

Report On
Aarong's Experiential Strategy for Gen Z Acquisition and Artisan
Sustainability

By
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An internship report submitted to the BRAC Business School in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Business Administration

BRAC Business School
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The internship report submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The report does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The report does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Letter of Transmittal

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Kha 224 Pragati Sarani, Merul Badda, Dhaka 1212.

Subject: Internship Report on “Aarong's Experiential Strategy for Gen Z Acquisition and Artisan Sustainability”

Dear Madam,

I am presenting here my internship report titled “Aarong's Experiential Strategy for Gen Z Acquisition and Artisan Sustainability”. It summarizes the key learnings and findings during my internship experience.

I have attempted my best to finish the report with the essential data and recommended proposition in a significant compact and comprehensive manner as possible.

I trust that the report will meet the desires.

Sincerely yours,

Abdul Kader Siddique, 21204062

BRAC Business School, BRAC University

Date: 01, 27, 2025

Non-Disclosure Agreement

The agreement is made and entered between Aarong and me, a student of BRAC University, that my paper titled “Aarong's Experiential Strategy for Gen Z Acquisition and Artisan Sustainability” will not be published or disclosed elsewhere except for academic purposes such as evaluation and presentation. In this report, I have used only those pieces of information that were officially released or authorized by my supervisors at the organization.

Name of the Company: Aarong

Supervisor Name: Md. Nahian Hossian

Position: Manager

Department: Marketing

Address: Aarong Centre 346, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208

Name of the Student: Abdul Kader Siddique

Address: Kha 224 Pragati Sarani, Merul Badda, Dhaka 1212.

Description of the report: “Aarong's Experiential Strategy for Gen Z Acquisition and Artisan Sustainability”

Acknowledgement

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I also want to thank my academic supervisor, Fabiha Enam, Senior Lecturer at BRAC Business School, BRAC University, for his support, advice, and helpful criticism.

I also extend my appreciation to my co-supervisor, **Ms. Fairuza Mehreen**, Lecturer, BRAC Business School, for her valuable support.

This report would not have been possible without the guidance and support of the individuals mentioned above.

Executive Summary

This internship report will discuss the experience marketing strategy used by Aarong, which is why the Winter Wonderland 2025 campaign and its ability to attract consumers in generations Z (Gen Z) and strengthen artisan sustainability will be explored. The report is a synthesis of organization and project-based study that the author has done as an intern at the Marketing Department of Aarong between October 2025 and January 2026.

In the study, the business model, marketing mix, competition, and financial performance of Aarong during the period of 2020-2024 is assessed, the company is identified as recovering after the pandemic and as a sustainable social enterprise of BRAC. A structured survey was used to gather primary data on 308 participants of an event to determine perceptions of value, sustainability, uniqueness, and purchase intention.

The results indicate that Winter Wonderland managed to distinguish Aarong among the rival lifestyle brands and positively affected Gen Z purchase intentions. Nevertheless, sustainability communication gaps and crowds' management gaps were found. The report ends with strategic suggestions on how to strengthen experiential storytelling, better design of events as well as ensuring a long-lasting engagement with Gen Z in a bid to boost artisan livelihoods.

Keywords: Experiential Marketing; Generation Z; Social Enterprise; Artisan Sustainability; Aarong; Winter Wonderland

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List of Acronyms

CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
COGS	Cost of Goods Sold
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
FY	Financial Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
QR	Quick Response
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communication
ROA	Return on Assets
ROE	Return on Equity

Chapter 1

Overview of Internship

1.1 Student Information

Name: Abdul Kader Siddique

ID: 21204062

Program: Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)

1.2 Internship Information

Period: 18th October 2025 to 18th January 2026

Company Name: Aarong

Department: Marketing

Address: Aarong Centre, 346, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208.

1.2 .2 Internship Information

Name: Md. Nahian Hossain

Position: Manager, Marketing

1.2.3 Job Description/Duties/Responsibilities

I worked as a marketing intern at Aarong under my internship programme. The brands I worked on are Taaga, Taaga Man and Aarong Earth. These are sub-brands of Aarong which

are mainly focused on acquiring the Millennials and Gen Z. I have got the opportunity to observe the work of the marketing, public relations, and human resource management departments. My major task was to assist in the work of my team and be accountable for certain tasks as well.

- Assisting in marketing research and evaluation.
- Managing Social Media Calendar and Contents.
- Ideation and execution for the campaign.
- Activation execution of Winter Wonderland.

1.3 Internship Outcome

1.3.1 Student's Contribution to the Company

1.1 Taaga and Taaga Man

It was an absolute privilege to be assigned to this team. Here, Interns have a lot to contribute through their work as the team consist of 4 people, and 1 addition just makes the whole things easier for them.

On the very first day at office, I have got to learn about the design team. My core work was to coordinate between design and marketing team.

There are a 4 major step by which an idea is converted as a finished product in the outlet.

1. The design team works on the ideation and design
2. Sample is made of each design.

In step 2, a lot goes on into supply chain, as at the products are mostly made by artisans, where the design team needs to make the implementers understand each and every bit of the work with proper resources.

3. The final call is made the Managing Director of the company of which products are the right fit for the market.
4. Among the finalized products, layout is made where the best of the best are gone for the photoshoots and campaigns.

1.2 Aarong Earth

This brand is working on coming up with products by understanding the customers needs. My being of the team members, I had the job to best the best possible campaign captions what not just talks about the product, but the essence of how the brand is fulfilling the needs of the customers.

For all Taaga, Taaga Man and Aarong Earth, I had the job to ideate captions and schedule the post at the right diligence. *Aarong presents Winter Wonderland a celebration of crafts.* (n.d.).

1.3 Campaign Shoots

What's seen on the billboards and social media are the reflection of months of hard work which I was a part of. Taaga's 'The Transit Stories' which is based on different professions stories in bus stand and was shoot in FDC. And Taaga Man's 'The Elevator Stories' where it was a reflection of people of different professions using elevator. It was done on a Cargo Elevator in Aarong's own premises.

Before the final shoot day, models have to go through at least 2 trial phrases, where in 1st phrase they have to try out all outfits and required measurements are measured. On 2nd phrase, they have to try out the final outfit which will be tried on them on the shoot day and seen if the cloths made are exactly of their fit or need changes. A basic shoot on phone is required on both days for the background process. And I had to be involved and coordinate where required in the whole process.

1.4 Winter Wonderland

It consisted of 8 days, over the month of December, on every Thursday and Friday on 4 different themes. The exact project on which my report will be. Planning over the 3rd week was my core responsibility. Where I locked the band Blue Jeans as our headliner on the Holud day of 'Fake Weeding'. Also selecting songs for the band, DJs and ideation of how the week can be promoted to the target audience. On all 4 days, it was work on the field. My core job was to supervise over the 'aarong.com' section which was the free gaming zone for all people who entered the event. The gaming zone consisted of 5 games and 15 Brand Promoters were there to elevate the experience of the participants.

1.3.2 Benefits of Students

The students acquire a comprehensive understanding of corporate structure and gain insights into the ecology of Aarong and the overarching values of the BRAC organization. Training programs exist that not only assist students but also contribute to the company development of Aarong. The students in the marketing department must conduct market trips to various sites, including Aarong's store, which facilitates a deeper understanding of customer desires. Aarong also takes us to Manikganj, where students can directly experience the lives of artisans for a day in the Aysha Abed Foundation.

1.3.3 Recommendations to the company on Future Internships

I recommend that HR collaborate with all departments prior to the starting of the internship period regarding the training program to prevent interruptions to work.

Interns are selected through a rigorous recruitment process. If interns are assigned projects for which they must assume ownership, it would be advantageous for the students to showcase these initiatives in their future careers, while also benefiting the team with which they collaborate.

Chapter 2

2.1 Introductions

This section includes details about Aarong, a social enterprise that is a fair-trade under social enterprise brand of BRAC established in 1978 to empower rural artisans.

Aarong presents Winter Wonderland a celebration of crafts. (n.d.).

- It briefly explains the history of Aarong, the mission, and vision of the company and its association with BRAC.
- Describe major organizational processes, including goals, capital structure, organizational structure, and corporate strategy.
- Present the recent financial information of BRAC 2024 Annual Report to place the position of Aarong in the portfolio of social enterprises of BRAC.

2.1.2 Scope of Study

This study looks at the organizational processes, managerial practices, marketing approaches, financial performance and the competitive position of Aarong since its inception in 1978 to 2025.

2.1.3 Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive design in order to obtain a comprehensive analysis of the management processes. The study is based on the qualitative analysis.

Data Sources

- Secondary data obtained through annual reports of Aarong.
- Published papers on the BRACU Institutional Repository.
(<https://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/>)
- Staff Interviews

2.1.4 Importance of Study

- Practical implication of the operations by Aarong.
- Lessons learned through policies and the development measures.

2.1.5 Limitations

- Secondary data dependence
- Restraints of access to information.

2.2 Overview of the Company

2.2.1 Historical background and tradition.

Aarong is a social venture of BRAC, which means village fair in Bengali. This Aarong program has been fighting poverty since 1978, at the same time. rebuilding artisanal Bangladesh. The history of Aarong shows that it has been successful in creating a market of the products such as Nakshi Kantha, pottery, and Jamdani. The story of Aarong that provides fair wages and maintains traditional skills persists.

Aarong is a leading lifestyle brand in Bangladesh that was founded based on 47 years of successful operation. It has a number of retail stores as well as a wide range of products. The

corporations have a great influence on social and economic status as it contributes to the help of thousands of production plants through artisans and their families.

Bangladeshi has become popularized by Aarong's crafts through a combination of the

traditional craftsmanship and modern design, making them to be a symbol of national pride. *Aarong presents Winter Wonderland a celebration of crafts.* (n.d.).

2.2.2 Mission, Vision and Core Principles.

Mission

The mission of Aarong is empowering people and communities in the state of poverty, illiteracy.

affliction, and social injustice. The efforts of Aarong are aimed at producing significant effects, positive change with economic and social programs that enable people to make it come true.

their potential.

Core Values

Integrity: dealing with candor, accountability and honesty in every decision and interactions.

Innovation: developing a creative and ongoing development to create a difference in the society and reinvent industry standards.

Inclusiveness: the inclusion and value of diversity in terms of age, gender, race, ability and belief, making sure that all voices are heard and valued.

Effectiveness: making interventions more effective through strategic planning, beneficial resource distribution, and implementational results. *Aarong presents Winter Wonderland a celebration of crafts.* (n.d.).

2.2.3 Aarong's at a glance



Figure 1: About Aarong

2.2.4 Aarong's Timeline at a glance

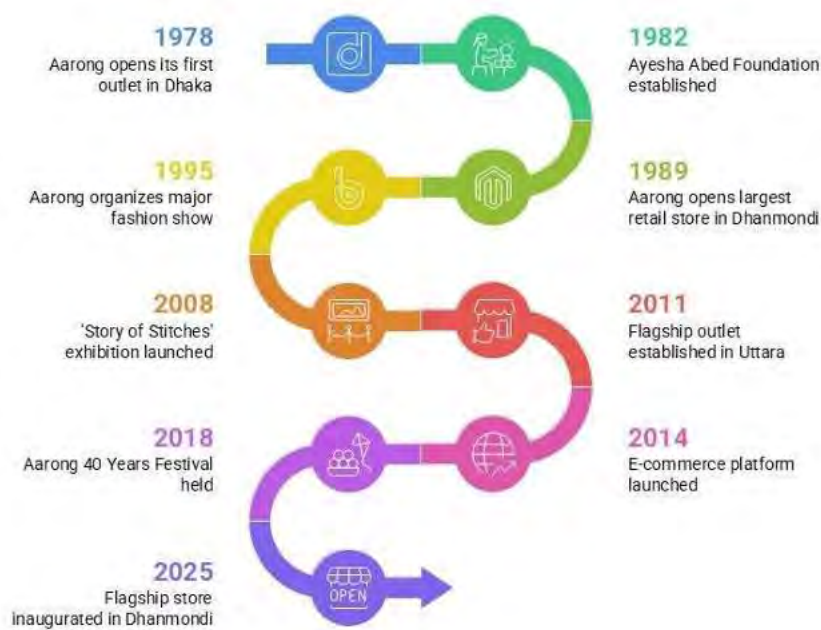


Figure 2: Aarong's Timeline

2.2.5 Key values Aarong has 4 key basic values.

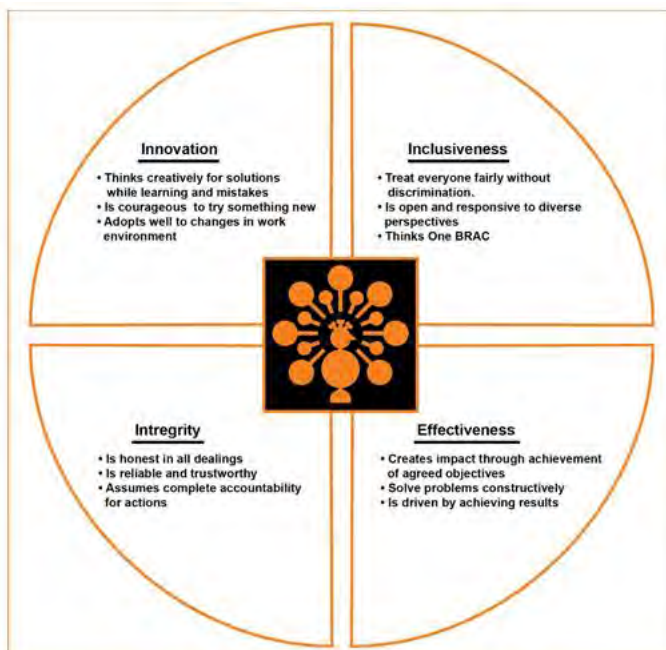


Figure 3: About Aarong Logo

Porter's Five Forces

Force	Level	One-line summary
Rivalry	Low–moderate	Few competitors in hand-crafted apparel; Taaga Man faces more rivals.
New entrants	Low	Large capital, loyal customers and artisan ties deter newcomers.
Supplier power	Moderate	A handful of fabric vendors hold sway; many minor suppliers don't.
Buyer power	Moderate	Middle- and high-income shoppers like Aarong's brand yet watch prices.
Substitutes	Moderate	Mass-produced fashion and local crafts exist, but authenticity protects Aarong.

SWOT

Category	One-line summary
Strengths	Market leader with a strong brand, artisan network and profitable social enterprise model.
Weaknesses	Taaga Man misaligned with youth trends; weak digital reach and internal inefficiencies.
Opportunities	Engage younger consumers, diversify products, enter new markets and enhance technology.
Threats	Rising fast-fashion and imitators, aggressive competitors and economic or

Category	One-line summary
	regulatory risks.

2.2.6 Sub-brands of Aarong

Brand	Paraphrased description
Taaga	A women's fashion line that blends elegance, comfort and creative touches.
Taaga Man	Aarong's menswear label delivering contemporary cuts and lifestyle apparel.
Herstory by Aarong	An upscale collection featuring distinctive garments and limited-edition designs.
Terracotta Tales	A series of home accents and pottery pieces rooted in traditional craftsmanship.
Aarong Earth	A product line committed to organic, eco-friendly fashion and accessories.
Grassroots Café	A lifestyle offshoot serving responsibly sourced food and drinks in line with Aarong's values.

2.2.7 Marketing Mix

Element	Concise description
Product	Offers a wide range of apparel, home decor, leather goods and jewellery, with a strong emphasis on handmade craftsmanship and cultural

Element	Concise description
	authenticity.
Price	Uses premium pricing to reflect artisanal production, quality materials and fair compensation for artisans.
Place	Operates over thirty stores across major Bangladeshi cities and sells globally via aarong.com and international shipping.
Promotion	Combines traditional media (print, billboards, events) with active digital marketing and social media campaigns targeting urban and younger consumers.

2.2.8 Competitive Landscape

Segment	Examples	Key points
Modern fashion & lifestyle brands	Yellow, Le Reve, Ecstasy, Sailor	Focus on trendy, Western-inspired designs and compete on style, affordability and urban appeal.
Traditional/handicraft boutiques	Nipun, Kay Kraft, Anjan's, Rang, Deshidosh collective	Offer locally crafted clothing with traditional motifs at moderate prices, appealing to buyers seeking cultural authenticity.
Large retailers & online platforms	Infinity Mega Mall, major e-commerce sites	Provide broad product selections and convenience, using aggressive promotions and a strong online presence to attract customers.

2.2.9 Capital Structure of Aarong

Aarong operates as BRAC's wholly owned social enterprise and does not have any outside shareholders. Its governance and finances are overseen directly by BRAC, and the organisation follows a dual-purpose model in which any surplus income is split between reinvestment in the business and support for the parent organisation's development work. This arrangement has remained constant, reflecting Aarong's commitment to growth and social impact rather than pure profit.

The company generates funding from several channels. Retail sales through 31 stores and its online platform are the main source of income, selling clothing, jewellery, hand-made crafts and lifestyle products. It also reallocates half of its net earnings: BRAC receives 50 per cent for programmes in education, healthcare and poverty reduction, while the other half is used to improve Aarong's logistics, stores and other operations.

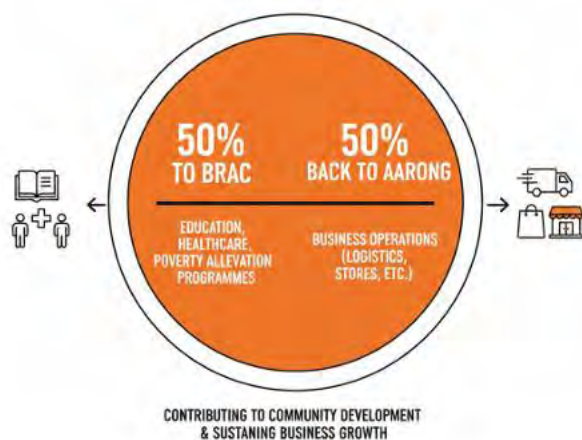


Figure 4: Financial Model of Aarong

Lastly, BRAC offers other financial and strategic resources to make it sustainable.

Combined with each other, these factors describe a capital structure that is financially independent and also invested in the welfare of the community.

Funding source	Description
Retail revenue	Income from sales at 31 physical outlets and online store offering apparel, accessories and crafts.
Profit allocation	Half of net profits go to BRAC's social programmes; the other half is reinvested into Aarong's operations.
Support from BRAC	The parent organisation provides strategic direction and financial oversight to keep the enterprise sustainable.

This structure emphasises the good growth and community concern of Aarong which means that its artisans and programmes will still be in the beneficiary of the business.

The financial analysis of Aarong (2020-2024)

Aarong is a premium social business of BRAC that sells hand-made fashion and lifestyle goods in a chain of stores and online platforms. Despite the social impact in its mission, the enterprise should not be financially unsustainable to empower more than 87 000 artisans and invest in the development programmes of BRAC. In this report, the company will examine the financial performance of Aarong between the FY 2020 and FY 2024 based on internship reports and the BRAC annual report. The analysis is structured in the format applied in the 2025 internship papers in Aarong,

and includes financial trends, liquidity, solvency, efficiency, profitability, DuPont decomposition, horizontal/vertical analysis and Economic Value Added (EVA).

Revenue and Profit Trends (2020-2022)

The growth in revenue was 42.62% in the years 2020 to 2021 due to the reopening of retail outlets and the growth of e-commerce in the postpandemic recovery. In 2022, growth was only 18.45% because of inflation and nervous consumer behavior.

The cost of goods sold (COGS) saw an increase of this nature that began with BDT 150 million in 2020 and rose to 198 and 231 million in 2021 and 2022 respectively. Even though the COGS increased, the gross profit increased in 2021 to BDT 149.04 million as compared to 2020 (BDT 65.36 million) and subsequently decreased to BDT 120.02 million in 2022. The drop in 2022 is an indication of cost pressure due to increased materials and logistics.

Net income was meanwhile fluctuating: Aarong has registered a net loss of BDT 17.64 million in 2020, a net profit of BDT 28.04 million in 2021, and a net loss of BDT 19.98 million in 2022. The 2021 profit was due to high sales volume and online operations whereas the 2022 loss was caused by increased staffing, utilities and procurement costs. On the whole, the period shows that Aarong is resilient: the revenue has been increasing even after the net loss in 2022, which means the strong demand of the brand and its chance to recover.

Profitability ratios (2020-2022)

Year	Revenue (BDT m)	Gross Profit (BDT m)	Net Profit (BDT m)	Gross Margin (%)	Net Margin (%)
2020	210	65.36	-17.64	31.1 %	-8.4 %

Year	Revenue (BDT m)	Gross Profit (BDT m)	Net Profit (BDT m)	Gross Margin (%)	Net Margin (%)
2021	309	149.04	28.04	48.2 %	9.1 %
2022	366	120.02	−19.98	32.8 %	−5.5 %

The margins indicate a severe recovery in 2021 but squeeze in 2022. The net profitability became negative in 2022 despite an improvement in revenue, indicating the necessity of controlling costs.

Growth and Post-Pandemic Recovery (2020-2024)

The revenue of Aarong has grown by a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of BDT 16.49 billion in 2024, compared to BDT 5.83 billion in 2020.

29.65 %. The expansion of Aarong is an indicator of high brand equity, extended network of outlets and omni-channel sales.

The net profit margins have increased significantly following the pandemic. Aarong has increased the net profit margin in 2022 to 8.53% and 2023 to 5.10% which was - 6.77% in 2020. ROA increased to 7.15% on average in 2021-24 (compared to -4.59 in 2020), whereas ROE improved to 13.01% in 2023 (compared to -6.81 in 2020). These advances highlight increased assets use and efficient financial management.

Liquidity and Solvency

Liquidity ratios are used to check the capacity to cover short term liabilities. Aarong kept current ratio at 2.40 on average in the period between 2020-24, which is significantly higher than the standard of 2.0. The ratio however dropped to 2.01 in 2024 indicating a tight working capital. The quick ratio (current assets less

inventories) had a wide range: it was lower than 1 in the majority of years, and it fell to 0.35 in 2024, which means that the company heavily depends on the inventory to meet short-term obligations. Cash ratio remained very low (throughout the period, between 0.03-0.10) indicating low cash reserves.

The long-term financial risk is reflected in the solvency ratios. The debt-to-assets ratio of Aarong is between 33 and 24 and 2024, which is a good range of debt to assets ratio of retail businesses. The equity ratio was always above 64 percent, which is indicative of a conservative capital structure and low risk of bankruptcy. This is in line with the social enterprise sustainability mission of Aarong as opposed to high leverage.

Liquidity and solvency ratios.

Year	Current Ratio	Quick Ratio	Cash Ratio	Debt-to-Assets	Equity Ratio
2020	2.50	0.36	0.08	~33 %	>64 %
2021	2.55	0.50	0.03	~33 %	>64 %
2022	2.45	1.00	0.06	~33 %	>64 %
2023	2.48	1.04	0.10	~33 %	>64 %
2024	2.01	0.35	0.03	~33 %	>64 %

Interpretation - The liquidity position of Aarong is satisfactory, but the negative current ratios and quick ratios in 2024 are suggesting the existence of issues in

inventory management and cash conversion cycles. Long-term financial stability is accentuated by the high equity base and low leverage.

Efficiency

Efficiency ratios determine the efficiency of using assets and inventory. The asset turnover of Aarong also improved in 2023 to 1.32, which was slightly more than in 2024, compared to 0.68 in 2020, which means that investment in assets earned more over time but slightly slowed down in 2024. The level of inventory turnover improved significantly: the number of days in inventory in 2020 was 345 days and in 2023 the number was 149 days and in 2024 it was 216 days. The inventory turnover increased in 2024 which indicates that inventories were becoming slower, a factor that can be trapping capital.

Profitability

The profitability ratios bring the earnings capacity into the limelight. The net profit margin of Aarong has increased to 8.53% in 2022 and 6.57% in 2023 and 2024, respectively, as compared to the 6.77% in 2020. The ratio of return on assets (ROA) rose to an average of 7.15 the year 2021-24, increasing by 4.59 to an average of 7.15 the very next year, whereas the corresponding ratio of return on equity (ROE) rose to 13.01 the year 2023 and slowed to 8.73 the year 2024. These trends indicate an excellent post-pandemic recovery and efficient asset and equity utilization.

Horizontal and Vertical Analysis.

Horizontal analysis is the comparison of annual growth in revenues and expenses, net income and assets. Revenue increase of 40.55% in 2021, 40.08% in 2022, 34.53% in 2023 and 6.68% in 2024 with corresponding expense growths of 31.74, 28.49 and

31.21. The net income became positive in 2021, increased 84.40 in 2022 and 17.24 in 2023. Asset growth was also low with a range of 2 to 28 percent. The declining revenue and profit growth in 2024 indicate that the cost pressures and market saturation would be coming.

Vertical analysis represents every item in the income statement as a percentage of revenue. The cost structure of 2024 reveals that COGS took 60.26% of the revenues, salaries and benefits took 10.96, and operating expenses took 28.78. The income statement is dominated by high procurement and production costs that underscore the need to be efficient in supply-chain.

Economic Value Added (EVA)

EVA is a value created after the cost of capital. In 2020, Aarong has the negative EVA of -349.6 million taka, which was caused by the pandemic, but then it showed a high level of positivity: BDT 1.53 billion in 2023 and BDT 1.05 billion in 2024.

The fact that positive EVA shows that the enterprise has been able to create shareholder value and earn returns that exceed its cost of capital and supports BRAC in its social programmes.

Areas of Improvement and Strengths.

Strengths

Strong revenue growth: Aarong has a CAGR of 29.65 in revenue between 2020-24 and attained a level of BDT 16.49 billion in 2024.

Profitability recovery: The Net profit margin became positive in 2021 and remained healthy through 2024.

Well-developed capital structure: Low leverage and a high equity ratio (>64 percent) is a guarantee of financial stability.

Value creation: A positive EVA in 2023-24 would indicate that Aarong will be able to create returns exceeding its cost of capital.

Areas for Improvement

Inventory management: The decreasing quick ratio and rising days in inventory (216 days in 2024) indicate that the inventory has slowed down. Better forecasting and optimization of the supply-chain may free working capital.

Cost control: This implies that High COGS and increasing overheads were factors that led to a net loss in 2022 and slower growth in 2024. Cost pressures could be addressed by the adoption of strategies such as supplier consolidation, lean production and energy efficiency.

Stabilization of profit margins: The net profit margin in the year 2024 dropped to 5.10%. The pricing strategies, product mix and cost should target to be able to maintain the margins.

Cash conversion: The cash ratios (0.03-0.10) are low with a reduction in the current ratio of 2.01 in 2024, which indicates the tightening of the liquidity. Increased collection of receivables within a shorter time and improved working capital will assist.

Lastly, the financial experience of Aarong demonstrates the ups and downs of a social company moving both in terms of commercial as well as social effectiveness. Having experienced losses at the start of the pandemic, the enterprise experienced a high growth of revenues and better profitability. EVA and conservative leverage bring into the limelight long-term sustainability and value generation. Nevertheless, the 2024

deceleration and more inventory days indicate that the supply-chain management needs to be more effective, and costs must be more controlled. With the emphasis on the working-capital optimization, cost efficiencies and margin management, Aarong will be able to retain its financial strength and remain helping tens of thousands of artisans.

Chapter 3: Project Part

3.1 Introduction

Aarong has introduced Winter Wonderland, an experiential marketing campaign in location Tejgaon in 2024. This paper is concerning 2025 Winter Wonderland which was a month long experience that combined concerts, folk culture, craft workshops and sustainable fashion projects over four themed weeks: Pitha Uthsob, Thanda Beats DJ sessions, a fake wedding funfair and a conclusion performance. Each week was different in terms of offering. The week one was a day that provided blissful moments which were marked by music and pitha. The theme of the Rave Party was given attention during the second week and the theme of the fake wedding in the third week. Every week, all people were invited to take part in the playful activities, practical crafts, live-sketching, and block printing, and make winter evenings a season of creativity and community. The fourth week was planned as the concert. But, political considerations forced it to be cancelled. It is also 2nd day of the 3rd week. This chapter discusses how the Winter Wonderland event operated as an experience strategy to appeal to the generation Z consumers and strengthen the artisan sustainability message of Aarong.

3.1.1 Background and Problem Statement

Aarong's mission goes beyond profit. As a subsidiary of BRAC, the brand aims to empower people and communities in situations of poverty through fair wages and access to healthcare, micro-credit and training (*About Us | Aarong*, n.d.). A recent AIM2Flourish case study noted that Aarong introduced renewable energy, water recycling and energy-efficient production processes and is "a model of inclusive

business that preserves cultural heritage while promoting economic and environmental sustainability”. The brand pays artisans immediately after receiving their products, ensuring cash flow and dignified working conditions (*From Philanthropy to Business to a Brand: Aarong Transforming Lives at Every Turn*, 2025).

Despite its strong social mission, Aarong faces a generational challenge. Gen Z consumers – born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s – are digital natives who demand authenticity, sustainability and social impact. They value personalized, immersive experiences and often discover brands through social media. Research shows that Gen Z shoppers are value-driven, expect brands to demonstrate social responsibility and prefer engaging experiences over traditional advertising. If Aarong fails to engage this cohort, its artisan-centric model may struggle to remain relevant in the long term (Priporas, Stylos, & Fotiadis, 2017).

3.1.2 Objective(s)

The primary objectives of this project are:

- **Assess Gen Z perceptions of Aarong’s Winter Wonderland.** Determine whether the event made the brand feel unique compared with other lifestyle brands and whether participants felt the artisan benefits justified product prices.
- **Evaluate the event’s role in communicating sustainability and artisan stories.** Examine whether attendees felt connected to authentic heritage and fair-trade values.

- **Analyse behavioural outcomes.** Measure time spent at the event, willingness to pay for future features and purchase intentions inspired by the experience.
- **Generate recommendations.** Offer actionable strategies to improve future experiential campaigns for Gen Z while supporting artisan sustainability.

3.1.3 Significance

The key to survival of Aarong is reaching Gen Z. It is expected that the spending power of Gen Z would grow because they become more informed and innovative. They demand their brands to be genuine, eco-friendly and socially conscious. Through experiential events, social enterprises such as Aarong are able to demonstrate their values, co-create experiences with the consumers. This study on Winter Wonderland will inform the ways in which the experiential marketing can help preserve the cultural tradition of artisans and appeal to younger consumers. The research also adds to the scholarly debate on fair-trade brands, sustainability and Gen Z marketing. (Experience Gen Z Marketing: What Makes them Loyal, n.d.),

3.1.4 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on Aarong's **Winter Wonderland 2025** at the Tejgaon outlet parking lot. Data were collected from **308 respondents** who attended the event. The survey captures demographics, perceptions of value and sustainability, satisfaction with communication, uniqueness compared with other brands, favourite aspects and behavioural intentions. The study does not encompass all Aarong customers or other marketing channels; thus its conclusions are contextual. Secondary sources include Aarong's official website, reports and scholarly articles on Gen Z behaviour and experiential marketing.

3.2 Literature Review

Gen Z consumer behaviour

Gen Z is the first generation of digital natives and they have never lived their life without being able to access information immediately. They make purchases based on value: they focus on authenticity, social responsibility, and sustainability. GenZ consumers want to have omnichannel experiences. Despite the internet habits, physical face-to-face interactions still hold significance in the lives of this generation; about half a generation of Gen Z spend their money in actual retail outlets. The factors of sustainability and ethical consumerism play a crucial role in shaping a buying choice; Generation Z prefers companies that consider the environmentally friendly approach, fair trade, and transparency. (Salam et al., 2024).

Experiential marketing and Gen Z

Experiential marketing is a marketing approach that involves intensive level of interactions with the brand, which aims at establishing emotional relationship with the consumers. Gen Z demand more than passive observation; they desire to see, experience and shape up how a brand appears. According to Attack Marketing, co-creation pop-ups and live events with social-media tie-ins enable Gen Z to experience that something real and relevant. The most positive ones are a continuation of the brand culture and values, where they demonstrate inclusiveness, support sustainability or social causes and are transparent and sincere. Brand recall, which is motivated by emotional memory, is based on surprise, joy and purpose, and transforms ordinary moments into enduring relationships. According to Vigyapan Mart, Gen Z is concerned with personalization, inclusiveness and social responsibility; an experiential campaign enables the brand to demonstrate these principles in the moment and build trust and community (Van den Bergh et al., 2024).

Aarong's social enterprise model

Aarong is a BRAC project that is focused on fair trade and empowerment of rural communities. According to the official site, Aarong has 31 retail stores and more than 100 product lines and employs more than 87000 craftspeople under fair trading conditions. Aarong is also influencing more than 320,000 people with Ayesha Abed Foundation (About Us | Aarong, n.d.-b). Aarong has gone beyond making handcrafted clothes, to jewellery, leather, metal, and wood, as well as to making use of renewable energy, recycling water and or using energy efficient production processes, according to AIM2Flourish. The strategy offers artisans with adaptive working conditions, advance payment prior to the sale of products, secure working conditions, and undertaking of fair treatment by the business. The activities were in accordance with the environmental and social justice principles of Generation Z. Winter Wonderland was a place where these values were put into practice by crafts, workshops, and stories (From Philanthropy to Business to a Brand: Aarong Transforming Lives at Every Turn, 2025c).

3.3 Methodology

This paper has used a descriptive survey to determine the perceptions of Winter Wonderland among the visitors. The use of a standardised questionnaire was applied in distributing the questionnaire both via physical and electronic methods to the participants during the four-week program. There were 308 valid responses collected. The questions in the survey covered demographic (age, gender, employment) and Likert-scale (1-5) questions that were asked to evaluate perceptions of value, relevance to sustainable values, communication efficacy, distinctiveness amongst other brands, artisan narratives, event characteristics, purchase intentions. The participants were also asked to describe the attributes that they would be happy to pay an access fee in the future and sources through which they found out about artists.

The analysis of data was conducted using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). Google Forms was used to create charts which were exported as an image. The secondary data were gathered through the official site of Aarong on the internet, journals, reports, and academic articles on Gen Z behaviour and experiential marketing. The weaknesses include non-probability sampling and potential bias of answers; however, the sample provides some valuable results concerning the Generation Z members of an exclusive experience campaign.

3.4 Findings and Analysis

3.4.1 Demographic Profile

The young age bracket of 19-22 years (42.2%), 23-28 years (27.9%), 16-18 years (22.1%), and a minor cohort between 13-15 years (7.8%) gave the majority of the responders. This confirms the fact that Winter Wonderland was mainly involving college based people and this was the main objective of Winter Wonderland Project.

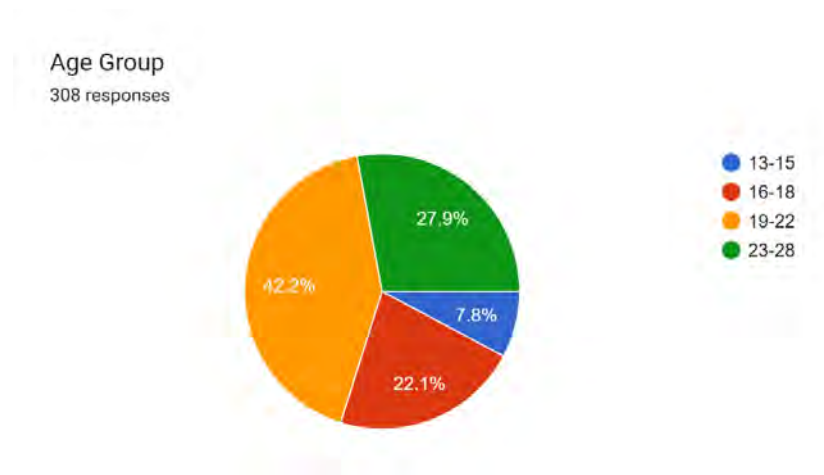


Figure 5: Age Group

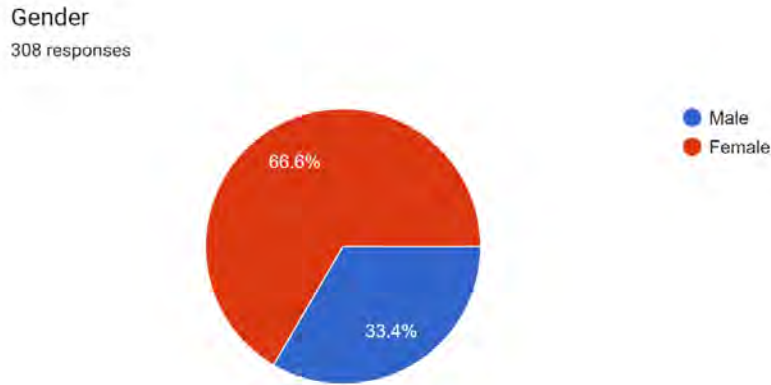


Figure 6: Gender

3.4.2 Occupational Profile

The respondents were questioned concerning the profession they are pursuing at the moment, and 81.5% of respondents were students, which shows that Winter Wonderland focuses on college attendance. Freelancers (16.6%), entrepreneurs (12%), and working professionals (11.4) were minor categories, which meant that, though early-career participants were also present at the event, it was mainly popular with the student population. There were several selections that could have been accepted and therefore lead to percentages exceeding 100. The article has only compiled the data about the generation Z, leaving out the rest of the age bracket who attended the event since the paper is strongly focused on Generation Z.

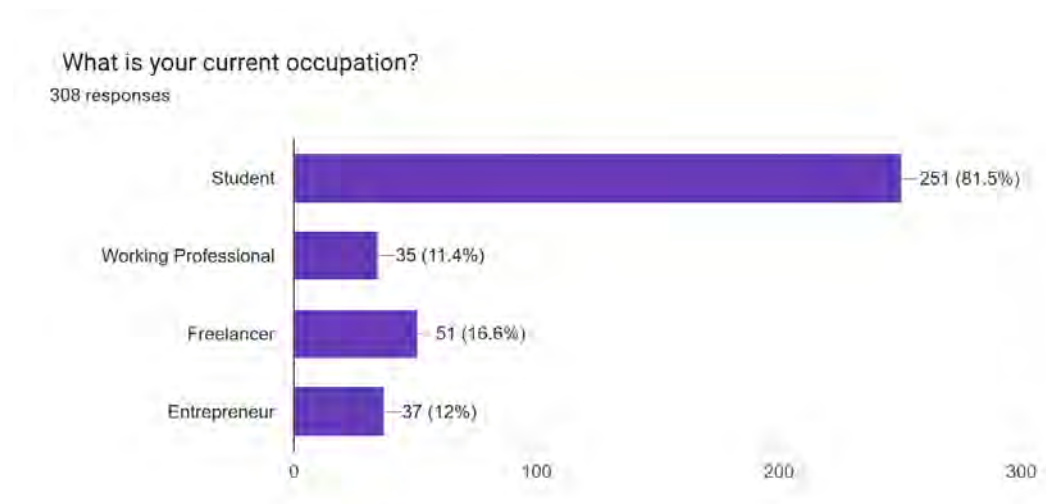


Figure 7: Occupation of Participants

3.4.3 Perceived Value vs. Price

On asking the respondents whether they believed that the artisan products sold by Aarong were worth their price (giving a scale of 0-5), most of them gave 4 (47.1%) or 3 (42.5%), a moderate to high perceived value. There were only 1.3% rating 1 (very low value) and 6.5% rating 2; 2.6% rating 5 (extremely high value) (Figure 4). It means that despite the fact that some Gen Z consumers consider Aarong product as premium, some consider that handcrafted workmanship and social impact is the reason to pay a certain amount. Gen Z will be willing to pay a higher price to buy the products that appeal to their ideology, but they are price sensitive (Prasanna & Lakshmi Priyanka, 2024). This equilibrium is represented in the distribution.

The brand now has to make the new target audience understand the perceived value of Aarong and what it brings to the artisans and how it changes their lives.

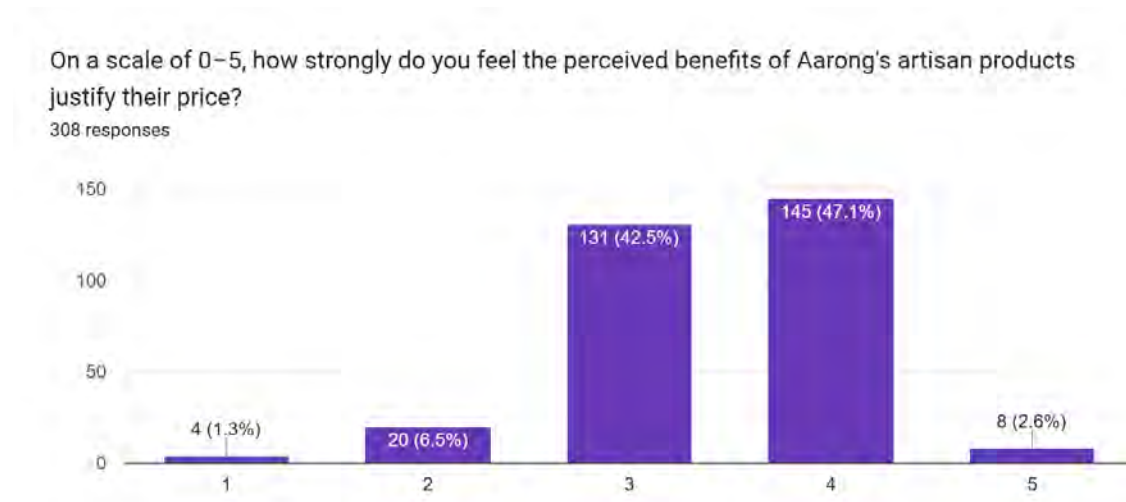


Figure 8: Justification of Price

3.4.4 Relevance to Modern Sustainable Values

The degree to which Winter Wonderland made Aarong relevant to current sustainability values was rated with 39.9% of the participants choosing option 3 and 36.7% choosing option 4 as the overall attendees considered the event as fairly relevant to the concepts of sustainability. Only 8.4% gave top rating of 5 and 15 percent rated 1 or 2. The mean rates reflect the possibility to work on the description of the sustainability activities of the brand. Generation Z requires that the brands are genuinely committed to practicing environmental and social responsiveness; therefore, the attitudes may be enhanced with the inclusion of clearer accounts of the fair-trade practices within Aarong. (Prasanna & Lakshmi Priyanka, 2024)



Figure 9: Relevancy of Aarong

3.4.5 Communication vs. Experience

Answering the question whether the social media communication during the event matched the actual experience, 39.6% of the respondents gave it a 4, and 18.8% gave it a 5. The most frequent was that 28.9% rated it as 3 and 11.4% rated it as 2, which indicates that the communication was mostly good but there were a few disconnections in it. Since social media is the primary indicator of recognition and evaluation of companies by Gen Z, there should be cohesiveness between online marketing and on-the-job delivery.

This occurred because of overcrowding. People tend to post the best moments on the social networking sites. However, this feeling of human flow was not retained in many of the posts and experiences shared by guests, which other people experienced upon entering the destination.

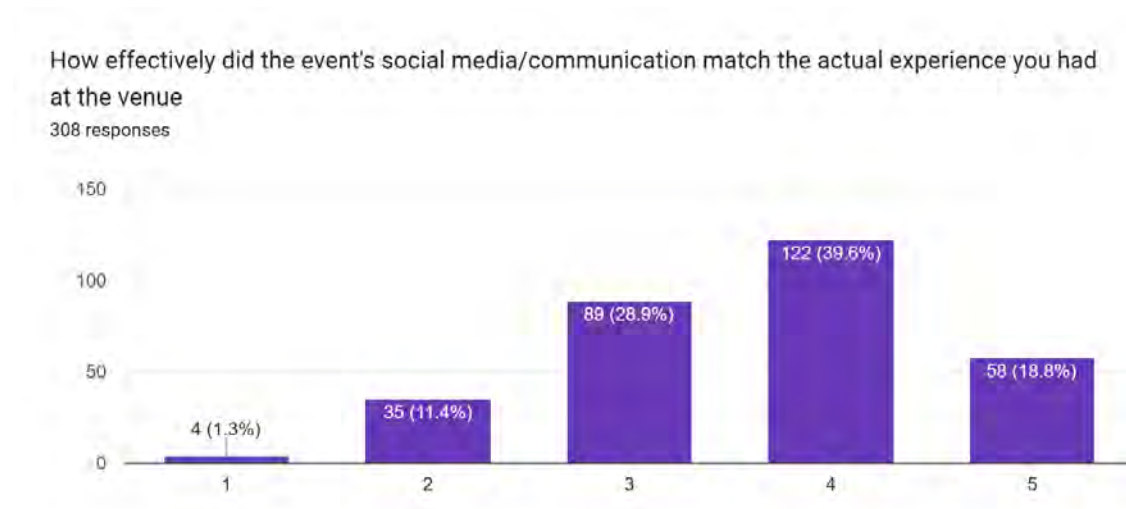


Figure 10: Social Media Communication vs. Actual Experience

3.4.6 Perceived Uniqueness vs. Other Lifestyle Brands

Winter Wonderland was an efficient way of differentiating Aarong among other lifestyle brands. More than 56.5 percentage of the respondents rated the event 5 (extremely distinctive), and 26.3 percentage rated it 4. Only 2 percent gave the lowest ratings. The results are aligned with the literature that states that Generation Z is responsive to immersive and authentic experiences that reflect brand values (Van den Bergh et al., 2024).

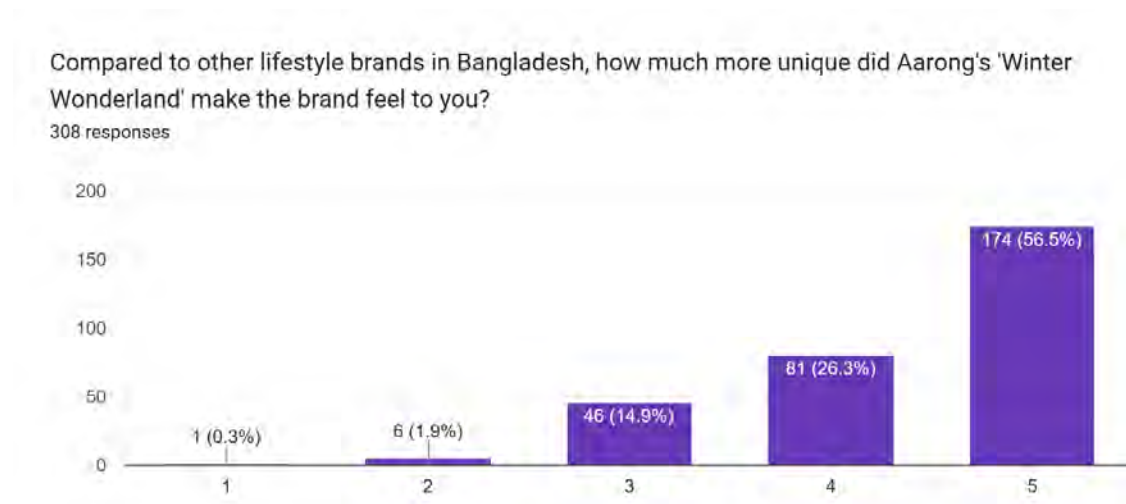


Figure 11: Uniqueness of Aarong's Winter Wonderland

3.4.7 Willingness to Pay for Future Event Features

A big majority (76.6) claimed to pay an entry price to Week 4: Concert, Week 4: Fake Wedding (18.8), Week 4: Thanda Beats DJ session (17.2) and Pitha Uthsob (4.2). Popularity of the concert also means that live music and entertainment increase the tendency to spend. In addition, people are predisposed to buy concert tickets because of being accustomed to it. The reduced attention to such cultural segments as Pitha Uthsob and artistic artisans workshops indicates that further curation or improvement might be required to realise the monetisation of this aspect.

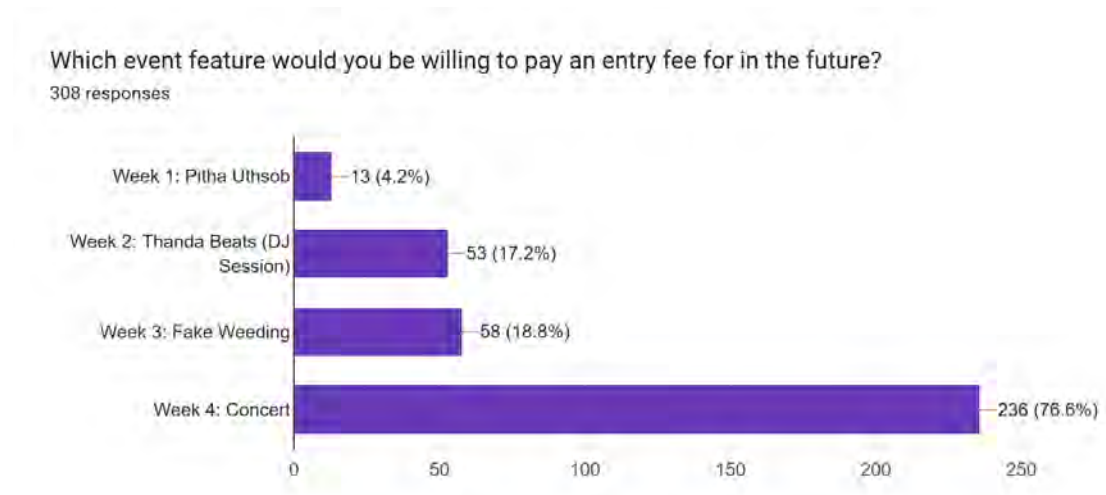


Figure 12: Willingness of Participants to Pay

3.4.8 Recommendation Likelihood

A small percentage of respondents, 17.2 showed that they would strongly recommend Winter Wonderland to others, with 80.8 stating that they probably would, with a small percentage saying otherwise. Although most participants enjoyed the event, the fact that most of them were not willing to explicitly show their support shows that the experience was not what was expected. According to the theory of experiential marketing, brands are supposed to create experiences that are memorable and shareable and encourage the participants to recommend them to others (Van den Bergh et al., 2024).

The author studied social media and had to interact with people personally, which indicates that a major contributing factor was the overcrowding of people. Lack of an access control ensured that people were flowing in the venue in large numbers which were adversely impacting the experience of the attendees.



Figure 13: Willingness to Recommend to Friends

3.4.9 Favourite Aspects of the Event

The participants were allowed to select various desired aspects. Photogenic moments and social activities (80.5%), which show the interest of Gen Z in Instagrammable experiences, were the most popular choice (Figure 10). The second one was Shopping and fashion with 30.2 and the third one was Workshops/DIY activities with 16.6. The fourth was the Activities; the fifth was DJ/Entertainment and lastly Artisan and craft exhibits with 14.9 and 8.4 respectively. There is a small group of cohorts who appreciate Traditional pitha and folk music (5.5%). These trends show that eye-catching experiences and fashionable purchasing are comparatively appealing to Gen Z. The goal of the organising team was very successful in that the visitors highly enjoyed the breathtaking event and the Winter Wonderland was the buzz of the town. Aarong can use crafts and historical accounts to a greater degree within the aesthetically pleasing spaces and social activities, which will increase the visibility of artisans.

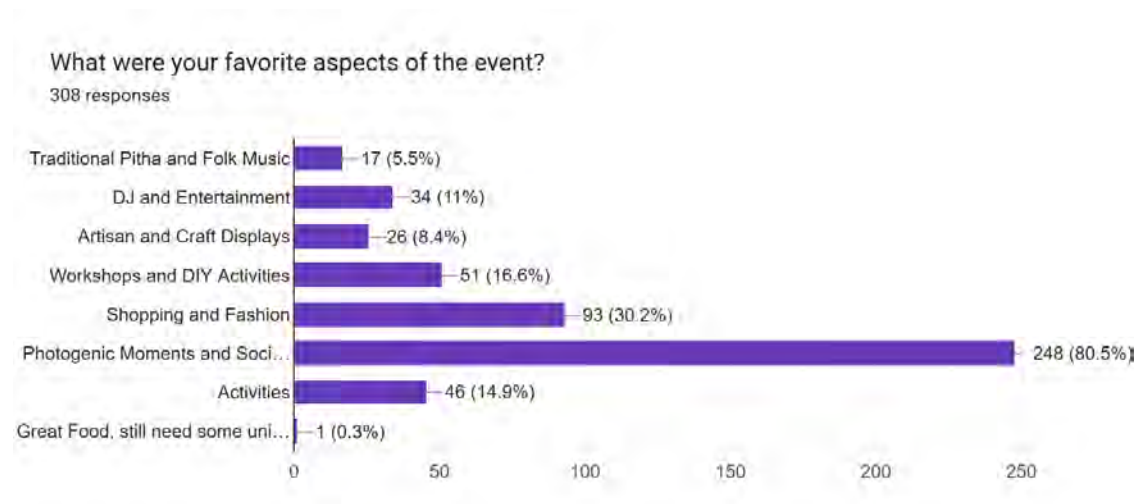


Figure 14: Favourite aspect of the Event

3.4.10 Connection to Heritage and Sustainability

Respondents graded the degree of fulfillment of their desire of authentic heritage and sustainability when reading artisan stories. A majority chose 4 (56.8%) or 3 (35.4%) (Figure 11). The highest value (1.6 percent) was picked by a minority of the respondents, and the lowest value was not picked at all. The results indicate that the subjects had a minor attachment to the past; nonetheless, better storytelling might help create more emotional appeal. This aligns with the studies that suggested that Gen Z pursues experience that is shaped by meaningful causes and social purpose (Van den Bergh et al., 2024).

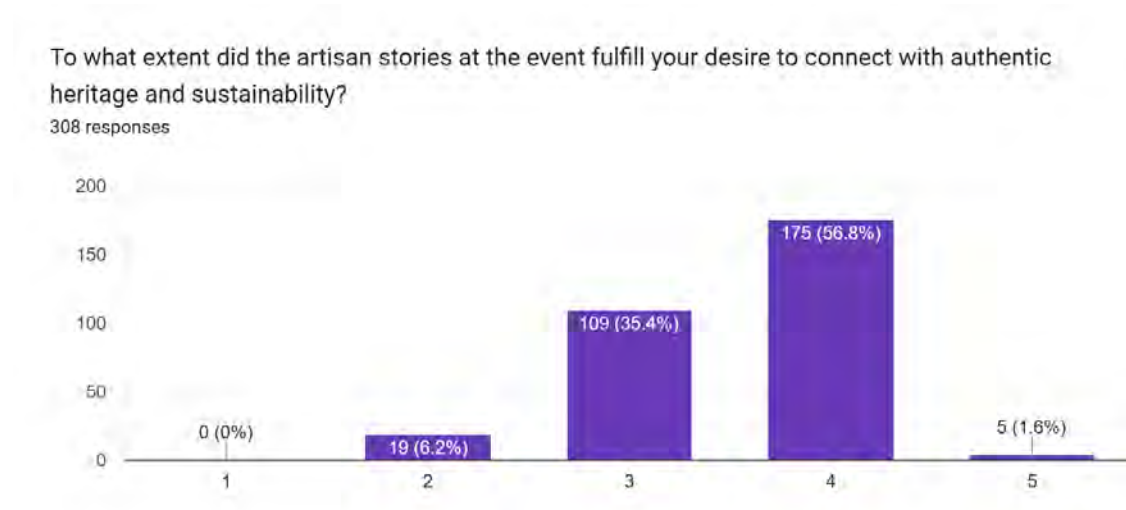


Figure 15: Connecting to Authenticity

3.4.11 Time Spent at the Event

Most respondents (74.4) spent 1-2 hours in Winter Wonderland, 10.7% spent more than 2 hours, 11.4% spent 30-60 minutes and a small percentage (3-4) spent less than 30 minutes. The statistics show that there was considerable involvement and time spent, which implies that the activities of the event made guests visit different areas. To experiential marketers, increased length of time will increase brand narrative and sales potential.



Figure 16: Duration of Time Spent in the Event

3.4.12 Influence on Purchasing Behaviour

Winter Wonderland was positive as far as purchase intentions were concerned, 89.6% of respondents said that they planned to buy at Aarong in the future, 7% purchased during the event and an even smaller proportion said that they did not intend to purchase. The finding supports the suggestion that experiential marketing can help convert the Generation Z into the consideration and purchase stage through memorable brand experiences (Van den Bergh et al., 2024).

As the author views it, people usually shop at Aarong. Specifically during Eid, which is on the offing. Guests could have planned on shopping at Aarong, but the Winter Wonderland experience could have elicited their mind to choose the latter option.

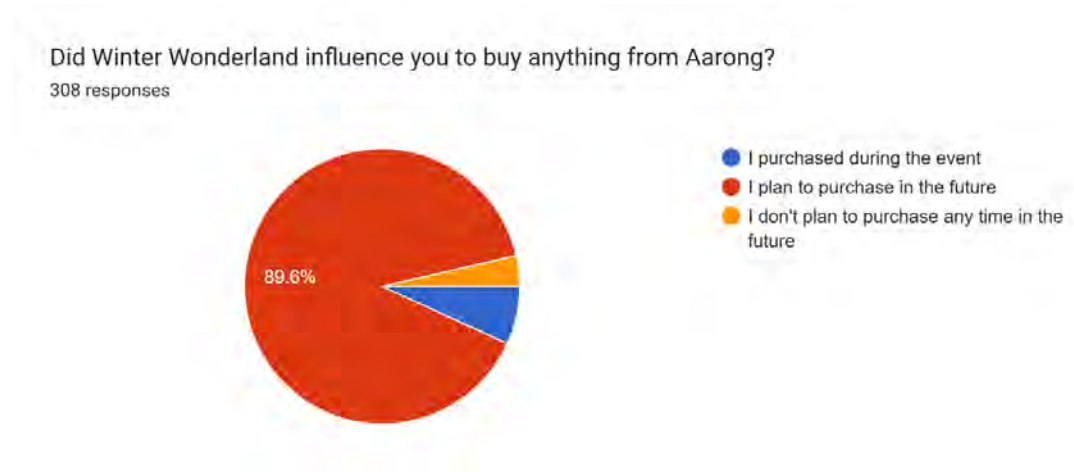


Figure 17: Influence to shop

3.4.13 Channels of Learning About Artisans

The respondents were inquired concerning their source of information on the topic of artisans during the event. Hosts (64.3%) were the most active source of information on artisans, then the staff explaining the origin and crafting process (14.3) and stories about craftsmen and their techniques (9.7%) and direct interaction with craftspeople (approximately 3-4). Importantly, 8.1 percent of those interviewed said that they had not seen any information in relation to artisans. The findings show that although Aarong aimed at prioritising artisan stories, the narration was based more on stage hosts than on interesting interactions. Since the Gen Z values authenticity and engagement, a stronger bond between the two can be achieved through a more direct experience, i.e., demonstrations by the artisans or interactive workshops.

Communication is an important element of the organizers, which prevented the effectiveness of face-to-face communication through interviews with the artisans.

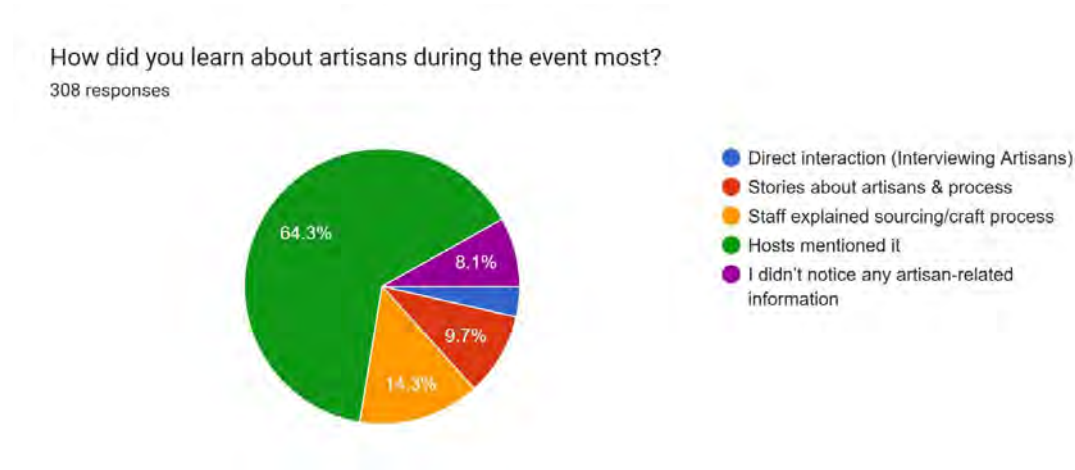


Figure 18: Source of Knowledge about the Artisan

3.4.14 Aligning Findings with BRAC Business School Marketing Curriculum

The questioner used in the survey was through the remembrance of the Course Curriculum of the BRAC Business School. Based on Principles of Marketing (MKT201) and Marketing management (MKT301), the 4P and planning bring about the concepts of planning and the 4Ps. Aarong demonstrates these ideas through thematic weeks (product), limited entry fees (price), the Tejgaon parking lot as a venue (place), and excessive focus on promotion via social media (promotion). The demographic information is possible only with the understanding of segmentation and consumer decision processes in order to personalize such experiences. Where more than 92 per cent were between 16-28 years old and 81.5 per cent students - how successfully, the event reached its target group.

Consumer-based courses such as Consumer Behavior (MKT421) focus more on psychological motivation and long term relationship development. This trend of intense interest in photogenic moments and entertainment as opposed to the conventional craft can be attributed to the need of Gen Z to experience something authentic, but more about

something shareable. Suggestions to establish community platforms and micro events throughout the year are in line with the CRM concepts where the emphasis is directed towards the perpetual interaction rather than one off campaigns.

Practical courses such as Marketing Research (MKT426) involve the students being taught how to design surveys and how to understand the data. The Winter Wonderland survey; the value perception and purchase intent are measured with the Likert scales, reflects such methods and emphasizes the usefulness of segmentation and data-driven insights. Lastly, Integrated Marketing Communication (MKT433) emphasizes on consistent channel and digital-physical channel integration. The fact that the event is based on social media and the use of influencers reflects the IMC implementation, whereas the suggestion to match the online advertising to the realities on the ground reflects the focus on the curriculum of authenticity and channel integration.

3.5 Recommendations

1 – Transparently convey narratives of sustainability and artisans

Emphasize physical influence: Sustainability expectations of the Gen Z require demonstration. Both digital displays and QR codes should be displayed to show that Aarong is a fair trade company. As one example, one might use interactive infographics in which the carbon footprint of handcrafted garments will be compared with that of fast fashion options. The delivery of facts and stories will address the need of Gen Z to stay transparent.

Bring in live artisan experiences: Have a workshop every now and then, with small timed sessions allowing the guest to meet the craftsmen, block print, weave or pot and bring theirs home. This is a reaction to the lack of interest in artisan displays and capitalizes on the participatory interests of Gen Z. Keep the groups small so as to guarantee quality and give focus on the human stories behind each craft.

Enhance the storytelling with hosts and technology: Educate hosts and employees on how to tell not only the product information, but also the life stories of the artisans, their community and the effect of fair pay. Build on these narratives with concise videos or augmented reality filters accessible via cellphones to enrich the connection to heritage.

2 - Improve event design and crowd control.

Introduce ticketing and scheduled access: Overpopulation negatively affected the experience and the possibility of recommendation. Adopt a seat reservation system (even in free events) on time basis to regulate the flow and create comfortable interaction areas. Provide early bird or golden hour passes to those wishing to have less activity.

3 - Build and nurture community

Host micro events all year: Have smaller pop ups/ maker market in universities or community centres where crafts can be demonstrated by artisans. This strategy will ensure that Aarong stays in the life of Gen Z even after the flagship event, and it creates a sense of continuous communication.

Get feedback and develop the experience of the future: Survey, focus groups, social listening to know which parts of the event can be listened to and which need to be improved. Engage the Gen Z consumers in the planning (e.g. advisory boards, crowdsourced theme ideas) to make it relevant and to make the consumers feel like they own it.

5 - Implement the principles of marketing analytics and research.

Action ROI and consumer flow: Monitor sales conversion, social media engagement, ticket reservations, duration of Wi-Fi or app check-in, and total hours spent. Marketing Analytics dashboards can be used to test what activities bring engagement and modify the budgets in the future.

Longitudinal research: Contact attendees several months after they attended the event in order to quantify the long-term effects of the event on brand perception, purchase behaviour and advocacy. This is in line with concepts of the Marketing Research and will serve to inform long term strategy.

Conclusion

The case of Aarong in 2020- 24 indicates the weaknesses and strengths of a social enterprise. The pandemic caused a drastic shrinkage, yet the brand reacted to it through cost control and product diversification which drove the revenue to BDT 16.49 billion in 2024 with the average growth rate of nearly 30 per cent per year. The figures of positive EVA in 2023-24 ensure that Aarong has started to make returns more than its cost of capital, which would enable it to invest back to artisan livelihoods and social programmes in BRAC. Nevertheless, structural weaknesses have also been revealed in the analysis: cost of goods sold occupies over 60 percent of revenue, the quick ratio and inventory turnover have worsened, and net profit margins dropped to 5.10 percent in 2024. To protect its financial wellbeing, the business will have to increase supply-chain effectiveness, manage overhead costs and working-capital.

The case study of Winter Wonderland demonstrates that experience-based marketing can help close the social mission of Aarong and the expectations of Gen Z. The month long event was able to reach its target market of more than 92 percent of respondents aged 16-28 years and 81.5 percent students as well as to over half of users who rated the experience as highly distinct with regard to the other lifestyle brands. The use of photogenic environments, socialization and live shows motivated interactions and made most of the visitors into prospective buyers. However, recommendations of the event by

17 percent were overwhelmingly positive, sustainability messages were viewed as average and being crowded with too many people spoiled the fun. The survey reveals that Generation Z is inclined to pay a premium for brands that provide authentic narratives and demonstrate a clear social impact. Hence, Aarong should integrate transparent accounts of fair trade and environmental practices, facilitate artisan small-group workshops, regulate access to prevent overcrowding, and foster a year-round community through micro-events and feedback mechanisms.

Put simply, a combination of these indicate a twofold imperative of Aarong: to be financially sound and to strengthen experiential relationships. Constant profitability allows further investment in artisans and the innovative market which prefigures craftsmanship, heritage and sustainability will make the brand remain relevant to a younger audience. The cost discipline and immersive storytelling and community-building can help Aarong continue its tradition as a profitable social enterprise empowering rural artisans and close to Gen Z culture.

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