

Detailed view on Bangladesh's evolving furniture industry

Rayana Hossain on Market Growth, Global Ambitions, and Cultural Craft.

As Bangladesh's furniture industry rapidly evolves into a design-driven, export-ready sector, few voices capture this transformation as clearly as Rayana Hossain, Founder of ISHO.

In this wide-ranging interview, she reflects on the industry's robust growth, shifting consumer preferences, and the rising importance of sustainability, technology, and cultural storytelling in design.

From export potential and policy challenges to the influence of heritage and the future of modular living, Hossain offers a candid and forward-looking perspective on how Bangladeshi furniture can carve out a confident place on the global stage.

How would you describe the current market for furniture in Bangladesh? What trends are you observing among consumers?

Bangladesh's furniture market is now a USD 2.5–3 billion industry growing at roughly 10–12 per cent annually, with a clear shift from import dependence to strong dominance of local brands.

Consumer behaviour has diversified, with older buyers preferring heavier, traditional styles, while younger urban audiences actively seek minimalist, design-led products influenced by global aesthetics.

People increasingly value ergonomics, finishing, and thoughtful design over price alone. The customer journey is omnichannel; digital discovery leads to showroom visits for tactile confirmation, making online presence crucial. There is also rising interest in sustainability and context-driven design that feels rooted in local culture rather than generic international trends.

Overall, the market is maturing fast, driven by aesthetics, lifestyle aspirations, and evolving digital habits.

What do you see as the potential for exporting Bangladeshi furniture? Are there specific markets that you believe would be receptive to our products?

Furniture exports from Bangladesh have grown nearly tenfold in the last decade, about 30 per cent growth. With the right policy support, I believe Bangladesh could follow Vietnam's trajectory in becoming a global furniture hub.

Our competitive manufacturing costs, strong craftsmanship, and growing design maturity give us an edge. One example is our brand Fico, which recently entered the European market and showcased at Milan Design Week, where its finishing quality and design refinement were met with real appreciation and surprise.

In terms of markets, I cannot comment on other companies, but for us, I see strong potential in Europe and also in the USA for minimalist design-led wooden collections.

In your experience, how has the government supported the furniture industry in terms of policies and initiatives? Are there specific programmes that you find beneficial?

High import duties on finished furniture have unintentionally benefited local brands as Chinese imports became less viable; consumers naturally shifted toward Bangladeshi options. However, high import duties on raw materials created a parallel challenge for local manufacturers. This is now being addressed, which is encouraging and shows intent from the government.

The government has been supportive in policy facilitation and engagement, and we value that. But when it comes specifically to exports, the sector still lacks targeted policies and streamlined processes.

For instance, even sending products to a government-funded fair took almost 10



days just to clear the border. If Bangladesh is serious about scaling furniture globally, the next push must be export-centric with testing facilities, easier logistics, and stronger country-level visibility at major international fairs.

The potential is obvious. Now the infrastructure and support mechanisms need to move in step with the ambition.

What additional measures or policy changes would you like to see from the government to facilitate easier exporting of furniture?

To unlock Bangladesh's export potential in furniture, we need export-focused policies modelled on successful examples like Vietnam. This includes bonded warehouses and duty-free raw material imports, similar to incentives available to the RMG sector.

Customs processes must be streamlined through a single-window system with time-bound clearances, supported by simplified HS codes for modular products. We also need local FSC/PEFC-aligned certification



and testing labs to meet EU/US compliance requirements without relying on foreign facilities.

Finally, national branding and presence at major global fairs like Milan, High Point (USA), and Cologne will be key to positioning Bangladesh as a design-forward furniture exporter.

How is your company addressing sustainability in furniture production, and how important do you think this is for the future of the industry?

For us, sustainability is integrated into the way we work. We prioritise circular production, reducing waste through material optimisation and reuse of off-cuts.

Responsible sourcing is central to our process, and as an FSC-certified manufacturer, we work with forestry partners who focus on regeneration and responsible timber practices. We also invest in low-impact materials and finishes such as engineered boards and water-based lacquers, and have introduced solar energy at our factory to reduce our carbon footprint and support cleaner manufacturing.

Sustainability is not optional anymore; global buyers increasingly evaluate suppliers on ESG, and without credible practices, Bangladesh will struggle to participate in higher-value export segments.

Do you believe that the IKEA model of affordable, modular furniture could be successfully adapted to the Bangladeshi market? What challenges would need to be overcome?

The IKEA model will work in Bangladesh, but only with adaptation. It can succeed only if it is rethought for local living habits and cultural preferences. A growing, design-aware middle class and smaller urban apartments make modular, space-saving furniture increasingly relevant. However, challenges remain in DIY acceptance,

supply-chain standardisation, import-dependent hardware, and the need for strong delivery and installation support. With contextual design, better logistics, and a service-led approach, a Bangladesh-specific modular model is achievable, and one we are already actively building towards at ISHO.

What are your thoughts on high-profile collaborations, like Gucci partnering with furniture brands? Do you see potential for similar collaborations in Bangladesh, and what could that look like?

There is strong potential for collaborations between furniture and fashion/lifestyle brands in Bangladesh, but it must be contextually priced; ultra high-end luxury collaborations like Gucci may not translate commercially here yet. What will work are cross-industry partnerships with local fashion, Jamdani, ceramics, and tableware brands to create capsule collections rooted in culture and craft.

There is room for global-local collaborations with international beauty or lifestyle brands operating in the region. These partnerships allow Bangladeshi furniture to become a storytelling medium where design, heritage, and lifestyle meet.

How are local consumers' preferences changing when it comes to design, quality, and functionality in furniture?

Bangladeshi consumers are becoming more design-literate, referencing global aesthetics and expecting cleaner lines, better finishing, and thoughtful detailing.

Preferences are now segmented; older customers lean traditional, while younger buyers prefer modern, compact, modular pieces that suit smaller urban homes. Quality expectations have risen, with customers comparing brands to international standards rather than local carpenters. There's also a growing appreciation for sustainability and storytelling in design, especially when collections reflect culture, craft, and place.

What role do you think technology plays in furniture manufacturing today? Are there any advancements in tools or materials that you find particularly exciting?

Technology is now central to furniture manufacturing, from 3D modelling for rapid prototyping to automation and CNC machining for precision and consistency.

Engineered boards and smart materials reduce waste and improve durability, while AI and robotic arms for spraying and finishing are creating new benchmarks for quality and efficiency.

Digital systems enable vertically integrated, data-driven operations across inventory, production, and routing. We are exploring smart integrations like wireless charging, solar elements and low-energy components that sit discreetly within minimal forms.