

# **INSIDE AARONG:**

# **MARKETING ACTIVITIES**

# OF AN ETHICAL BRAND

BUS 400 Internship Report



APRIL 4, 2018

# **BUS-400**

Internship Report

On

# Inside Aarong: Marketing Activities of an Ethical Brand



## **Submitted to:**

Mayesha Tasnim

Lecturer

**BRAC Business School** 

**BRAC** University

# **Submitted by:**

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**Date of submission:** 04/04/2018

Letter of transmittal

Mayesha Tasnim

Lecturer, BRAC Business School

**BRAC** University

Subject: Submission of Internship Report

Dear Miss.

I am submitting this report with absolute pleasure, which has been prepared while abiding by the

requirements of the course BUS 400 as well as the rules set by my host organization, Aarong.

The report is based on the experiences gathered from my three months long internship in the

Marketing department of Aarong. During the internship I got the opportunity to consolidate my

theoretical learnings with practical application. I also feel that this program prepared me to tackle

the practicality of the real business world as a Marketer.

I would also like to thank you for providing valuable assistance and guidance to me to help

complete this report.

Sincerely,

Labib Ishmam Khalid

ID: 13204058

#### Letter of Endorsements

25<sup>th</sup> February, 2018

Mr. Syed Redwanur Rahman

Marketing Manager

**BRAC-Aarong** 

Aarong Centre, 346, Tejgaon Industrial Area

Dhaka 1208, Bangladesh

Subject: Letter of Endorsements

Dear Mr. Redwan,

I, Ms. Mayesha Tasnim, hereby authorize my student (Labib Ishmam Khalid), to make an internship report on your organization and fill the forms on my behalf. He will also claim detail and other related non-confidential documents from your office, you can offer on my behalf. I have asked him to verify all the documents and collect the details from your office within 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2018. You are requested to allow him complete access to the above mentioned grounds. Feel free to contact me via email on mayesha.tasnim2000@gmail.com for any further clarifications needed.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully yours,

Mayesha Tasnim

Lecturer,

**BRAC Business School** 

# Acknowledgement

At the very beginning, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my Internship Supervisor Ms Mayesha Tasnim, Lecturer, BRAC Business School, BRAC University for her supervision during the internship period. Her valuable suggestions and guidelines helped me to prepare the report in an orderly fashion.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my on-site Supervisor, Syed Redwanur Rahman, Manager, Marketing, Aarong, for his close supervision and keenness in letting me take on challenging tasks in the Marketing Department throughout the duration of my internship.

I would like to extend my gratitude towards all the co-workers in my department for helping me throughout the journey as they have given me all kinds of information, guidance and feedback required in order to complete this report.

Finally, I would like to mention my gratitude to all the officers and employees of Aarong for giving me such a pleasurable working experience.

# **Executive Summary**

Aarong is the leading lifestyle retail chain in Bangladesh and is a 40 year old organization. It is the source of livelihood for about 65,000 artisans spread throughout the country of which some are reached through the Ayesha Abed foundation which manages 37 centers and 637 sub-centers of production where artisans can and find employment as well as produce their products.

This report attempts to explain the values and culture of Aarong, its people and the marketing department. Additionally it also puts light on the details of the various kinds of work that I have had to do in campaigns such as Aarong Spring and Valentine Campaign, Aarong Sale, Aarong Boishakh 1425 Campaign, Aarong Boishakh 1425 Collection Preview event and the upcoming Aarong Eid-ul-Fitr Campaign and all the other miscellaneous works. I have explained the lessons learnt over the course of my internship, how I haveovercome the challenges I have faced and how valuable are the experiences that I have gathered. The report also provides an insight into the activities of Aarong's Marketing Department as well as how I have tackled the responsibilities and work that I have been given.

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#### Part 1

#### **Organization Overview**

The word Aarong stands for 'village fair' in Bengali and as a brand, Aarong is meant to invoke a deeper connection with people to their rural roots. BRAC, the world's largest development organization initiated Aarong back in 1978 which is currently one of the 18 social enterprises of BRAC. Turning 40 this year, Aarong has been working with BRAC towards alleviating poverty through economic development and capacity building, while putting a strong emphasis on women empowerment. Born from humblest of beginnings, Aarong now is Bangladesh's largest lifestyle retail chain. It has 18 outlets all over Bangladesh, covering all the important cities like Dhaka, Chittagong, Bogra etc. Currently, Aarong is the source of livelihood for about 65,000 artisans spread throughout the country, some of whom are reached through the Ayesha Abed Foundation which runs 37 centers and 637 sub-centers of production.

Aarong has a very strong marketing team which is continuously raising the bars in the fashion and lifestyle industry in Bangladesh. In recognition of this, The Asian Marketing Federation (AMF) awarded Aarong with the Marketing 3.0 award which is promoted by renowned marketer Philip Kotler, on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016 (Aarong, 2016).

The Organogram of the Marketing Department, Organizational process flow and list of outlets are all available in the Appendix.

#### Part 2

#### 1. Introduction

#### 1. a. Rationale

A marketing campaign consists of various activities from inside a marketing department. But a successful execution of a campaign demands cooperation within all the wings inside the department. And this blend of activities is very hard to replicate in a classroom environment. So to understand how such activities are carried out, a study is required to be carried out while being involved in the activities. This study will give me a real life perspective of the teachings from the classroom which will also help me consolidate my learnings with actual working experience for the betterment of my future career as a marketer. I hope this study can help everyone have a detailed insight into the marketing activities of a leading organization that can also be used as a case study in BRAC Business School.

#### 1. b. Background

Aarong is a Bangladeshi lifestyle retail chain that started its operations back in 1978 which operates under BRAC. The word Aarong stands for 'village fair' in Bengali and is currently Bangladesh's most popular lifestyle retail chain. The brand initially started as a means to empower rural artisans so that their poverty could be alleviated. This ethical brand prides itself

for supporting 65,000 artisans with fair terms of trade. Aarong is an iconic Bangladeshi brand that is setting the standards of quality and artistry and reaching more and more consumers through 18 retail stores all over Bangladesh with over 100 fashion and lifestyle product lines. (Aarong, 2018)

BRAC tried to engage a few rural women to produce handicrafts back in 1976, but there was a severe limitation with the supply and payment as their only buyers existed as few scattered retailers in Dhaka. In order to create a proper supply and retail channel through which the artisans could produce and get paid efficiently, BRAC established Aarong. Since then, Aarong has created for themselves a unique market segment for handicrafts, and also revived Bangladesh's rich heritage. In the last four decades, Aarong managed to impact the lives of more than 325,000 people through 850 small entrepreneurs and the Ayesha Abed Foundation, which acts as Aarong's production hub, where artisans are provided with employment and access to various kinds of support that BRAC provides such as micro-credit, maternal health care, legal aid, day care and education for their children.(Aarong, 2018)

Aarong boasts a product line consisting of clay pots, diamond jewelry, silk and cotton fabrics to brass and leather merchandise. And these are all backed by the marketing activities of Aarong which has turned them into a household name in Bangladesh. And it has been acknowledged internationally, when The Asian Marketing Federation (AMF) awarded Aarong with the Marketing 3.0 award promoted by renowned marketer Philip Kotler on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016.(Aarong, 2018)

#### 1. c. Objectives

#### General Objective:

 To attain knowledge and experience about the activities surrounding a marketing campaign.

#### Specific objectives:

- To accumulate experience of applying classroom learnings in real life marketing activities.
- To bring out the elements that contributes towards successful running of a marketing campaign.

#### 2. Review of Related Literature

This report is the culmination of my internship experience at BRAC-Aarong. The internship program is an employer offered opportunity for studentsinterested to gain work experience in a particular industry. This is an opportunity to have a hands-on opportunity in the desired field of work which helps to learn to application of study in the real world and become a stronger candidate for a job after graduation. It is also a great way for a trial of a certain career which can ultimately aid in choosing the best career path. (Loretto, 2018)

I had been assigned to work at the Marketing Department of Aarong. From here, all the marketing activities of Aarong are controlled. Marketing is the process of creating and capturing value by building strong customer relations. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009) To create such relations, running of Marketing Campaigns are integral to a company's marketing activities. The marketing efforts of a company to create or increase awareness targeting particular product or service or the organization itself is a marketing campaign. A marketing campaign has a defined duration of running. (Business Dictionary, 2018).

Aarong is a brand that is one of the most iconic in Bangladesh and is also a household name. A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of all these that identifies the products or services of a particular business and differentiates them from its competitors.(Kotler & Armstrong, 2009)

Aarong maintains a high degree of brand consistency across all its promotions and outlet ambience. Brand consistency is the attempt of a business to communicate with its audience in a manner that does not detract or wander away from the business's core brand strategy, values and foundation (Brand Consistency Defined, 2018).

According to Swystun, consistency is the second most important aspect of branding after differentiation. Brands are often criticized or praised based on the uniformity and consistency of the experience they manage to deliver. (Swystun, 2007)

Work orders are required for several marketing activities involving outside contractors essential for running a campaign. A work order is a written order from the client providing a defined

amount of authorization to the contractor to proceed with the execution given orders (Business Dictionary, 2018).

Aarong has a very efficient marketing system and has ATL, BTL and TTL advertising activities integrated into the system. Marketing activities involving advertisements are divided into three categories today— Above the Line (ATL), Below the Line (BTL), & Through the Line (TTL). The line was originally referred to separate activities into two extremes, mass penetration (above the line) and specific penetration (below the line). But these days, the increased competition and development in technology resulted in through the line emerging as a new term for marketing activities which incorporates the use of both ATL & BTL advertising activity(Pahwa, 2017).

#### 3. Activities Undertaken:

I was one of the two Interns at the Marketing Department of Aarong. As I was attached with the Manager of the department, I had the opportunity to work with teams all around the department. Most of my activities revolved around Branding and Creative though.

#### Key responsibilities:

#### Making presentation briefings:

During my internship program I have had to make several PowerPoint presentations for various purposes. When another brand wanted to collaborate with Aarong with something, I was tasked to go through their proposals and prepare presentations that gave brief answers to the following questions:

- What kind of collaboration is expected from Aarong? (For example, to be the wardrobe partner for a certain television show.)
- What is in it for Aarong? (How much will Aarong be mentioned in the collaboration.)
- Is it feasible for Aarong to collaborate? (If the show is popular enough to make the collaboration beneficial for Aarong's promotion.)
- What was the standpoint of Aarong when collaborating with the same party in any previous instance? What were the outcomes from the collaboration?
- Recommendations

Then I had made some presentations for the creative team on the following topics:

- Probable photo shoot locations with pictures
- List of top fashion photographers worldwide

#### **Communicating with different departments:**

During my internship period I have had to communicate with many different departments for various activities. Departments included Accounts, Procurement, Design, Human Resource, Warehouse, Store, E-commerce, Merchandising, CRM and Documentation. Marketing activities of Aarong require close communication with these departments and I had to work relatively close with all of them.

#### Making Layouts for photo-shoots:

Every photo-shoot required layouts of outfits, models and jewelry to be made. This was job was mainly done by the management but I was also tasked to assist in the process. This layout making process involved some of Aarong's expert Designers as well. They used to help with the color combinations and jewelry pairing. Layout making also involved choosing which costume should be worn by which model and which costume(s) should feature in which layout. I then had to make PowerPoint slides of those layouts so that the management can show it to the DGM and

higher level management for final approval. If there was any change made to the layouts, then those corrections were made on the final slides by me as well.

#### Distributing items to different outlets:

I had the duty to distribute marketing materials such as Cutouts, stand signage, table-talkers etc. when a new campaign was launched. These materials had to be delivered across 18 outlets across Bangladesh. Of those, the materials for the 11 outlets inside Dhaka were delivered with my presence. I had to travel to as far as Wari in Old Dhaka to Uttara in a single day for ensuring proper distribution. This was required because different outlets require different amount of materials. I had to communicate with all the outlet managers to ensure that they are receiving their allocated items. The materials that had to go to outlets outside of Dhaka were sent by official transport or courier services.

#### **Communicating with Models:**

Models were required to come to the marketing department few days before the photo-shoots so that they can trial the outfits and adjustments can be made before the actual photo-shoot takes place. They also had to be present at the day of the photo-shoot in time. So I was tasked time to

time to help with communicating with the models so that there are no hiccups here and there. Communicating with them early was important because models tend to have a very busy schedule and by getting the schedules of all the models, a comprehensive plan could be made on choosing a date for the shoot or looking for a replacement model.

#### **Photo-shoot Duty:**

I have been tasked to be present on the photo-shoot sites during multiple campaigns. There I had to do various kinds of tasks. Some of them were:

- Collecting required accessories, jewelry, shoes and clothes for photo-shoot from Aarong Gulshan outlet
- Receiving items for the shoot from internal warehouse and store
- Going to certain places for collecting props for the shoot and bringing them to the sets
- Communicating with production team
- Communicating with models and stylists between shoots of layouts
- Travelling back and forth to the Aarong Centre for carrying important or urgent documents
- Assisting in planning transportation for the models and staffs
- Receiving photographers from the airport

#### **Handling Bills and Work Orders:**

The Marketing department of Aarong has work with outside vendors constantly. Different tasks are done by various vendors. So there is a constant flow of bills in the department. These bills have to be settled with the accounts department. So many work orders and summary bills are being made I have been tasked with creating some of them. I was always given inputs and guidelines so that these important pieces of documents are created without any mistake and I have adhered to it. I also had to do bill entries into accounting books. These tasks were carried out very carefully by me because it involved money and no mistake is small in these cases. After doing these tasks for some time, I can now be left with these duties reliably rarely requiring any assistance. I also had to work closely with the accounting department while carrying out these tasks as they require attention by them as well.

#### **Controlling LCD displays:**

Aarong has LCD displays inside all of their outlets which is used to play the intended contents such as videos or slideshows relating to an ongoing campaign. Most of those displays can be controlled from the Marketing department at Aarong Centre, with the rest also coming under central control in the coming days. During the absence of the concerned person, I am tasked to log into the computers through the network and control the contents being played on the displays. I had also helped in pointing out which displays are not functioning properly.

#### **Cataloging online products for remarketing:**

I have been tasked with creating catalogs of products that are being marketed on a current campaign but will be remarketed as well after the end of that campaign. Those products had to be cataloged from the Aarong website with their product codes, pictures and URL.

#### Assisting the Co-workers with miscellaneous tasks:

I had the privilege to work with seniors who have guided me throughout the program. Everyone tried to involve me in their work as they showed the level of trust they had on me. Due to the variety of tasks, I was able to experience many different activities that a Marketing Department has to do.I have done tasks like:

- Attending to official guests
- Assisting with printing and photo-copying
- Delivering MOUs to different organizations
- Receive important marketing items
- Take part in brain storming session

#### Responsibilities on Boishakh 1425 campaign:

Boishakh is one of Aarong's biggest campaigns each year. So a lot of effort is put into this campaign by the Marketing department. For this campaign, I was involved with the photo-shoot and the video shoot for the promotional contents and the Boishakh Preview event.

#### Boishakh campaign photo and video shoot:

For the shoots, 14 layouts were created and costumes were selected from a shortlist for all the layouts. The Sarees, Panjabis and SKDs had to be collected from the outlets or the store to help make the layouts and also for use in the following shoots and event. Then the concepts for the set were created which can complement the outfits. Then the required poses for different layouts were added to create a 'Moodboard'. Then models were communicated to come to the office for trial so that necessary adjustments could be made before the actual shoot. Preparations before the shoot also involved preparation of work orders for different vendors who gave us production and creative support, photography, shoot location, food etc. Then I had to go to various spots to collect props for the photo-shoot. I was also entrusted with receiving and accompanying two high profile Fashion Photographers from India before the day of the shoot. On the day of the photo-shoot, I had several kinds of duties like monitoring the vendors, helping with logistics, communicating with models and staff etc. After the end of the shoot, I had to assist in processing and entering all kinds of bills associated with the shoot.

The video shoot for TVC was conducted a few weeks after the photo shoot. The preparations were pretty much the same because layouts and models remained the same and it was conducted on the same set and location. I had the duty to collect the exact same props and items that were used for the photo shoot.

With all the contents from the photo shoot and video shoot, the promotional contents were created. In the meanwhile, billboards and display boards across different locations were rented in time to launch the promotional campaign. The contents were edited according to the specifications of the displays and billboards. I had to assist in making the work orders for displaying the intended contents.

Some end products from the photo-shoot are as follows (next page).

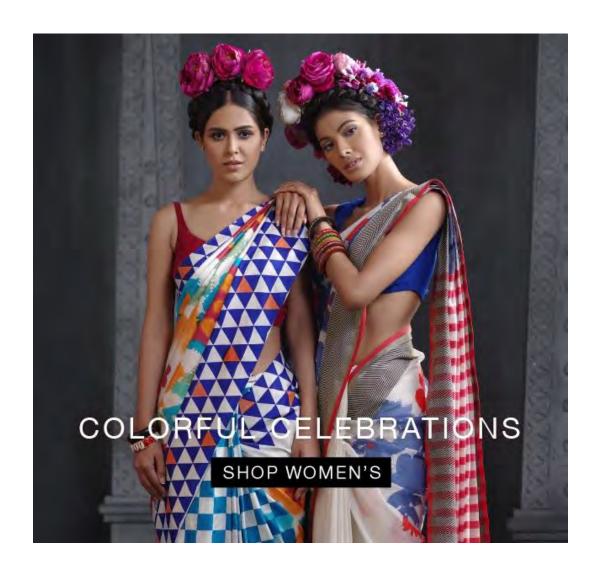


Fig 1: Boishakh Photoshoot



Fig 2: Boishakh Photoshoot



Fig 3: Boishakh Photoshoot

Boishakh collections from Aarong are one of the most celebrated in Bangladesh. Before the launch of every Boishakh collection, Aarong organizes a preview event for the premium customers. This year it was organized at the Bashundhara City Aarong Outlet. For this event, the privileged customers were notified through sms by CRM. A fashion show is organized every year for the preview event, so it was required to visit the outlet for finding out good location for conducting the fashion show walk. It was also required for us to meet with Bashundhara City Shipping Centre authorities to get the permission to let privileged customers to enter the outlet before the shopping mall actually opens. On the other hand, the models who were present for the photoshoot had to be contacted again and some new models had to be added to the list. This is due to the fact that there were more outfits to be showcased than the number of models hired for the previous shoots. So the new models had to go through the trial process for outfit adjustment again. I had also assisted on making the transport plans for all the models, beauticians and staff. There were four brand promoters present for the event and I had the role of guiding and monitoring them during the event.

At the day of the event, I had assisted with administering the event successfully. During the event I had monitor the vendor who were providing the food for the staff, models and guests. After the preparations ended, I had been reassigned to take a brand promoter and with his help to ensure that the guests who are allowed to enter were only membership card holders. Because the time of the event starting was an hour before the regular outlet opening times and as it was an exclusive event. It was challenging because turning back customers is a very tricky task because

if the reason for the denial was somehow not conveyed to the regular customers properly, then that could have turned into a CRM crisis.

After handling the entry of the guests, I had been tasked to assist with all the other administrative tasks to the end of the event. After the event ended, I had to assist in packing up everything. Tasks included collecting all the costumes and accessories back from the models and ensure that none goes missing.

During the event, a Platinum grade customer lost her card inside the outlet. I was assigned to make handle the situation. So I personally assisted her in communicating with the outlet staff and getting a new membership card. She was satisfied and delighted with the treatment she got.



Fig 4: Boishakh 1425 Preview

#### Other Campaign activities:

The Aarong Boishakh Collection Preview 1425 event kicked off the launch of the Boishakh collection and promotional campaign. So all outlets had to get updated cutouts and other materials for the running campaign. So I was tasked with the distribution of those across all the outlets and also ensure that the right quantities are given. For the outlets in Dhaka, I personally visited all the outlets with the materials and distributed them while communicating with the Floor managers of all those outlets. For outlets outside of Dhaka, the materials were delivered with the help of a Courier partner.

The start of the promotional campaign meant the promotional materials also started showing up across all platforms. Platforms included social media, newspaper, billboards, movie theatres, road side displays etc. I assisted in creating the related work orders for all these ATL, BTL and TTL activities.

The final activity involving the campaign is going through the returning process of all the Sarees, Panjabis & SKDs, Jewelry and Accessories to the store or the outlets from where these were brought.

## 4. Challenges and Proposed Course of Action for Improvement

My internship at Aarong and preparing a report on it was not all plain sailing. There were plenty of challenges for me to tackle. Although those were all eventually overcome, there are some scopes of improvement that I will be proposing here.

#### 4. a. Observed in the organization

#### Challenges

- The branding materials (Cutouts, Table talkers etc.) for each campaign are always produced centrally from a single vendor due to Brand Consistency issues. This results in additional costs and delays for delivering the materials to the outlets outside of Dhaka. Due to this, sometimes the materials does not reach the outlets in time for the launch of a campaign.
- Interns may have to work long hours without the facility for flexible work hours.
- As an intern, I was mostly assigned to small tasks where there was very limited scope available to show my abilities.

#### Proposed Course of Action for Improvement:

- Aarong can come into understanding with the closest vendors to the outlets outside
   Dhaka for producing the branding materials with strict guidelines from the Marketing
   team to reduce the time and cost penalty of sending the materials from Dhaka.
- The organization can offer flexible work hours for the interns so that their work hours can be compatible with the supervisor.
- Interns could be tasked with doing some less sensitive tasks while attaching an officer as a guide.

#### 4. b. Academic Preparation

#### Challenges

- The work in a Marketing Department demands a lot of inter-personal communications
  and negotiations to be done with different departments or outside vendors and partners.
  But technically, there are no academic courses for a marketing major to tackle these
  challenges.
- The learning of how to use an online marketing tool like the Google Analytics was not available in our curriculum due to a paywall. So understanding this tool was a challenge to me.

#### Proposed Course of Action for Improvement:

- More practical tasks can be designed as assignments in marketing courses to prepare the students for inter departmental and outside communications.
- An online marketing course could be designed that will familiarize the students with contemporary online marketing tools.

## 5. Lessons Learned from the Internship Program:

#### 5. a. Implications to Organization based Affiliation:

- The values and objectives of Aarong
- The marketing activities that Aarong executes
- The caliber of Aarong's sales and marketing
- Aarong's organizational process flow
- The quality and capabilities of personnel working for Aarong
- The environment of respect for everyone

#### 5. b. Implications to University's Internship Program:

- Aligning the learnings from the classroom with the real world business world
- Filled the gap of actual work experience that the classroom cannot provide
- How to represent BRAC University in a manner that improves the reputation of the University and enabling outside organizations to put more trust on graduates from the institution.

#### 5. c. Others:

- How to follow orders and execute them effectively and efficiently
- How to behave in a work environment
- How to work for the betterment of the organization
- How to carve out a work-life balance

#### 6. Concluding Statements

#### 6. a. Recapitulation:

It was a privilege for me to have had the opportunity to do my internship at the Marketing Department of BRAC-Aarong. It is Bangladesh's most successful lifestyle retail chain with almost 40 years of history. The internship exposed me to the diverse nature of work that a marketing department does. It also allowed me to interact with the huge network of suppliers and operations that Aarong has provided and use it as a platform to gather real life experience and develop some practical skills. Working alongside people of different duties also taught me to appreciate everyone's contribution because the work process of Aarong is woven around them with care. I feel honored to have worked with people all around this process that starts from the artisans and leads to the outlets. My supervisor made sure that I have a proper learning experience during my internship by attaching me to all kinds of activities that the department executes. The officers and executives also guided me throughout and taught me each of the processes with care and patience so that I could be gradually trusted with responsibilities. The overall positive experience that I have got from this internship program encouraged me to pursue a career in the world of Marketing.

#### 6. b. Recommendations for Future Strategic Actions:

#### For the organization

- The Aarong Gulshan outlet is Aarong's best-selling outlet and host some of the most premium and high profile guests from time to time. So it needs to be renovated and refurbished in order because the ambience inside the outlet has become dated.
- Because Aarong is growing at a fantastic pace, the work inside the organization is also
  increasing which is making it harder for the existing work force to cope. So increasing
  some staff in various departments should be on the cards for Aarong in the near future.

#### For the university

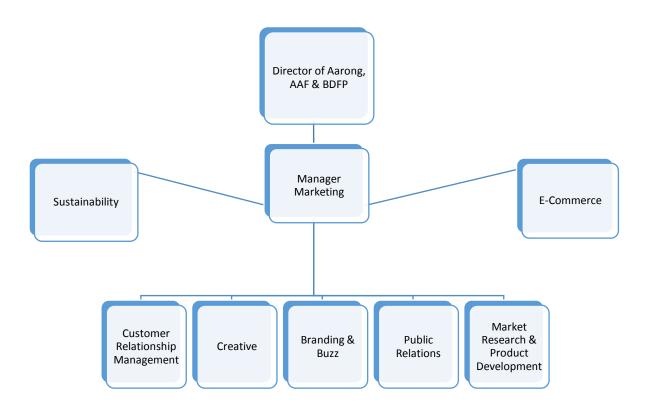
• The deadlines regarding the internship report could be tailored to ensure it is at or after the end of an intern's internship period. Because if the intern still has a month of the internship period left at the organization, he/she has incomplete information and findings about the organization and its processes to write an intriguing report. This problem specially arises when the internship starts sometime after the advising procedure.

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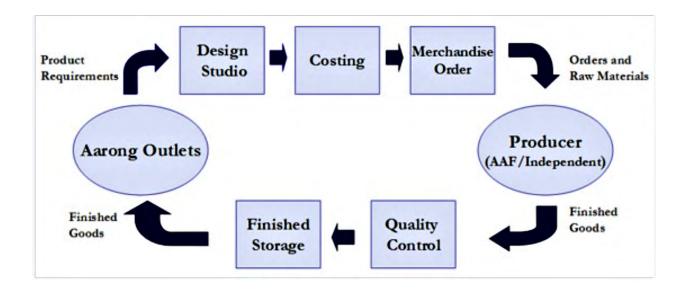
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# Appendix:

## 1. Organogram of the Marketing Department:



## 2. Aarong Organizational Process Flow



# 3. List of Aarong Outlets

Location	Date of inception	Closing date
Sobhanbag, Dhaka	1978	Closed sometime around 1980s
Sholoshahar, Chittagong	1983	
Moghbazar, Dhaka	1984	
Zindabazar, Sylhet	1985	
Lalmatia, Dhaka	1989	
New Market, Khulna	1995	
Gulshan, Dhaka	1997	
Wari, Dhaka	1998	2016, changed location
Uttara, Dhaka	2001	2011, reopened as flagship
Halishahar, Chittagong	2008	
Mirpur, Dhaka	2010	
Ranir bazar, Comilla	2012	
Ukilpara, Narayanganj	2013	
Jamuna Future Park, Dhaka	2014	
Dhanmondi, Dhaka	2015	
Banani, Dhaka	2015	
Bashabo, Dhaka	2016	
Bashundhara City, Dhaka	2017	
Jaleshwaritala, Bogra	2017	