade policies should be improved to further simplify international trade, reduce tariffs on essential imports where feasible, and strengthen export competitiveness. Strategic use of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) should be explored to unlock new global markets in line with the country's overall trade strategy.

**Strengthening Business Environment Initiatives**

Evaluate current government programmes aimed at improving the business climate. Identify ways to enhance their scope, accessibility, and effectiveness across industries. Any new reforms should integrate seamlessly with existing institutions that support business facilitation.

In summary, the electronics and electrical industry in Bangladesh has flourished largely due to supportive policies. Continued policy backing is vital, particularly in ensuring a level playing field in public procurement for domestic manufacturers.

## THE SMART SHOPPER'S CHECKLIST

AYMAN ANIKA

Buying smart home appliances nowadays can feel like stepping into a minefield of QR codes, blinking LEDs, and tech jargon. One moment, you're just looking for a fridge that texts you when it's low on eggs, and the next, you're stuck in a rabbit hole of compatibility charts and subscription-based features.

In a market flooded with gadgets labelled as "smart," how do you make sure you're not buying an overpriced, overhyped toaster that's obsolete in two years? Welcome to the smart shopper's checklist—a reality check for those navigating the future of home living without losing their money, mind, or WiFi connection. **Start with your lifestyle, not the latest features**

Every household is different, and that's where your journey should begin—not with a list of features, but with an honest look at how you live.

Tanvir Anjum, Business Coordinator to the Managing Director of Walton Hi-Tech Industries, describes it clearly, "Smart home appliances basically mean AI-incorporated or IoT-integrated devices. It's about connectivity—your phone being connected to your AC, your fridge, your alarm clock, even your door lock. You're five minutes from home, and you can turn on the AC, the lights, maybe even play your preferred music. That's what makes it smart."

The smartest appliance isn't the one with the most bells and whistles—it's the one that integrates effortlessly into your day-to-day

life. Don't be swayed by shiny packaging or futuristic demos. Begin by identifying your pain points and picking devices that address them directly.

**Local conditions matter more than you think**

Most global smart devices are built assuming stable infrastructure—steady electricity, clean water lines, good insulation, and flawless WiFi. These assumptions don't always hold true everywhere in Bangladesh, where voltage spikes can damage sensitive electronics, and internet dropouts are routine. In these conditions, how "smart" a device is depends on how well it adapts to your environment.

Before making a purchase, check if the appliance has built-in voltage protection or auto-resume features after power failures. A smart fridge that resets its settings after every outage can become a daily frustration. Similarly, an app-controlled geyser might look great until the WiFi fails and no one at home knows how to turn it on manually. Always think in terms of backup functionality, especially in a country where infrastructure can be unpredictable.

**Don't pay for gimmicks**

One of the biggest traps in smart appliance marketing is the emphasis on gimmicky features that look impressive but serve little real purpose. "AI wash," "smart diagnosis," and "energy-aware cycles" sound innovative, but are often marketing repackagings of basic functionalities. A feature is only "smart" if it adds measurable value to your routine.

When evaluating features, ask yourself if you'll still use it six months down the line. If not, it's probably not worth paying for. That's why homegrown innovation also matters. Walton, for instance, has been focusing on

**Choose brands that think long-term**

Software support is an often-overlooked issue in the smart appliance world. Many devices depend on periodic software updates to remain functional, secure, and compatible with newer

technicians trained to work with smart systems. Global giants like Samsung, LG, and Whirlpool typically have stronger after-sales support networks in Bangladesh. But local manufacturers are not far behind—on the contrary, they are actively innovating and making their presence felt across all segments.

Monika Islam, Group Director of Jamuna Group, underscores this shift: "Domestic brands like Jamuna have built a strong position among consumers, leaving behind foreign brands. The electronics industry, which was once completely dependent on imports, is now dominated by domestic companies."

The rise of locally manufactured smart appliances is not just a sign of self-sufficiency—it's also a way for buyers to access innovation that's tailored for the Bangladeshi lifestyle and climate.

**Local support should be part of your decision**

Many Bangladeshi buyers overlook one crucial element: what happens if the product breaks? Imported gadgets may come with great features, but limited or no local servicing. That smart oven from an online store might seem like a steal—until something goes wrong and there's no technician qualified to fix it.

Always ask where the service centre is located. Is there support in your city? How long do repairs typically take? Are there spare parts available locally? It's also smart to photograph and digitally store your warranty papers—service providers in Bangladesh often "misplace" hard copies.

### QUICK TIPS FOR SMART APPLIANCE SHOPPERS



**Always ask:** "Will I use this feature six months from now?"



**Check for built-in voltage protection—**it's not optional.



**Look for auto-resume features** after power cuts.



**Opt for Bangla voice compatibility** if available—it's practical.



**Avoid brands without local servicing** or app updates.



**Store warranty and service info** digitally.

function-driven products.

As Anjum notes, "We launched the first voice-controlled AC in Bangladesh, and it even works in Bangla. You can turn it on from outside the home. Our smart fridges let you manage temperature and even lock the device remotely. Our TVs are Google TV and Android TV. We are integrating IoT across our entire product line."

tech. Unfortunately, some lesser-known or imported brands disappear from the market in a year or two, leaving their customers stuck with expensive hardware that no longer syncs with anything.

If you're buying a high-investment smart product, make sure the brand has a local footprint—authorised service centres, responsive customer support, and

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