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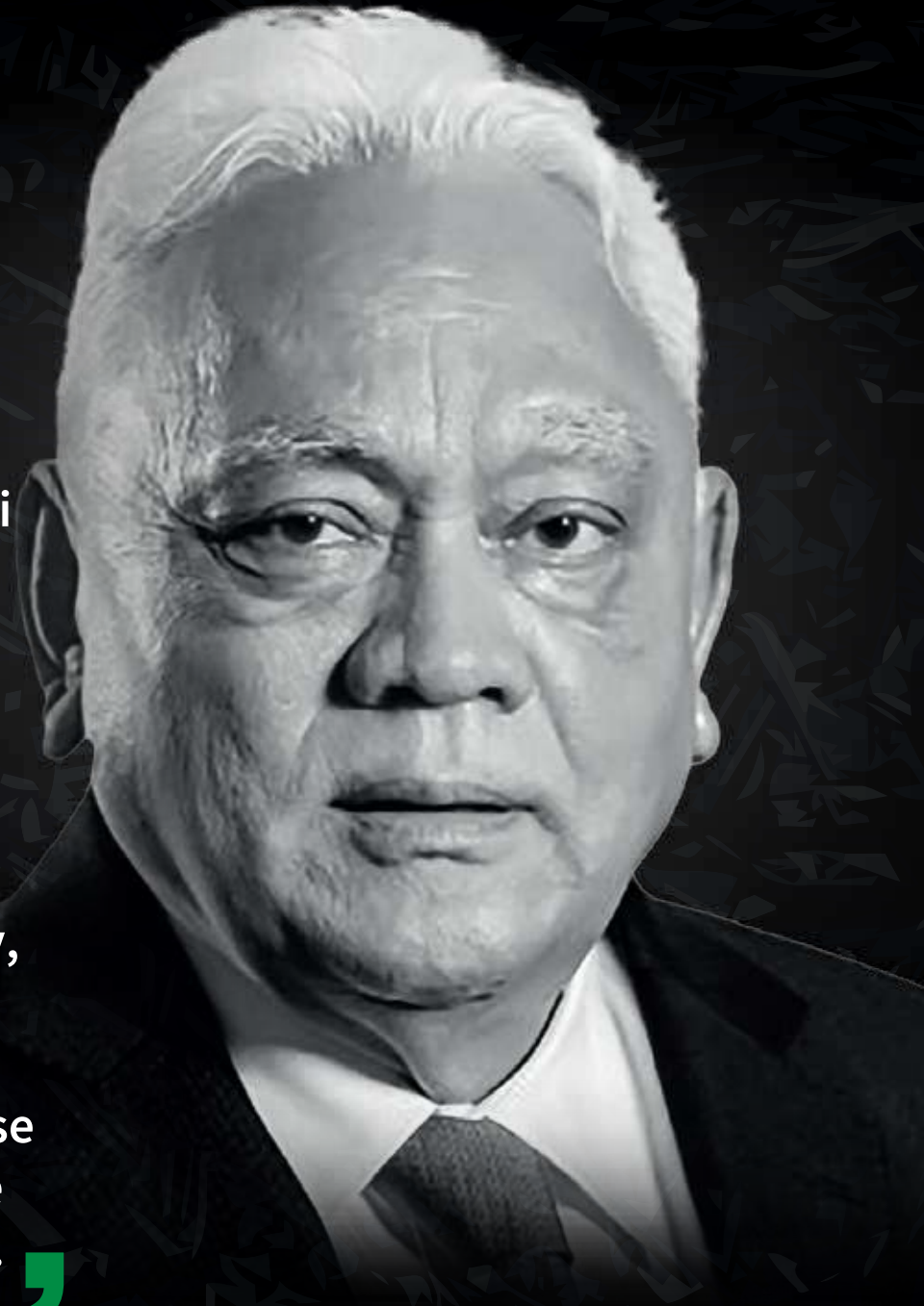


**THE RISE OF MOULDED EVA FOOTWEAR
IN BANGLADESH:
A TRANSFORMATIONAL SHIFT IN
THE INDUSTRY**

SYED MANZUR ELAHI

The Man, The Mentor, The Legend

“ Few individuals leave a lasting impact on an industry, a country, and generations of professionals. Syed Manzur Elahi was one such visionary— a pioneer who transformed Bangladesh’s leather and footwear industry, a mentor who nurtured talent, and a leader whose legacy will inspire for years to come. ”



Editor's Note

A Time of Tribute, Transition, and Transformation

Wishing all our readers, contributors, and industry partners a prosperous and purposeful New Year 2025.

This year began with the passing of Syed Manzur Elahi, a legendary figure and one of the founding architects of Bangladesh's modern leather and footwear sector. His visionary leadership, entrepreneurial spirit, and lifelong dedication to industry development have left an indelible mark. This issue of **Leather & Footwear HIVE** is humbly dedicated to his memory—with respect, reverence, and recognition.

In this first issue of 2025, we spotlight a transformational shift in the industry: The Rise of Moulded EVA Footwear in Bangladesh. Once a niche product, EVA footwear has become a dominant force in both local markets and export potential. This feature explores how technology, entrepreneurship, and market demand are converging to reshape manufacturing dynamics.

March also marked International Women's Day, and we use this moment to reflect on a pressing concern—**Women in Bangladesh's Leather and Footwear Sector: Growing Workforce, Lagging Leadership**. While women continue to join the workforce in greater numbers, their representation in leadership remains starkly limited. It's time we ask—what does real inclusion look like, and how can we actively create pathways for women to lead?

Our **Technology & Innovation** column returns with two timely discussions: the shift toward chrome-free leather, as sustainability becomes a global standard, and footwear solutions for seniors, a growing consumer segment in need of attention, empathy, and design excellence.

We are pleased to feature Accenture Footwear & Leather Products Ltd. in our **Leader's Insight** segment. In an exclusive interview, the Managing Director of Accenture Footwear & Leather Products Ltd shares his company's vision, values, and the path forward in a competitive market.

Alongside these, our regular columns continue to explore key themes that shape our sector: management practices, quality standards, industry education, and workforce development. These pillars remain central to sustainable growth and long-term competitiveness.

Thank you for being with us as we navigate this evolving landscape—together. Let's keep learning, questioning, and building a future worthy of our industry's legacy.

Editorial Team
Leather & Footwear HIVE

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Leather & Footwear HIVE

Leather & Footwear HIVE is a quarterly magazine of Footwear Exchange, a platform of people from all around the world who make the footwear, leather and allied industry work. Our mission is to advance all stakeholder of footwear, leather and allied industry through gathering and sharing knowledge.

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My advice is to start with a clear vision and a well-researched strategy—covering product development, branding, market entry, and growth. Focus on understanding both the product and the market. Begin with a small-scale operation to learn, adapt, and minimize risk, but always keep your long-term goals in sight.



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Footwear merchandising acts as the bridge between production and the market, ensuring that the right products reach the right customers at the right time. However, in many factories and companies, this essential function is often overlooked or misunderstood. The lack of trained professional's hampers efficiency and limits the industry's ability to compete on the global stage.



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The Rise of Moulded EVA Footwear in Bangladesh: A Transformational Shift in the Industry

The footwear industry in Bangladesh is experiencing a significant transformation with the rise of moulded EVA (Ethylene Vinyl Acetate) shoes. Traditionally dominated by EVA/rubber flip-flops, the market is shifting towards more advanced and versatile footwear options like IMEVA (Injection Moulded EVA) and CMEVA (Compression Moulded EVA). These modern alternatives are gaining popularity due to their superior lightweight properties, enhanced comfort, increased durability, and affordability.

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WOMEN IN BANGLADESH’S LEATHER AND FOOTWEAR SECTOR: GROWING WORKFORCE, LAGGING LEADERSHIP

Afsa Rahman

As the world marks International Women’s Day on March 8, it is crucial to recognize the increasing contribution of women in Bangladesh’s leather and footwear industry. Despite making up a significant portion of the workforce, women remain largely absent from leadership roles. In this era of growing women empowerment across the world, this is high time to examine the current state of women’s participation, the barriers to leadership, and possible solutions for gender-inclusive growth.

CURRENT STATE OF WOMEN’S LABOR PARTICIPATION IN THE LEATHER AND FOOTWEAR SECTOR

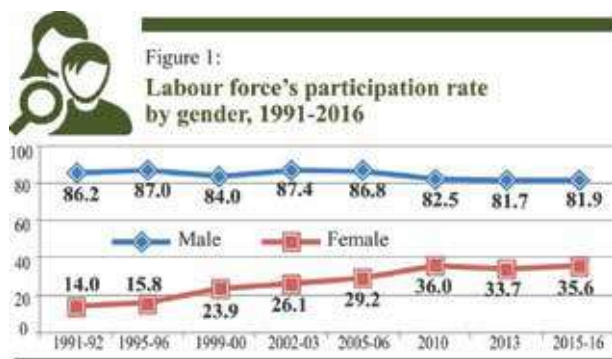
The leather and footwear sector is a vital industry in Bangladesh, employing around 850,000 people. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), women constitute approximately 70% of employees in Bangladesh’s footwear firms (Hong, 2018).

The Leather Goods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB) reports that about 65% of workers in export-oriented factories are women.

- **Footwear Manufacturing:** Women’s participation increased from 2.2% in 2001 to 37% in 2012, continuing to rise in 2024.
- **Luggage and Handbags:** Women make up 33% of the workforce.
- **Tanneries:** Only 2% of tannery workers are women due to the physically demanding nature of the job.

The RMG sector, once a stronghold for female employment, has seen a decline in women’s participation—from over 80% in previous years to 53% in 2023. Reasons include physical demands, automation, and decreased interest from younger

generations. In contrast, the leather and footwear sector continues to employ around 65-70% women.



While the number of women entering the labor force in the leather and footwear sector continues to rise, their representation in leadership roles remains stagnant. Despite the increasing participation of women in the workforce, the pathway to leadership positions and entrepreneurship is still limited due to various barriers, including gender biases, lack of support systems, and societal expectations. Understanding why this gap exists and finding solutions to promote women's leadership in the sector is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

KEY BARRIERS TO WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN BANGLADESH'S LEATHER AND ALLIED SECTOR:

As per the Policy review paper on Leather and Leather Goods Development Policy 2019 by Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh WTO Cell, Ministry of Commerce, they have identified several points for the barriers of women entrepreneurship in Bangladesh's leather and allied sector.

Information Gap

- Limited knowledge of SME loans, mortgage requirements, incentive programs and legal documentation prevents business initiation.

Social Stigma & Safety Concerns

- Women face restrictions in working late hours due to societal norms.
- Harassment in banks and registration offices discourages business engagement.
- Land ports lack gender-friendly infrastructure, making export-import processes challenging for women.

Limited Financial & Business Knowledge

- Many women lack expertise in business planning, legal procedures, and customs regulations.
- Poor knowledge of accounting and financial management limits access to financing.

Lack of Institutional Assistance

- Limited support staff and unfriendly banking environments make business operations difficult.
- Women frequently depend on male counterparts for financial transactions and business setup.
- Dedicated help desks for women entrepreneurs are rare in banks.

Cumbersome Loan Processes & Financial Barriers

- Women fail to secure even the 15% SME loan allocation due to complex documentation.
- High mortgage requirements and the lack of bank guarantees make access to credit difficult.
- Cash-based transactions in small businesses result in poor financial traceability, making banks hesitant to lend.

Bank Reluctance in Lending to Women

- Banks often resist giving loans to women despite Bangladesh Bank and SME Foundation directives.
- The lower interest rates for women-led businesses discourage banks from lending.
- Many banks claim that "no eligible women entrepreneurs applied", leaving loan quotas unfulfilled.

Inefficient Training & Skill Development

- Training programs are often poorly designed, failing to cover practical business needs.
- Vocational training for women remains scarce, limiting skill development in non-conventional sectors.

Coordination Failures Among Authorities

- Weak collaboration among government bodies, banks, and training organizations hampers progress.
- Policy implementers often lack capacity, making support programs ineffective.

"In the future, there will be female leaders. There will just be leaders."

Sheryl Sandberg



SUCCESS STORIES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: OVERCOMING BARRIERS

More women are now venturing into entrepreneurship rather than pursuing traditional jobs, and many have found success in the leather goods industry. Despite starting with low investments, these women-led businesses now manufacture quality leather products that are being exported worldwide. Here are some of their inspiring success stories. (source TBS)



TANIA WAHAB – From Small Savings to a Tk 4 Crore Business

Tania Wahab, a leather engineering graduate, started her business Athene in 2005 with just Tk10,000, which she had saved from tutoring. What started as a one-machine, one-worker operation in a 100 sq. ft. room has now grown into a 6,500 sq. ft. factory with over 200 employees. Tania produces leather jackets, shoes, wallets, and bags, supplying major brands like Bata, Apex, and Bay while also exporting to Italy and Canada. Her contributions to the industry have been recognized with multiple awards, including the Best Entrepreneur Award (SME category) in 2008 and international fellowships.

REZBIN HAFIZ – From Teaching to Exporting Leather Goods Worldwide

Originally a teacher, Rezbin Hafiz left her job in 2012 to establish People’s Footwear and Leather Goods in Ashulia. She started with just Tk 3 lakh and a 500 sq. ft. factory, but within a few years, her products became widely popular. Now, she has factories in Gaibandha and Dhamrai, employs 150 people, and produces over 12,000 leather products per month. Around 70% of her production consists of shoes, which are exported to China, Malaysia, Japan, and India. Recognized as Bangladesh’s Best Micro Entrepreneur in 2020, Rezbin is now focused on expanding her business and training new artisans through her People’s Leather Training Centre.



RUBINA AKTER – Building a Global Brand from Scratch

Rubina Akter founded Design by Rubina in 2010, initially working with jute before expanding to leather goods. Without taking any bank loans, she steadily grew her business, now employing 16 full-time and 30–35 contract workers. Her factory in Gazipur produces high-quality bags and accessories that are exported to China, the Philippines, Qatar, Dubai, and Poland. In 2019, she won 2nd prize in the Micro Entrepreneurship category from the Ministry of Commerce. Determined to create a strong brand, Rubina prioritizes product quality over marketing and believes that superior craftsmanship will naturally attract buyers worldwide.



MAKSUDA KHATUN – Overcoming Financial Struggles to Reach International Markets

Maksuda Khatun, an MBA graduate, initially ran a boutique but had to sell it due to financial struggles. She and her husband turned to the leather industry, starting Shabab Leather in 2016 with Tk15 lakh. Today, her factory in Hazaribagh has 48 employees and produces wallets, bags, jackets, belts, and key rings. Despite setbacks from the Covid-19 pandemic, Maksuda secured loans from Prime Bank and United Finance, enabling her business to bounce back. Her company now exports to Japan, Switzerland, Morocco, the Netherlands, Malaysia, and Canada, with a monthly production capacity of 10,000 pieces.



AYESHA SIDDIQUA – Aiming for a 10,000-Worker Leather Empire

After completing her MBA in Malaysia, Ayesha Siddiqua chose entrepreneurship over a traditional job. In 2016, she started Mats Cottage Limited with just Tk2 lakh and 7 workers. Now, her factory in Dhaka’s Bhatara area employs 50 workers and generates an annual turnover of over Tk4 crore. Despite challenges during the pandemic, Ayesha remains ambitious, stating, “One day, my factory will employ 10,000 people, and my monthly sales will be Tk 5–6 crore



VOICES OF WOMEN IN LEATHER AND FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND UNLOCKING LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

Shamima Jahan Shanti,

was a topper of her batch in MSc, from Institute of Leather Engineering and Technology (ILET), choose sector as her career. Working around 5 years in this sector now as an Assistant Manager at Apex, highlighted three basic key challenges:



1. Location and mobility: Factories are often in remote or unsafe areas with poor transport, limiting women's access and career growth in the industry.

2. Parenthood vs. Career: A Barrier to Women's Leadership. Without childcare or flexible work options, many women pause or leave their jobs after becoming mothers. This limits their chances for promotion and long-term career growth.

3. Challenges in Leadership: Breaking the Bias Factory work is wrongly seen as too rough or “unsuitable” for women, fearing both societal norms and the additional facilities they might need to provide. Instead of creating an inclusive environment, they see it as an extra burden and often overlook women for leadership roles.

Sayema Saliha, Former Student of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, Currently working as Executive at Framehouse Footwear Ltd., shared an optimistic view on the future of women's leadership in the leather sector. Her optimism is focused on key points such as:



1. More Opportunities: Many multinational and local companies need to balance the male-female workforce ratio. With fewer women competing, those who effectively use their skills, knowledge, and communication abilities can rise to leadership roles faster

2. Re-entry Advantage: Unlike many sectors, the leather industry offers flexibility for women to return after career breaks, providing them with stability and continuous growth opportunities.

3. Beyond Government Jobs: Women often prefer government jobs due to structured benefits. However, this does not mean the leather sector lacks quality opportunities.

Tasmin Wazeda Binty,

now a Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Kansas, continued her career in the footwear sector before flying for her higher study in USA. She focused on creating space for women to lead and grow. Her vision for empowering women includes:



1. Foster inclusive workplace cultures free from bias and discrimination.

2. Invest in leadership development programs for women.

3. Actively highlight and celebrate women's achievements in the sector.

4. Support flexible work arrangements to promote work-life balance.

Women play a critical role in Bangladesh's leather and footwear industry, but their path to leadership remains blocked by deep-rooted structural and cultural barriers. By implementing gender-equitable policies, ensuring workplace safety, and mentoring female leaders, the industry can unlock the full potential of women—not just as workers, but as decision-makers shaping the future.

About Author

Afsa Rahman is a dedicated professional in the leather and footwear industry with a versatile experience. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Leather Products Engineering from ILET, University of Dhaka, and a Graduate Diploma in Leather and Footwear Management from East West University. Over the past six years, she has worked across multiple areas of the industry; starting in the Merchandising Department at FB Footwear Ltd., moving into business development at Jennys Shoes Ltd. and later serving as a Development and Industrialization Production Leader at Decathlon Sports Bangladesh. Currently, she brings her expertise to her role as Coordination Lead at Footwear Exchange.

SUSTAINABLE CHROME FREE LEATHER

ADVANTAGE, DISADVANTAGE & APPLICATION

Quazi Salahuddin Mahmud

INTRODUCTION

The Leather used for making shoes, bags, garments and other leather products, are tanned by the following three main different process. They are-

- Full vegetable tanning
- Semi chrome tanning
- Full chrome tanning

A) FULL VEGETABLE TANNING:

Full Vegetable leather is tanned with tannin and other ingredients found in trees and plants. This type of leather has greater body and firmness than chromium-tanned leather with little or no elasticity. This leather is mainly used for bags, belts and sole leather.

B) SEMI CHROME TANNING:

It is a combination process of vegetable and chromium. At present perhaps this is the most preferable by the tanneries and leather products manufacturers.

C) FULL CHROME TANNING:

Chrome tanned leather is tanned using mainly chromium salts. It is softer and suppler than vegetable-tanned leather and does not discolor or lose shape like drastically in water as vegetable-tanned leather. This tannage is ideal for making various types of nappa leather which is renowned in the world. Full chrome leather has got extra benefits from all other tannage considering



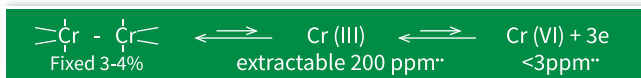
softness, melloness, feel, touch, roundness and the other physical properties (like as Tensile Strength, Tear Strength, Grain Cracking, Color fastness, Rub fastness) over full vegetable and semi chrome leather.

Till today there is no other tannage which can replace full chrome leather. But now a day it is proved that full chrome leather has many difficulties to the environment and not Eco-friendly. Because of formation of Cr (VI), which is banned for more than 3 mg/kg in the leather.

FORMATION OF CR (VI) IN LEATHER

There are many reasons for the formation of chrome VI. These are-

1. Selection of bad quality chrome powder as a tanning agent.
2. Improper distribution and fixation of chrome powder during tanning operation.
3. The use of wetting auxiliary can causes the Cr (VI) formation under drastic conditions like heating at 80oC.
4. Cr (III) used in tanning process could oxidize to Cr (VI) through excessive neutralization prior to dyeing or application of bleaching (oxidizing agent) to create pale leather.



[Cr-collagen complex]

5. Oxidation by air favored by high neutralization or dyeing PH, photo-ageing by air subjected to light, thermal ageing by air subjected to heat and moisture content Cr (III) used in tanning process could oxidize to Cr (VI) through excessive neutralization prior to dyeing or application of bleaching (oxidizing agent) to create pale leather.

6. Cr (VI) formation in leather is heavily influenced by fatliquors, especially natural products such as oxidative fatliquors.

7. Application of alkali glues on leather during production of shoes increases the amount of Cr (VI) content after dry heating. It may decrease after several weeks of storage.

8 Use of inappropriate chemicals (like as Solvent, Glues, Dyes, finishing agent which contains alkaline & oxidizing agents.)

9. If the finish leather exposed in the open air or sunlight for long time there may be chance to occur Cr (VI) due to oxidation.

10. At high temp. ($\geq 80^{\circ}\text{C}$) and low humidity ($< 35\%$) Cr (VI) also may occur.

$\text{Cr [III]} \xrightarrow{(80^{\circ}\text{C})} \text{Cr [VI]} + 3\text{e}^-$ [Here, e = free electron]

11. When the leather / leather products comes under UV light then free radicals are formed from a molecules whose normal covalent bond was split to create two unstable moieties. These free radicals react with strong oxidants and form Cr (VI).

$\text{Cr [III]} + 3 \text{R-O} \xrightarrow{(50^{\circ}\text{C})} \text{Cr [VI]} + 3 [\text{R-O}]^{**}$
[Here, $[\text{R-O}]^{**}$ = [free radicals acting as strong oxidants]

12. Storage and Transportation: Low humidity, high temperature and direct sunlight can contribute to indirect formation of chrome VI. So best practices for leather storage and transportation including controlling temperature and humidity, providing adequate air circulation and ventilation, protecting leather from sunlight, dust and moisture.

AVOIDING OF CR (VI) IN LEATHER

None of the publications gives an absolutely safe "recipe" how to avoid the formation of hexavalent

chromium in leather. For avoiding Cr (VI) it can be recommended:

- Not to use natural fatliquors such as fish oils and iodine values over 40 ppm.
- To employ vegetable retaining agents, rather than polymers/syntans/Metal complex dyes or pigments.
- To properly adjust pH values in neutralization. Not over than 5.5
- To avoid ammonia as a wetting agent before dyeing and instead, use agents with reducing abilities.
- Use vegetable retaining agents (Tara powder) and synthetic fat liquors in leather processing.
- Should be used of ZDHC MSRL conform process chemicals.

REMEDIES OF CR (VI) CONTAMINATION

According to latest study many researchers have found some chemicals which can minimize or eliminate Cr (VI) from leather and leather products. These are-

1. Sulphur di-oxide. (SO_2).
2. Sodium bisulphite (NaHSO_3).
3. Sodium Meta bisulphite ($\text{Na}_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_5$).
4. Ferrous sulphate (FeSO_4).
5. Ferrous Ammonium sulphate ($(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{Fe}(\text{SO}_4)_2$).
6. Sodium dithionite ($\text{Na}_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_4$).
7. Calcium polysulphide.
8. Citric acid, Oxalic acid, Tartaric acid, Ascorbic acid.
9. Vegetable tanning materials especially Tara powder.
10. Mixture of tartaric acid and iso propyle alcohol.

Among all above chemicals vegetable tannins, sodium Meta bisulphite, citric acid and Ascorbic acid plays a significant role to protect/eliminate/reduction of Cr (VI).

CHROME FREE LEATHER – THE MOST DESIRABLE LEATHER FOR TODAY!

To avoid the above circumstance and in the light of environmental issues, the new technologies have been developed and that's chrome free/Eco-friendly leather. This type of Leather has gradually gained commercial importance, particularly for automobile upholstery applications. Now a day many research have been going on to develop chrome free leather for shoe upper, upholstery, garment and bags etc. There are four method of tanning process-

■ PROCESS

COMPLETELY ORGANIC TANNING SYSTEM (ALDEHYDE TANNING)

The application of aldehyde polymers was studied and a Wet-White process developed. But the physical properties like Tensile strength, tearing strength is poor. The final leather becomes less body. Even the colorfastness is not good as full chrome leather. Presently Aldehyde tannage system is used for children shoes, car upholstery, lining leather making.

PHOSPHONIUM TANNING

This tanning is banned in Western country.

TITANIUM TANNING

In this tanning system Titanium salt is used for tanning.

MINERAL TANNING SYSTEM WITHOUT CHROMIUM (COMBINATION OF ALUMINUM & SILICON)

New technique has been developed for chrome free leather. It is the combination of Aluminum and Silicon. Aluminum & Silicon is considered as most suitable chrome free Mineral tanning agent. Finally, all the concepts were applied to develop a complete process for chrome free articles but not metal free, that can be adapted to different leather articles such as shoe upper, furniture, bag, garments etc.

Due to the mineral character of these chemicals leather offers a perfect dye ability and high dye affinity, allowing for very bright colors in all leather applications.

ADVANTAGES OF CHROME FREE LEATHER OVER FULL CHROME LEATHER

Chrome free leather has many demonstrable advantages-

- No chromium in the effluent.
- Fully recyclable shavings and end-products (shavings as nitrogenous fertilizer or components for leather fibers, fully organic compound leather combined with natural latex as sole material for fully recyclable footwear).
- No risk of Cr (VI) formation.
- Brilliant dyeing, especially for fashion items.
- A time reduction in processing with a corresponding reduction in energy consumption.

- A reduction of chemicals required in terms of both range and quantity.
- A high chemicals uptake in tanning, offering the possibility of recycling the residual floats and washings.
- A reduction in total water consumption, and also the treatment cost of the wastewater.
- Significantly reduced salinity.
- E.T.P management cost will be less and easier.
- Tensile strength and tearing strength are comparatively higher than chrome tanned leather.

DISADVANTAGES OF CHROME FREE LEATHER

- The ability of chrome free leather to withstand degradation due to change in environmental condition is low.
- Formaldehyde content may exceed the restriction limit.
- It is difficult to prepare super softy, pliable leather.
- Hydrothermal stability or Shrinkage temperature comparatively low than Chrome tanned leather.
- Cannot store for long time like full chrome leather.

COMPARATIVE STUDY (ADVANTAGE & DISADVANTAGE) BETWEEN CHROME FREE & FULL CHROME LEATHER

According to physical test:

Sl No.	Characteristics	Standard Value	Full Chrome L/R	Wet-White L/R	Wet-Bright L/R
1	Tensile strength	200-250 kg/cm ²	Good	Fair	Excellent
2	Tearing strength	Min 100 kg/cm	Good	Fair	Excellent
3	Grain crack	7 mm distention	Good	Fair	Excellent
4	Grain burst	10 kg	Good t	Fair	Excellent
5	Water vapor permeability	Min 200 kg/cm ²	Good	Fair	Fair
6	Shrinkage temp.	100 °C	96-105 °C	< 80°c	< 85 °c
7	Color fastness	5-3, grey scale	Good	Fair	Good
8	Looseness	1-3, break pipiness scale	Good	Fair	Good

According to Chemical test:

Sl No.	Characteristics	Restriction Limit	Full Chrome L/R	Wet-White L/R	Wet-Bright L/R
1	Chrome VI	≤ 3 ppm	Highly possible	Not possible	Not possible
2	Formaldehyde	≤ 150 ppm	Less possible	Highly possible	Less Possible
3	Phthalate	≤ 0.1%	-	-	-
4	APEO	≤ 500 ppm	-	-	-
5	PCP	≤ 0.5 ppm	-	-	-
6	DMF	≤ 50 ppm	-	-	-
7	Heavy metals	≤ 100 ppm	-	-	-
8	SCCP	≤ 100 ppm	-	-	-

TEST COMPARISON OF VARIOUS ARTICLES (CHROME FREE & FULL CHROME LEATHER)

Article Name	Test Property	Test Method	Sample Condition	Test Standard	Test result		Result Status
					Chrome Free	Full Chrome	
a) Lamy Blk	Tensile Test/ Pull Test	SATRA TM411	Temperature: 23±2 °C Leather width: 10 mm	No less than 14 kgf	28 kgf	17 kgf	Pass
b) Africa	Tensile Test/ Pull Test	SATRA TM411	Temperature: 23±2 °C Leather width: 10 mm	No less than 14 kgf	30 kgf	29 kgf	Pass
c) Loc. Flou/calif	Tensile Test/ Pull Test	SATRA TM411	Temperature: 23±2 °C Leather width: 10 mm	No less than 14 kgf	36 kgf	20 kgf	Pass
a) Lamy Blk	Flex Test	SATRA TM25	Dry Test 200,000 times Temperature: 23±2 °C	Lower limit: Third Grade	Marked Creasing: Second Grade	Slightly Creasing: First Grade	Pass
b) Africa	Flex Test	SATRA TM25	Dry Test 200,000 times Temperature: 23±2 °C	Lower limit: Third Grade	Marked Creasing: Second Grade	Marked Creasing: Second Grade	Pass
c) Loc. Flou/calif	Flex Test	SATRA TM25	Dry Test 200,000 times Temperature: 23±2 °C	Lower limit: Third Grade	Marked Creasing: Second Grade	Slightly Creasing: First Grade	Pass

NECESSARY STEPS TO BE TAKEN FOR MAKING CHROME FREE LEATHER IN OUR TANNERY

- To build up a new beam house section or clean or change the floor of rental tannery.
- Have to clean all drums, store areas, for capable of making wet-white leather.
- New water pump to be set up in our own tannery to avoid iron content in the water.
- All machineries have to be well maintained like change of felts, rollers if necessary.
- To set up enough collectors to avoid flying dust since chrome free leather is very sensitive to heat and dust.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable chrome free leather for shoe upper is not well known and well-practiced in most of the tanneries. Even though, it is not well-established in the footwear industry for gents/ladies shoe globally. So it needs to do more research and workshops about making sustainable chrome-free leather. More technical research and trial is needed for sustainable leather production.

About Author

Quazi Salauddin Mahmud is currently working as Chief Manufacturing Officer at Apex Footwear Limited, Bangladesh. Over 35 years of experience in different leather industries, Mr. Mahmud received different training as a Leather professional at home and abroad. Alongside, he is Lead Auditor of EMS (Environmental Management System) and works as an expert in Sustainability Development in the Leather sector.



FOOTWEAR FOR SENIORS

Dr. Sayed Ahmed, PhD

As the first PhD in Podiatry in Australia, I have dedicated my career to understanding how footwear can impact health, particularly for seniors and those with health problems like arthritis, diabetes and neuropathy. Proper footwear is not merely about comfort – it can significantly improve mobility, reduce pain and enhance overall well-being. In this blog, I'll let you know how the right shoes can support seniors in maintaining a good quality of life, ensuring that foot health remains a priority as we age.

Why Senior Foot Health Requires Special Attention

As we grow older, our feet endure years of wear and tear. Conditions like arthritis, bunions and plantar fasciitis are more likely to emerge and foot structures can change due to natural ageing. The thinning of the fat pads on the feet and the weakening of ligaments often lead to discomfort, making proper footwear essential.

Foot health becomes increasingly important as we age because it directly impacts mobility and independence. Pain or discomfort in the feet can make walking difficult, which can lead to a sedentary lifestyle, further compromising overall health. Addressing these issues early with appropriate footwear can prevent many of these complications.

The Impact of Proper Footwear on Mobility

Mobility is one of the most crucial factors that affect

the independence and lifestyle of seniors. As we age, foot conditions and joint issues may make walking painful or difficult. Shoes that are not designed for ageing feet can exacerbate these problems, reducing physical activity and increasing the risk of falls.

For seniors, the right footwear can make all the difference in staying mobile. Supportive, well-fitting shoes can reduce pressure points, correct alignment and provide much-needed cushioning. Custom orthotics are often an excellent solution for seniors who struggle with foot pain or discomfort. They help distribute weight evenly and align the foot correctly, enabling a more comfortable walking experience.

When the feet are properly supported, seniors can maintain their independence, participate in physical activities, and enjoy a better quality of life.

Footwear and Overall Health: It's All Connected

Many people are surprised to learn that foot health is intricately linked to overall health. When feet are unsupported or improperly aligned, it can lead to issues with the knees, hips and back. Over time, this misalignment can result in chronic pain or decreased mobility.

For seniors, this is particularly concerning, as weakened muscles and joints are less resilient to these stressors. Proper footwear and, when

necessary, custom orthotics, help correct foot posture, distribute body weight more evenly and reduce the risk of pain extending beyond the feet.

Taking care of your feet by investing in supportive footwear is an investment in your overall health. When your feet are healthy, it's easier to remain active, which contributes to better cardiovascular health, mental well-being and even social engagement.

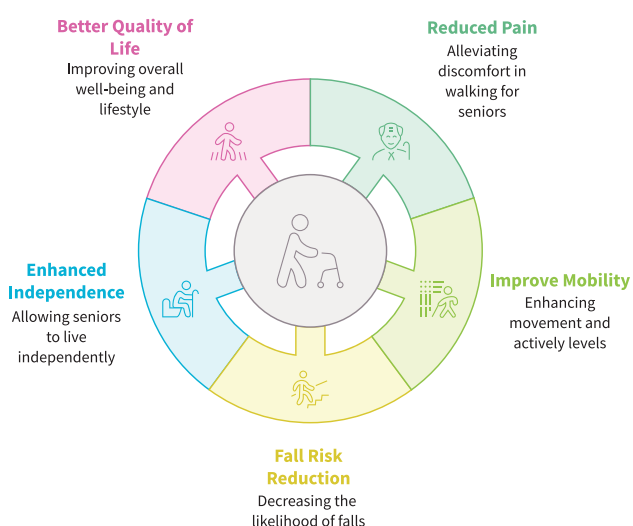
Preventing Falls with the Right Footwear

One of the greatest risks for seniors is falling, and inadequate footwear can often be the cause. Whether it's shoes that are too loose, worn down or simply not designed with the elderly in mind, poor footwear significantly increases the risk of slips and trips.

Footwear designed specifically for seniors can mitigate these risks. Non-slip soles, sturdy heel support and properly fitting shoes ensure better balance and stability, making each step more secure. Custom orthotics can also play a role in preventing falls by addressing foot alignment issues that cause instability.

For those at risk, paying attention to footwear is an essential step in maintaining independence and avoiding serious injury.

Footwear Impact on Senior Mobility



Addressing Common Foot Conditions in Seniors

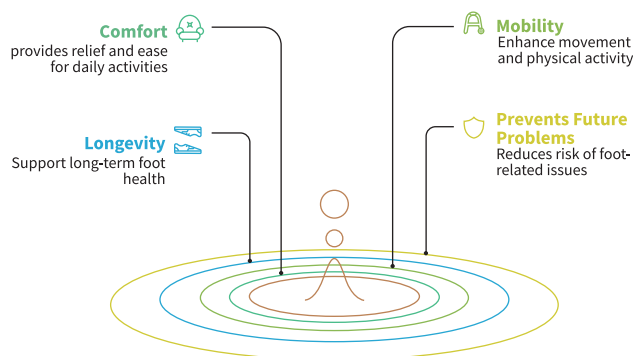
Foot conditions such as arthritis, diabetes and neuropathy are common among seniors and often require specialised footwear. Arthritis, for example, can cause swelling and joint pain, necessitating shoes that provide extra cushioning and flexibility.

For seniors with diabetes, proper foot care is even more critical. Reduced circulation and neuropathy can lead to foot ulcers and other complications if not managed properly. Shoes with wide toe boxes, cushioning and protective insoles can help relieve pressure points and prevent injuries that could otherwise lead to serious health issues.

Proper footwear can be a game-changer for those dealing with these chronic conditions. It can alleviate pain, improve function and prevent further complications, ultimately enhancing quality of life.

Long-Term Benefits of Personalised Footwear for Seniors

Investing in the right footwear isn't just about comfort – it's about longevity. Poorly fitting or mass-produced shoes may offer temporary relief, but they fail to address the specific needs of each individual. Personalised footwear, on the other hand, is tailored to meet your unique requirements, providing long-term benefits for both comfort and mobility.



Personalised orthotics, for example, offer targeted support based on your foot's structure, ensuring proper alignment and reducing strain on the rest of the body. By addressing the root causes of discomfort, personalised footwear can help prevent future problems and support the long-term health of your feet.

As seniors continue to face the natural challenges of ageing, investing in proper footwear becomes a critical component of maintaining not just foot health but overall physical well-being.

Why Prioritising Foot Health Matters

Foot health isn't just about addressing issues as they arise; it's about prevention and maintenance. The feet are a foundation for the body, and if that foundation is compromised, it affects everything else. Taking the time to care for your feet is one of the simplest yet most impactful ways to ensure a healthier, more active life.

■ EDUCATION

As someone who has spent many years in the field, I've seen how a change in footwear can turn someone's life around. It's often the small adjustments, like using custom insoles or choosing shoes with better support, that make the biggest difference.

As we age, our feet deserve more attention, not less. They carry us through life, and keeping them healthy and comfortable should be a priority for everyone, especially seniors.

Your Steps Towards Better Foot Health

Foot health is often overlooked, but it plays an enormous role in maintaining mobility and independence, particularly as we age. Choosing the right footwear is one of the easiest and most effective ways to support your body's needs as it changes. Whether you're dealing with specific foot conditions or simply looking to stay active and pain-free, taking care of your feet is a fundamental step toward improving your quality of life. For seniors, this is

especially true. With the right footwear, you can remain mobile, reduce pain and continue enjoying the activities that matter most to you. Remember, your feet are your foundation – taking care of them today will pay dividends for years to come.

About Author

Dr. Sayed Ahmed, PhD, is a foot healthcare professional, entrepreneur, researcher and accomplished leader in pedorthics and medical device innovation. He became the very first PhD in Pedorthics in Australia. He completed his PhD from Southern Cross University, focusing on diabetic foot care and personalised footwear prescriptions. His professional journey includes significant roles as founder and CEO of Foot Balance Technology and OrthoGenix, where he developed innovative solutions for foot health challenges, particularly for individuals with diabetes. Dr. Ahmed is dedicated to advancing foot health through interdisciplinary collaboration, mentorship, and innovative research.





PRINCIPLES OF SHOE SIZE AND FIT: UNDERSTANDING FOOT MEASUREMENTS FOR OPTIMAL COMFORT

Naveed Anwar, PhD

When it comes to footwear, very few people realise how crucial the principles of shoe size and fit are not only to comfort but also to overall foot health. An ill-fitting shoe can cause a whole range of problems, some of them quite serious. As our understanding of these principles evolves, let's take a journey through the past, present, and future of shoe fit—delving into essential measurements like foot sole length, insole length, and foot length.

An Overview of Foot Measurement Terms

Before we dive into their importance across timeframes—past, present, and future—it's vital first to clarify key terms related to shoe fitting

1. Foot Length: This is measured from the tip of the longest toe (often not always the big toe) to the back edge of the heel. It's commonly used as a primary measurement when determining shoe size. When it comes to choosing the perfect pair of shoes, your foot length is the foundational step that can set you up for

comfort and style. Did you know that foot size can fluctuate based on several factors, such as time of day or even how active you've been? In fact, many people find their feet swell slightly after standing or walking for a while. Therefore, it's always wise to measure your feet at the end of the day when they are at their largest. A simple measurement using a ruler or tape measure can unveil vital information about your shoe size and fit. Once you have this crucial number in hand, consult a standardised sizing chart to compare it against different brands. Remember, each brand may have its own nuances when it comes to sizing—what fits perfectly in one line might feel tight in another! Being aware of these variations allows you not only to choose shoes that fit well but also to invest in pairs that will support your unique foot structure over time. After all, no one enjoys wearing shoes that pinch or rub uncomfortably; taking the extra time to understand foot length could be key in finding footwear that's both stylish and comfortable.

2. Insole Length: The length of an insole corresponds closely with foot length but often accommodates a slight difference for added cushioning or arch support.

While foot length gives you a good starting point for sizing, don't overlook the importance of insole length, as it's often what directly interacts with your feet once you slip into a pair of shoes. Insole length refers to the actual space within the shoe that accommodates your foot and provides essential support throughout your day. Many shoe brands go the extra mile by offering removable insoles; this not only allows for easier cleaning but also lets you customize fit and comfort according to your personal needs. If you're someone who uses orthotic inserts or simply prefers an added cushion, measuring your insole's dimensions can guide you towards shoes that cater specifically to your requirements. Plus, it's important to note how various materials interact with insoles—memory foam versus gel padding, for instance—can dramatically change how snugly or comfortably a shoe fits while also affecting overall performance during activities like walking or running. The right insole can make all the difference between slipping into sheer bliss or battling through discomfort at every step! So take just a moment to check insole lengths and adapt as necessary—because luxurious comfort starts from within.

3. Foot Sole Length: This measurement is taken at the bottom (or sole) of your foot; it may include additional space for flexibility depending on your arch type.

When it comes to finding that perfect blend of style and function, foot sole length is an often-overlooked factor that plays a pivotal role in your overall comfort and stability. The foot sole—essentially the part of your shoe that sits beneath your foot—directly influences how weight is distributed with each step you take. For those who engage in activities like running or hiking, understanding your foot sole length can help you select shoes designed with appropriate arch support and cushioning tailored to your specific movements. It's fascinating to note how different designs cater to various types of arches: flat-foot soles might thrive in shoes with a wider base for better stability, while high-arched soles may prefer styles offering extra shock absorption. Plus, brands are increasingly innovating with their materials—some utilize advanced technologies for enhanced grip and flexibility. This means there's an array of options out there not only catering to aesthetics but also affording you the functional needed for sports or

daily wear alike! By being mindful of foot sole length as part of your shoe selection process, you're taking a proactive step toward ensuring each stride feels effortless at all times.

Understanding these parameters allows individuals not just to select appropriately sized shoes but also adds a layer that personalizes their search based on comfort preferences.

The Past: Tradition Meets Measurement

Historically speaking, shoe sizes were generally based on primitive methods that relied heavily on local traditions rather than standardized measurements. Variations existed widely as artisans crafted shoes unique primarily by design rather than functionally supporting different foot shapes. Obtaining accurate measurements was often cumbersome—a traditional method involved tracing one's feet on paper while another required hitting local cobblers armed with outdated sizing charts regardless if they matched differently shaped feet precisely!

Moreover, materials used ranged significantly; leather would stretch over time while synthetics maintained shape far better—adding complexity in achieving consistent fits across different brands!

The Present: Digital Transformation & Standardization

Fast-forwarding into today's landscape showcases radical advancements influencing how we approach shoe size and fit assessments—thanks largely to tech evolution! Brands have embraced techniques such as 3D scanning and augmented reality applications, allowing individuals access to tailored recommendations within minutes!

Standardised sizing charts mean less guesswork when purchasing online; however, inconsistencies still arise if various manufacturers implement differing standards altogether, leading us back full circle—a user contemplating returns after realising their expectations don't align well with received products despite following stated guidelines meticulously!

Comfort plays a crucial role nowadays too! With many consumers gravitating towards performance-based footwear—from running shoes boasting advanced cushioning systems helping enhance dynamic movements to lifestyle sneakers offering stylish options without sacrificing function—the industry acknowledges modern customers want versatility above all else.

The Future: Personalized Fit Solutions

As we look ahead in the realm of footwear, personalised fit solutions are set to transform how consumers select and experience shoes. Advancements in technology, particularly through innovations like biometric analysis and artificial intelligence, promise to deliver tailored recommendations based on an individual's unique foot structure and gait patterns.

Imagining a future where customers step onto scanning devices that assess their foot dimensions alongside performance metrics offers exciting potential—this would enable brands to provide truly customised options rather than relying solely on standard sizes. Such innovations not only prioritise comfort but also enhance walking efficiency by addressing individual anatomical differences.

This shift towards personalisation aligns with a growing consumer demand for products that cater specifically to their needs. By embracing these tailor-made solutions, the footwear industry can better meet the diverse preferences of today's savvy shoppers while promoting healthier lifestyles overall.

As we move forward, it's essential for industry players to stay attuned to these trends and explore collaborations with technology experts—ultimately creating optimal experiences that resonate deeply with consumers' desires for fit and comfort while revitalising longstanding paradigms established within traditional shoe-making practices.

Conclusion

Understanding the principles of shoe size and fit is crucial for anyone seeking to prioritise comfort and foot health. From the rudimentary methods of measurement in the past to today's advanced digital solutions, the evolution of footwear fitting techniques reflects not only changes in technology but also an increasing awareness of individual needs. As we look ahead, personalised fitting solutions promise to revolutionise how we choose our shoes, ensuring that each step we take is both comfortable and supportive. By sharing insights and learning from one another's experiences on platforms like LinkedIn, we can foster a community committed to understanding these essential principles—ultimately paving the way for healthier lifestyles lived within optimum comfort.

FAQs

Q1: What is foot length, and how do I measure it?

Foot length is measured from the tip of your longest toe to the back edge of your heel using a ruler or

measuring tape while standing with your weight evenly distributed.

Q2: How does insole length differ from foot length?

Insole length typically matches closely with foot length but provides additional space necessary for cushioning; it allows room for movement that natural walking necessitates without feeling constrained inside a shoe.

Q3: Why are standardised sizing charts important?

Standardised sizing charts play a crucial role in the footwear industry by providing consistency and clarity for consumers when selecting shoes. These charts serve as a universal reference, enabling shoppers to understand how different brands and styles correspond to their foot measurements, thereby reducing confusion during the purchasing process.

In an era where online shopping is prevalent, standardised sizing helps mitigate the risks of incorrect fit due to variations between manufacturers. By establishing common guidelines, consumers can confidently navigate product options without the fear of receiving ill-fitting shoes that may deviate from their expected size.

Ultimately, standardised sizing charts enhance customer satisfaction and streamline the buying experience while promoting trust in various brands. This consistency not only benefits shoppers but also encourages retailers to maintain high-quality standards across their offerings—leading to greater loyalty and repeat business in the long run.

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About Author

Naveed Anwar, PhD, A committed and passionate professional footwear expert, has consistently been to transcend the limits of innovation and design within the footwear industry.



FIREFIGHTER, POLICE OFFICER, OR TEACHER: WHICH LEADER ARE YOU ON THE PRODUCTION FLOOR

Mizanur Rahman

If you've ever led a team on the production floor, you know that each shift brings new surprises. Machines break down at the worst possible times, urgent customer orders pile up, and workers need guidance—sometimes all at once. Some days, you feel like a hero, keeping everything under control. Other days, it's just controlled chaos.

Over the years, I've noticed that production floor leaders tend to fall into three categories: the Firefighter, the Police Officer, and the Teacher. These aren't job titles—they're survival strategies. And let's be honest, we all shift between them depending on the situation. The trick is knowing when to step into each role and when to step back.

The Firefighter: Jumping from Crisis to Crisis

If you spend most of your day running from one problem to the next—fixing breakdowns, rushing to meet deadlines, handling last-minute shortages—you might be playing the Firefighter role. You're the one who keeps things moving when everything seems to be falling apart.

Sound familiar?

- A key machine fails 30 minutes before a major shipment is due.
- A supplier delay forces you to scramble for alternative materials.
- A batch of defective products is discovered after packaging is complete.

Real-Life Firefighter Moment:

One morning, I walked onto the floor and—boom—one of our key machines was down. Operators were standing idle, supervisors were looking around for answers, and orders were already behind schedule. No time to analyze—just act! I pulled in maintenance, shifted work to another line, adjusted production targets, and made a quick call to the logistics team. Crisis averted.

But here's the problem: If you're always firefighting, you're never building. Production can't improve if the same fires keep popping up.

✔ **What Works:** Quick thinking, adaptability, keeping the line moving.

✘ **What Doesn't:** Living in a reactive cycle, failing to prevent problems before they happen.

The Police Officer: Enforcing Rules & Keeping Order

Ever feel like you're constantly reminding people to follow procedures, meet safety standards, and stick to the plan? Then you're stepping into the Police Officer role.

You might be a Police Officer if:

- You find yourself saying, "We have SOPs for a reason—follow them!"
- You focus on eliminating waste and reducing defects through strict processes.
- You implement audits, checkpoints, and tight quality control measures.

Real-Life Police Officer Moment:

We had a persistent problem with workers skipping a key quality check. Every time we caught the issue, it was too late—the defective products had already moved down the line. I put my foot down. We set up a stricter verification process, implemented a sign-off system, and made it clear that skipping this step was not an option. Within weeks, defects dropped by 40%.

A strong Police Officer presence ensures consistency, quality, and safety. But too much control? That can kill initiative. Employees may follow orders but stop thinking for themselves.

✔ **What Works:** Structure, discipline, efficiency, high-quality output.

✘ **What Doesn't:** A rule-heavy environment where workers feel micromanaged and disengaged.

The Teacher: Building a Smarter, Stronger Team

The best production leaders aren't just good at fixing problems or enforcing rules—they're Teachers. They take the time to explain why processes matter, develop people's skills, and empower workers to think critically.

You might be a Teacher if:

- You ask workers why a mistake happened instead of just telling them not to do it again.
- You mentor your supervisors and operators, helping them grow into better leaders.
- You focus on continuous improvement and encourage innovation.

Real-Life Teacher Moment:

We were dealing with excessive material waste in our cutting section. Instead of simply issuing a new rule, I gathered the workers and walked them through the cost impact. I showed them how a small

improvement in material usage could lead to bigger savings—money that could be used for bonuses or better tools. Once they understood why it mattered, they started coming up with their own solutions. Waste dropped significantly, not because I enforced a rule, but because the team took ownership of the problem.

✔ **What Works:** Empowering workers, creating a problem-solving culture, fostering innovation.

✘ **What Doesn't:** If you focus only on teaching without setting clear expectations, things can slip through the cracks.

So, Which One Are You?

If you're like most production leaders, you probably recognize yourself in all three roles. Some days, you have to be the Firefighter. Other times, you need to be the Police Officer. And on the best days, you get to be the Teacher.

The key is balance. If you're always firefighting, you'll never get ahead. If you enforce rules too strictly, you'll stifle creativity. If you only teach, you might not get immediate results.

Here's how to shift between roles effectively:

- Be a Firefighter when the situation calls for fast action—but don't make it your default mode.
- Be a Police Officer to enforce standards and discipline—but leave room for flexibility and improvement.
- Be a Teacher to build a smarter, stronger team—because in the long run, that's what will create real success.

Final Thought

Next time you step onto the production floor, ask yourself: Am I just reacting, or am I leading? Because the best leaders aren't just fighting fires or enforcing rules—they're building something better. And that starts with knowing which role to play—and when.

About Author:

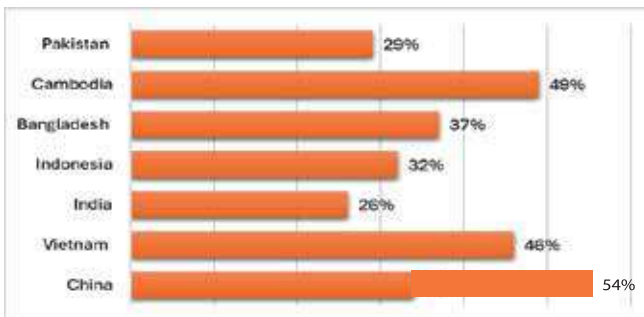
Mizanur Rahman has been driving growth and innovation in the footwear industry for nearly 20 years, leading strategic initiatives across production, sourcing, and retail. With a foundation in shoe design and factory operations, his expertise evolved into managing large-scale footwear programs, optimizing supply chains, and strengthening market positioning. His experience is defined by a commitment to strategic growth, operational excellence, and shaping the future of the footwear sector.



U.S. TARIFFS: A MAJOR BLOW OR OPPORTUNITY FOR BANGLADESH'S LEATHER AND FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY?

UNPACKING US TARIFFS: A FIRST LOOK AT THE IMPACT

HOW DOES BANGLADESH COMPARE WITH COMPETITORS FOR TARIFFS?



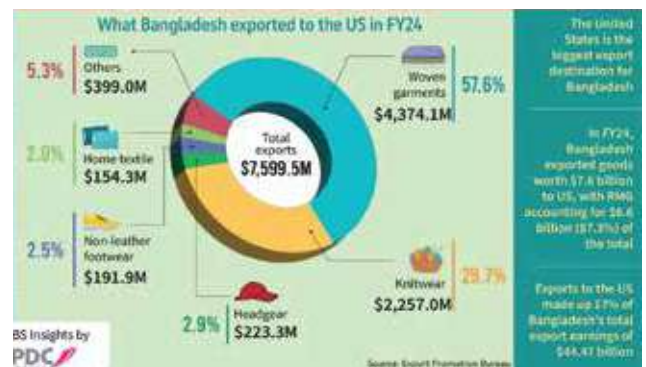
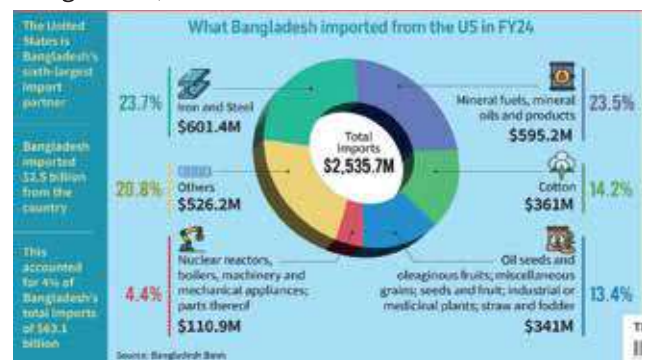
Donald Trump announced a 90-day pause on tariffs for most countries except China, whose tariffs he raised to 245% as of now.

Countries like India, Pakistan and Indonesia are emerging leaders in leather and footwear exports, the tariffs stand lower than Bangladesh, gives them an immediate competitive edge of nearly 10% over Bangladesh. Other countries like China, Vietnam and Cambodia who is among top 5 exporters to USA imposed higher tariffs, gives Bangladesh a competitive advantages.

BANGLADESH'S TRADE WITH THE U.S.A.!

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka Office, is convinced that the United States' new tariff policy will severely damage

Bangladesh's export sector as American demand shrinks. His concern runs even deeper: with tariffs pushing up prices across the board, a slowdown in the US economy appears inevitable. "As a result, there is a risk of a decline in exports from Bangladesh," he told TBS.

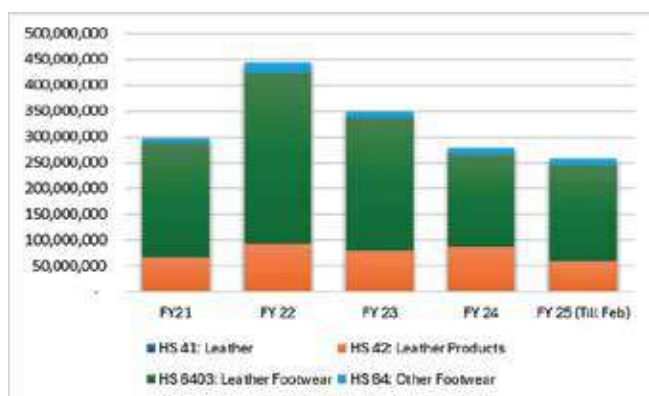


LEATHER & FOOTWEAR EXPORT TO THE U.S.A.

In 2022, the top partner countries from which United States Imports Footwear include **China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Italy and Cambodia.**

United States imports Leather Apparel primarily from: India (\$205M), Italy (\$186M), China (\$174M), Pakistan (\$149M), and Vietnam (\$96.2M). The fastest growing import markets in Leather Apparel for United States between 2022 and 2023 were France (\$4.87M), United Kingdom (\$1.24M), and Portugal (\$713k).

BANGLADESH LEATHER & FOOTWEAR EXPORT TO THE U.S.A.



Million USD					
	FY21	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25 (Till Feb)
HS 41: Leather	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
HS 42: Leather Products	67.4	92.1	79.0	86.9	58.9
HS 6403: Leather Footwear	220	330.5	256.5	179.0	185.9
HS 64: Other Footwear	10	22.4	13.6	12.9	13.4
Total	298	445.2	349.2	278.9	258.3
YoY Evolution		49%	-22%	-20%	-7%

20-23%

Share % of Total Leather & Footwear to USA



WHAT THESE TARIFFS MEAN FOR BANGLADESH LEATHER & FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY

● Export Opportunity or Shutdown?

The U.S. higher tariffs on China, Vietnam and Cambodian leather and footwear products could create an opportunity for Bangladesh to capture market share if it can offer competitive pricing and quality. Conversely, as India, Pakistan and Indonesia imposed lower tariffs, there could have order move to those country.

● Factory and Job Risks

If buyers shift orders from China to tariff-free or lower-tariff countries like Bangladesh, factories could see an increase in production, leading to job creation. If Bangladesh fails to meet compliance standards (especially regarding LWG-certified tanneries), international buyers might shift orders to Pakistan, Indonesia, or India instead.

● Rising Costs & Supply Chain Challenges

Bangladesh imports a large portion of its raw materials for footwear production. If global supply chain costs rise due to the U.S.-China trade war, Bangladesh’s production costs could increase, reducing its price competitiveness.

HOW SHOULD BANGLADESH RESPOND

Immediate Actions

- Call for urgent negotiations with US officials
- The reduction of tariffs on imports from the US,
- Bangladeshi exporters must avoid undercutting each other in a desperate race to secure orders.

Medium & Long-Term Actions

- Bangladesh must focus on boosting productivity
- Reducing business costs,
- Expanding regional markets as a core strategies to cushion against future trade shocks.
- Bangladesh must pursue a stronger bilateral trade agreement with the USA and other countries.

TARIFFS



ACCENTURE FOOTWEAR & LEATHER PRODUCTS LTD.

FOCUSED, FLEXIBLE, AND FORWARD-THINKING: A PARTNER YOU CAN RELY ON

L&F Hive Desk

The leather and footwear industry in Bangladesh has moved well beyond its early promise. Today, it is recognized globally for its skilled workforce, abundant raw materials, and expanding compliance footprint. The sector is no longer seen as just an emerging sourcing base—it is a serious destination for brands that value quality, reliability, and ethical manufacturing.

Amid this growth, a group of quietly efficient factories are making their mark—not by their size, but by how well they understand client needs, manages processes, and stay true to ethical and professional values. One such factory is **Accenture Footwear & Leather Products Ltd**, founded in 2010 and steadily gaining trust for its ability to combine technical understanding with sincere execution.





Accenture operates a well-structured facility that produces leather and synthetic leather goods for export markets. The factory layout is clean and functionally segmented, allowing work to move efficiently from raw material inspection to finished goods. Each step is thoughtfully organized, with enough capacity to handle meaningful production volumes while maintaining direct oversight and hands-on management.

Rather than chasing rapid expansion, the team focuses on building the right systems—ensuring each process is documented, repeatable, and in line with buyer expectations. The result is a factory that runs with clarity, control, and care.

Technology at Accenture is selectively applied to strengthen process reliability. CAD tools are used to ensure design precision, and semi-automated machinery supports key stages like cutting and finishing. Workflow is further strengthened by digital tracking and internal coordination tools.

But what truly anchors the operation is the team. Most supervisors and line managers are experienced professionals who understand both the product and the expectations of international buyers. There’s a clear rhythm to the way they operate—one that blends structured tools with a strong sense of ownership from the people behind them.

At Accenture, quality is more than a checklist—it’s a culture. From the initial sourcing of raw materials to packaging and shipment, quality control is applied in stages. Incoming materials are screened, production is monitored in-line, and final inspection is conducted with consistency.

The factory doesn’t promise perfection—it promises attention to detail, responsible communication, and continuous improvement. For brands that value honest partnerships over inflated claims, this is a refreshing approach.

AUDITS













PEOPLE-CENTERED APPROACH AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY

The people working at Accenture are at the heart of its consistent delivery. Many have grown with the company, and there is visible loyalty among supervisors and operators alike. Training is regular, communication is open, and expectations are clearly defined. The result is a workplace where responsibility is shared, and execution feels personal.

In an industry where turnover and instability are common, Accenture benefits from continuity and trust—two factors that contribute directly to smoother production and fewer surprises for clients.



FACTORY OVERVIEW

 64,000 sq. ft. Production Area	 8,589 sq. ft. Goods Warehouse	 10,200 sq. ft. Raw material Warehouse
 TWO Emergency Stairs	 1100 Nos. Man power	 42 Nos. Management personnel
 700 Pcs. Different Type Machine	 729 Pcs. Fire fighter Equipment	



CUSTOMER













GET IN TOUCH

Accenture Footwear & Leather Products Ltd.
Corporate Office Address: Jhawchar (Munshipara, Hemayetpur, Savar, Dhaka-1340, Bangladesh)
Factory Address: Jhawchar (Munshipara, Hemayetpur, Savar, Dhaka-1340, Bangladesh)
E-mail: info@accenture-bd.com
Website: www.accenture-bd.com

IN CONVERSATION WITH A.K.M MOSHPIQUR RAHMAN

ACCENTURE FOOTWEAR & LEATHER PRODUCTS LTD.

Q. Can you tell us about your journey? What motivated you to enter the footwear and leather product manufacturing industry?

A. After graduating from ILET, I began my entrepreneurial journey in 2003 with a business focused on leather and leather chemicals. In 2008, I expanded into accessories and finished leather products, integrating these into my existing operations.

I saw a unique opportunity to build a distinctive brand in this industry—an ambition that continues to fuel my work. The unwavering support of my family and friends has been a constant source of encouragement. While I've come a long way, I remain committed to the journey and to transforming this vision into a globally recognized brand.

Q. What challenges do you face in the global market, and how do you navigate international competition and demand shifts?

A. Our industry operates under intense global pressure—particularly regarding pricing and lead times. Countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, China, and India benefit from more developed infrastructure and larger-scale production, which poses a challenge for us. Compliance with strict environmental and ethical standards further increases operational complexity.

Our reliance on imported raw materials also introduces cost and supply chain risks. Additionally, shifting customer demands, high tariffs, and complex international regulations challenge our ability to stay competitive.

To address these, we've developed a strategic approach: streamlining processes, embracing automation to reduce waste and enhance productivity, and focusing on sustainability. These efforts have helped us obtain certifications such as BSCI, SEDEX, NIRAPON, SCAN, and GRS. We also leverage advanced technologies, including AI-powered systems,



land maintain a transparent sourcing and logistics framework supported by a capable supply chain team to consistently meet buyer expectations.

Q. What are some of the major challenges your company has faced in the past few years, and how did you overcome them?

A. The last few years have brought unprecedented challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted global supply chains, followed by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which further inflated costs. Additionally, we experienced labor shortages due to skilled worker migration and had to navigate a volatile global economy.

To overcome these obstacles, we diversified our buyer base across multiple countries, invested in workforce development, adopted flexible financial strategies, and focused on producing only high-demand products. These steps allowed us to remain resilient and adaptable in uncertain times.

Q. In your opinion, what are the biggest opportunities for growth and innovation in the footwear and leather industry, both locally and globally?

A. Opportunities lie in three major areas: sustainable production, digital transformation,

LEADER'S INSIGHT

and brand development.

Locally, we can gain a competitive edge by investing in eco-friendly processes, developing a skilled workforce, and building strong domestic brands. Globally, innovation in smart footwear, customization, direct-to-consumer models, and expansion into emerging markets with rising demand for affordable, high-quality products presents significant growth potential.

Q. The role of technology in manufacturing has become increasingly important. How has your company leveraged technology to improve efficiency and product quality?

A. We've integrated various technologies to enhance our operations. Using AutoCAD 3D design software has streamlined product development and reduced costs. Automation in cutting, lamination, stitching, assembly, gluing, and edge coloring has improved consistency, reduced labor costs, and minimized production errors.

We also utilize smart inventory management systems to maintain optimal stock levels and improve store operations. These technologies collectively support better efficiency, product quality, and customer satisfaction.

Q. Sustainability is a growing concern in many industries. How does your company address environmental and social sustainability in its operations?

A. Sustainability is at the core of our operations. We use sustainable materials, biodegradable packaging, and ZDHC-certified chemicals to ensure our processes are environmentally responsible. Through automation, we reduce material waste and improve overall efficiency. Socially, we are committed to ethical practices. We work with suppliers who comply with international labor standards, regularly audit working conditions, and uphold fair wages and zero-tolerance policies for exploitation. These efforts underscore our dedication to responsible business and long-term environmental and social well-being.

Q. What advice would you give to new entrepreneurs or companies looking to enter the footwear and leather industry today?

A. My advice is to start with a clear vision and a well-researched strategy—covering product

development, branding, market entry, and growth. Focus on understanding both the product and the market. Begin with a small-scale operation to learn, adapt, and minimize risk, but always keep your long-term goals in sight.

Embrace sustainability and ethical practices from the beginning—they're not just trends but essential values that will define future success. Build strong relationships, invest in innovation, and never stop learning.

Q. The footwear and leather industry requires skilled craftsmanship and technical knowledge. How does your company ensure it has the right talent to stay competitive in the market?

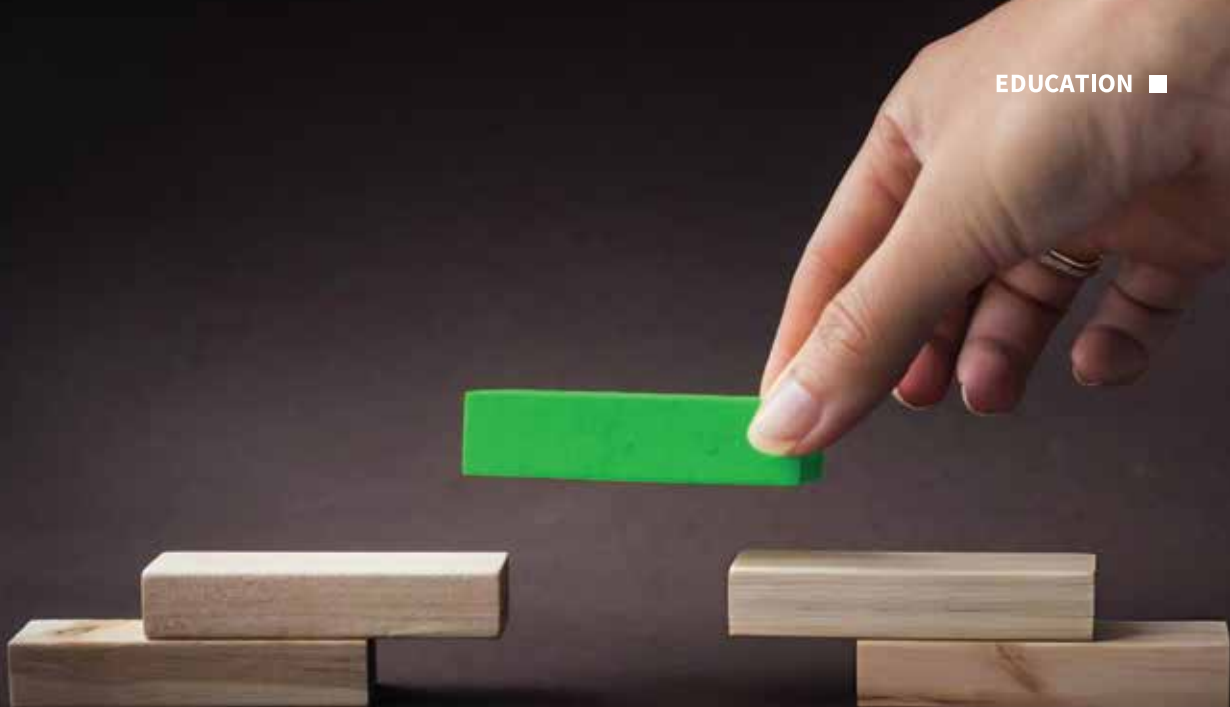
A. We place a strong emphasis on developing talent through in-house training and continuous learning. We actively recruit from institutions like ILET and KUET to bring in fresh talent. We also invest in clear career pathways, employee recognition, and maintaining a respectful and safe work environment.

This approach has helped us build a loyal and skilled workforce that not only contributes to our competitiveness but also drives our long-term success.

Q. How important is foreign direct investment (FDI) in the context of Bangladesh's growing footwear and leather sector, and how can the government or private sectors further facilitate such investments?

A. FDI plays a vital role in transforming Bangladesh's footwear and leather industry. It brings in capital, advanced manufacturing technologies, and global business practices that can boost efficiency, product quality, and workforce expertise. FDI also helps foster sustainability by introducing green technologies and responsible sourcing practices.

To attract more investment, both government and private sectors must simplify business registration processes, reduce bureaucratic red tape, and ensure transparency. Offering tax incentives, establishing special economic zones, upgrading infrastructure, and providing clear investment guidelines will significantly improve the overall business climate and attract more foreign interest.



BRIDGING THE SKILL GAP IN FOOTWEAR MERCHANDISING

Mr. Md. Abdullah Bin Arif

Reflecting on my journey, I recall the early days I entered the footwear industry without formal training. I had to wear many hats—negotiating with suppliers, managing production timelines, and dealing with demanding buyers—all while learning through experience. It was a steep learning curve, one that often felt overwhelming. I remember a particularly stressful moment during a critical shipment to a European buyer. A supplier's delay in delivering insoles left us scrambling to find an alternative without compromising quality. The pressure was immense, and the communication required between suppliers, manufacturers, and the buyer was crucial. This experience underscored the importance of having solid problem-solving skills and the ability to handle crises.

In my career, I've observed that while experience can offer valuable insights, it's not always enough. I often wished there were structured training programs that could have equipped me and my colleagues with the right tools and knowledge earlier in our careers. It became increasingly clear to me that the footwear merchandising sector needed more formalized

education and hands-on training to nurture talent and equip professionals to meet industry challenges head-on.

The Unspoken Challenge in a Growing Industry

The footwear industry in Bangladesh is undergoing a remarkable transformation. Local manufacturers are gaining ground, and with the rising global demand for quality footwear, the potential for this sector has never been higher. Yet, despite the obvious opportunities, a critical challenge persists—a skill gap in footwear merchandising that, if not addressed, could undermine the industry's future growth.

Footwear merchandising acts as the bridge between production and the market, ensuring that the right products reach the right customers at the right time. However, in many factories and companies, this essential function is often overlooked or misunderstood. The lack of trained professional's hampers efficiency and limits the industry's ability to compete on the global stage.

■ EDUCATION

With over 14 years of experience in the footwear industry, I have witnessed firsthand how a lack of skilled merchandisers can negatively affect businesses. From last-minute design changes to production delays caused by raw material shortages, the job of a merchandiser requires problem-solving, adaptability, and effective communication. These skills are not always readily available in the talent pool, making it harder for companies to keep up with market demands and international standards.

Understanding the Skill Gap in Footwear Merchandising

Merchandising in the footwear sector requires a unique blend of skills, including market analysis, material sourcing, production coordination, quality control, and negotiation. Unlike industries like apparel, which have well-established training programs, footwear merchandising often relies on informal, on-the-job learning. As a result, many professionals enter the field with significant gaps in their knowledge, struggling to meet the demands of buyers and manufacturers.

Some of the key issues that contribute to this skill gap include:

- **Lack of Formal Training:** Unlike other industries, specialized courses in footwear merchandising are scarce in Bangladesh. Most professionals learn through experience, resulting in inconsistencies in skills and knowledge.
- **Limited Exposure to Global Trends:** While global brands are increasingly looking for local suppliers, the industry in Bangladesh has yet to catch up fully with technological advancements and sustainability trends. This makes it difficult for merchandisers to add value beyond the basics of product sourcing and delivery.
- **Inadequate Problem-Solving Skills:** Footwear merchandisers face various challenges, including production delays, material shortages, and last-minute design changes. Without proper training, these issues become more overwhelming and difficult to manage.
- **Weak Communication Skills:** Merchandisers act as a crucial link between manufacturers and buyers. Strong communication skills are essential, yet many merchandisers struggle with technical jargon, costing businesses valuable opportunities and creating friction with clients.

The Road to Bridging the Gap

Addressing this skill gap is not just an industry necessity—it is vital for the future sustainability and competitiveness of the footwear sector. To overcome this challenge, both companies and industry professionals need to take proactive steps.



1. Investing in Education and Training

One of the most impactful ways to bridge the skill gap is through education. Bangladesh needs dedicated training programs tailored to the footwear industry. Industry associations and universities should collaborate to create specialized courses that cover everything from product development to supply chain management. These programs should focus on practical knowledge that can be applied directly in the workplace.

Furthermore, short-term workshops conducted by experienced professionals can provide hands-on learning opportunities. This could be the first step toward creating a generation of well-equipped merchandisers who can effectively manage production timelines, handle buyer relationships, and solve problems efficiently.

2. Encouraging Internships and Apprenticeships

Rather than waiting for professionals to learn on the job, companies should focus on creating structured internship and apprenticeship programs. These

programs provide students and young professionals with exposure to the real-world challenges of merchandising. By mentoring fresh talent early on, companies can create a pool of skilled professionals ready to step into roles with minimal training required.

In my experience, many young merchandisers are eager to learn and excel but often lack the proper guidance. Internships can serve as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

3. Enhancing Industry Exposure

The global footwear industry is constantly evolving. To stay competitive, professionals need to stay up-to-date with international trends and best practices. Regular participation in international trade fairs, study tours, and collaborations with global brands can provide invaluable exposure to the latest innovations and business practices.

Additionally, online courses, webinars, and digital learning platforms should be encouraged. These platforms provide an accessible way for merchandisers to gain new skills and stay informed about industry changes, even if they are unable to travel or attend large events.

4. Strengthening Soft Skills

In addition to technical expertise, soft skills play a crucial role in footwear merchandising. Strong communication, negotiation, and crisis management skills are essential for building relationships with both suppliers and buyers. Companies should invest in training programs that focus on these soft skills, ensuring that merchandisers can effectively manage negotiations and handle stressful situations.

I've seen many talented individuals struggle simply because they lacked the ability to communicate effectively. Soft skills training could make all the difference in helping merchandisers succeed in their roles.

5. Leveraging Technology

The use of technology in footwear merchandising is growing rapidly. From 3D design software to AI-driven demand forecasting tools, technology is playing an increasingly vital role in the industry. Training professionals in these technologies will improve efficiency, enable better decision-making, and enhance the overall competitiveness of the sector.

As the industry evolves, companies should provide access to the latest digital tools, allowing merchandisers to stay ahead of the curve and make informed decisions based on real-time data.

Another Personal Reflection

Having worked closely with professionals in this field, I have witnessed both the struggles and immense potential. I recall a first hand experience in a factory in Gazipur, where I met a young merchandiser. Despite his passion for the industry, he often felt overwhelmed by the complexities of handling buyers and coordinating production. Recognizing his potential, his company enrolled him in a Basic Footwear Training program.

The transformation was remarkable. He gained confidence, improved his communication skills, and developed a keen eye for design and market trends. Within a year, he secured a senior role and now leads a merchandising team, contributing significantly to the company's growth. His journey reinforced my belief that structured learning can truly transform careers.

The Future is in Our Hands

Bangladesh's footwear industry is at a crossroads. If we fail to address the skill gap, we risk falling behind in an increasingly competitive market. However, by taking proactive steps—investing in education, fostering industry collaborations, and embracing technological innovation—we can create a skilled workforce that will drive the industry forward.

The future of footwear merchandising in Bangladesh is bright, but it is up to us—companies, professionals, and industry leaders—to ensure that we bridge the existing skill gap and unlock the full potential of the industry.

About Author

Md. Abdullah Bin Arif, is the Senior Brand Manager at Karnaphuli Shoes Industries Ltd., Bangladesh (a sister concern of Youngone Corporation, Korea), with 14 years of experience in the leather industry. With over a decade of expertise, he has held leadership roles in merchandising, quotation management, and product development, specializing in target costing and innovative design. His diverse experience has equipped him with the skills to address complex market demands of the footwear industry.

THE RISE OF MOULDED EVA FOOTWEAR IN BANGLADESH: A TRANSFORMATIONAL SHIFT IN THE INDUSTRY

L&F Hive Desk

The footwear industry in Bangladesh is experiencing a significant transformation with the rise of moulded EVA (Ethylene Vinyl Acetate) shoes. Traditionally dominated by EVA/rubber flip-flops, the market is shifting towards more advanced and versatile footwear options like IMEVA (Injection Moulded EVA) and CMEVA (Compression Moulded EVA). These modern alternatives are gaining popularity due to their superior lightweight properties, enhanced comfort, increased durability, and affordability.

THE EVOLUTION OF EVA FOOTWEAR: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The global evolution of EVA footwear can be traced back to the 1970s. In the 1970s, most running shoes had rigid soles made of rubber. Then in 1975, Brooks incorporated EVA into its Villanova shoes. EVA belongs to a class of “elastomeric” compounds called polymers, which means they have elastic properties (these compounds come from fossil fuels). The material provided cushioning and the right amount of give, and soon it became the material of choice for most fitness brands, including Nike and Saucony, the latter of which introduced the first molded EVA dual-density midsole—a firmer density of EVA—in 1993.

EVA remained primarily in athletic footwear until Crocs came along in 2002. Technically speaking, Crocs are made of Croslite, a proprietary material comprised of polyethylene vinyl acetate (aka PEVA or EVA for short). Crocs was the first brand to make an entire shoe out of EVA.

Emboldened by Crocs' success and recent comeback, other brands followed suit, most notably Birkenstock, which launched its EVA sandal in 2015 for half the price of its cork-and-leather counterpart. A 2024 report states that EVA sandals are now the most popular Birkenstock shoe among teens in the U.S., and Goldstein notes that the brand has been successful without cannibalizing sales of its leather

Arizona offerings.

A TIME JOURNEY SUMMARY

1975 Brooks Villanova Running Shoe



WHY MOULDED EVA SHOES ARE GAINING POPULARITY AMONG BANGLADESHI CONSUMERS

The footwear market in Bangladesh is witnessing a significant shift, with moulded EVA (Ethylene Vinyl Acetate) shoes becoming increasingly popular among consumers. Traditionally, rubber and basic EVA flip-flops dominated the market, but the demand for lightweight, comfortable, and affordable footwear has led to the rise of moulded EVA alternatives, particularly IMEVA (Injection Moulded EVA) and CMEVA (Compression Moulded EVA). Several factors contribute to this growing trend:

1. Lightweight and Superior Comfort

One of the key reasons for the rising popularity of moulded EVA shoes is their lightweight nature. Compared to traditional EVA / rubber flip-flops, EVA-based footwear provides a soft and cushioned feel, making them more comfortable for long-term wear. Consumers in Bangladesh, particularly those who walk long distances or stand for extended periods, find these shoes highly convenient.

Unlike conventional rubber flip-flops, which can feel hard and cause foot fatigue, moulded EVA shoes offer better shock absorption, reducing strain on the feet. This makes them ideal for both casual wear and semi-active lifestyles.

2. Affordability for Mass Consumers

Price plays a crucial role in consumer choices in Bangladesh. Moulded EVA footwear is significantly more affordable than leather or premium synthetic alternatives, making them accessible to a wide range of consumers, from urban professionals to rural workers.

As the cost of raw materials such as rubber and leather rises, many consumers are opting for EVA shoes as a cost-effective yet durable alternative. The affordability factor is especially relevant in a price-sensitive market like Bangladesh, where a large portion of the population seeks budget-friendly yet stylish footwear options.

3. Durability and Water Resistance

Bangladesh experiences high humidity and frequent monsoon rains, making water resistance a crucial factor when choosing footwear. Traditional rubber and foam flip-flops often degrade quickly in wet conditions, whereas moulded EVA shoes are water-resistant, quick-drying, and more durable.

The closed-cell structure of EVA prevents water absorption, reducing the risk of bad odors and fungal infections, a common issue in humid climates. Consumers appreciate that these shoes last longer without losing their shape, making them a practical and economical choice.

4. Fashionable and Versatile Designs

Moulded EVA shoes have evolved beyond their initial functional appeal to become a fashion statement. With vibrant colors, modern patterns, and sleek designs, these shoes attract young consumers who want stylish yet affordable footwear.

Global trends, driven by brands like Crocs, Yeezy Slides, and Nike, have influenced the local market,

making trendy EVA footwear highly desirable. Bangladeshi consumers, especially the younger generation, now prefer EVA shoes for their stylish look and casual versatility. They can be worn at home, at work (in some settings), and even as outdoor wear, making them highly adaptable.

5. Health and Ergonomic Benefits

Many consumers are becoming aware of the health benefits that moulded EVA shoes offer. Unlike traditional flat flip-flops, which provide little to no arch support, EVA shoes are designed with better ergonomics, reducing strain on the feet, knees, and lower back.

People with conditions such as plantar fasciitis or foot fatigue find these shoes beneficial due to their cushioned soles and improved foot alignment. The soft yet firm sole structure helps in better weight distribution, reducing the impact on joints.

6. Easy Maintenance and Hygiene

Another major reason for the increasing preference for moulded EVA shoes is their ease of maintenance. Unlike fabric-based or leather footwear, which requires regular cleaning and conditioning, EVA shoes can be easily wiped clean or washed with water.

This low-maintenance aspect makes them highly convenient for consumers in Bangladesh, where dust, mud, and rain often make shoe care a challenge. Additionally, the non-porous nature of EVA prevents bacterial growth, reducing odor issues.

7. Growing Demand in Semi-Urban and Rural Markets

The popularity of moulded EVA shoes is not limited to urban centers like Dhaka and Chittagong. With increasing affordability and availability, these shoes are becoming a preferred choice in semi-urban and rural areas as well.

For workers in agriculture, construction, and small businesses, EVA shoes provide a comfortable, waterproof, and durable solution at a lower price point than leather or synthetic shoes. Many local manufacturers are now producing EVA footwear tailored specifically for rural consumers, further expanding the market. Demand is growing in villages and small towns, with EVA shoes now widely available through markets, fairs, and small retailers. Their lightweight design, easy maintenance, and modern look make them a practical, fashionable choice for all ages across the country.

■ FEATURE

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IMEVA AND CMEVA IN FOOTWEAR MANUFACTURING

Moulded EVA footwear primarily comes in two types—IMEVA (Injection Moulded EVA) and CMEVA (Compression Moulded EVA). While both use EVA (Ethylene Vinyl Acetate) as the base material, they differ significantly in the way they are manufactured, affecting the final product's properties, cost, and applications.

AESTHETIC QUALITY:

When it comes to a finished look, the overall appearance of a Compression molded EVA (vacuform/thermoform) foam part cannot compare with that of an injection molded foam part. The increased density, and perfect “mold” finish of an injection mold, produces a part with far superior aesthetics. Because the foam used for compression molded parts is outsourced, the quality of the foam is also likely to be variable, affecting the final aesthetics of the part. On the other hand, because the injection molded foam is manufactured in-house with the foam and part made simultaneously, the quality is always consistent. Specific variables that affect quality in compression parts, but not injection parts, are:

- inconsistent cell count within the foam, variable pigmentation and density in the raw materials causing color variation
- inconsistent part to part processing time, temperature and degree of compression causing variation in part definition.

DIMENSION QUALITY:

The ability to produce a consistent dimensional part is based on how well the molding process can be controlled. The pellet to product process means that the manufacturing of the foam, and final part, are one and the same. Most processing conditions can be controlled and duplicated, resulting in minimal part to part variation. Compression molding, however, starts with a bun or sheet of foam that is heated and molded into a different shape, subject to far more variable processing conditions. In addition, the need for final trimming of the compression molded part can also be a major contributor to a low quality image.



THICKNESS VARIATION:

If the final product has varying height profiles, a compression molded part must start with a sheet (bun) of foam that is the height of the tallest dimension of the part. If the foam chosen for the compression molding process does not come in a thick enough bun, laminating sheets together is required to form thicker buns. This can result in that some parts have a lamination line which can delaminate with time. Injection molded foam parts, however, can be made to any height, not limited by the process, without need for lamination.

POST MOLD STABILITY:

Another area where the two processes differ significantly is what happens to the part after it is processed. Injection molded parts are extremely soft and malleable when they finish their molding cycle. During the post molding phase, a cooling fixture may be required to help the part maintain its shape. Unless the part is subjected to external forces that causes it to change shape, the final cooled part will be exactly what was expect. On the other hand, compression molded foam parts can suffer post molding shrinkage and warp, even if cooling fixtures are utilized.

COST AND VALUE:

Compression molded EVA foam parts will almost always cost less than injection molded foam parts. Not only is the tooling and manufacturing equipment less expensive but the parts as well. Because compression molding uses bun stock, low density (inexpensive) foams are often chosen. This results in lower quality products that are great for a give-away or other temporary product. Injection molded foam products, while more expensive, are attractive, with long lasting value.

Key Challenges and Strategic Solutions for Moulded EVA shoes in Bangladesh

1. Quality Control and Consistency

Challenges:

- Inconsistent material quality due to limited access to advanced manufacturing technology.
- Defects such as improper shaping, poor adhesion, and uneven thickness.
- Low-cost EVA compounds reduce durability.

Strategic Solutions:

- Invest in high-quality EVA raw materials to ensure longevity and comfort.
- Adopt precision moulding technologies like **IMEVA and CMEVA** to enhance product consistency.
- Implement strict **quality control (QC) measures**, including durability and flexibility testing.

2. Sustainability and Environmental Concerns

Challenges:

- EVA is non-biodegradable, contributing to long-term environmental concerns.
- Lack of recycling infrastructure for EVA waste.
- Growing global demand for eco-friendly alternatives.

Strategic Solutions:

- Develop **recycled EVA footwear** using post-industrial and post-consumer waste.
- Partner with research institutes to create **biodegradable EVA blends**.
- Implement a **waste collection program** to recycle used EVA footwear.

3. High Initial Investment in Machinery and Technology

Challenges:

- Advanced **IMEVA and CMEVA** machines require significant capital investment.
- Limited local expertise in operating and maintaining high-end machinery.
- Long payback period for new entrants in the industry.

Strategic Solutions:

- Secure **government incentives or soft loans** for footwear manufacturing investments.
- Establish **joint ventures with international footwear manufacturers** to share technology and expertise.
- Start with a **pilot production line** and scale up based on market response.

4. Raw Material Dependence and Cost Fluctuations

Challenges:

- Bangladesh imports most EVA raw materials, making the industry vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions.
- EVA prices fluctuate based on global oil prices,

Strategic Solutions:

- Secure long-term contracts with multiple suppliers to reduce risks.
- Explore options for local EVA resin production to decrease dependence on imports.
- Diversify sourcing to alternative regions (e.g., India, Vietnam, Malaysia) to mitigate risks.

5. Distribution and Retail Challenges

Challenges:

- Traditional retail channels favor leather and synthetic shoes.
- Over-reliance on informal markets.

Strategic Solutions:

- Develop a **multi-channel distribution strategy**: retail stores, e-commerce, and direct-to-consumer sales.
- Partner with major **retail chains, supermarkets, and footwear stores** to increase product availability.
- Expand into export markets, targeting regions with high EVA shoe demand (e.g., Middle East, Africa, and Europe).

6. Limited Product Innovation

Challenges:

- Lack of R&D investment leading to repetitive designs.
- Global competitors launching hybrid EVA materials, antibacterial coatings, and smart insoles.

Strategic Solutions:

- Invest in R&D for innovative EVA footwear, including hybrid materials and ergonomic designs.
- Work with designers and material scientists to create next-generation footwear.
- Introduce seasonal collections with new styles, colors, and enhanced features.

Source:

1. How the EVA sandal became everyone's favorite shoe - Fast Company
2. Difference between Injection Molded EVA Foam and Compression Molded EVA foam - Mor Eva Foam

UNDERSTANDING OF LEATHER QUALITY AND GRADING

Firoz A Talukder

Quality has defined as “conforming to specifications, fitness for use and customer satisfaction”. The ISO definition (ISO 8402) for quality is “conformance to requirements- the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs.” Quality refers to the inherent characteristics of a product or service that make it fit for its intended purpose, ensuring it performs well, lasts for a reasonable period, and provides value to its users.

Quality can be quantified as- $Q \text{ (Quality)} = \frac{\text{Performance}}{\text{E (Expectations)}}$.

Key Elements of Quality are- Conformance to Standards, Performance, Durability, Reliability, Aesthetics and Customer satisfaction. In a general sense, quality is about providing value through excellence in both the design and execution of a product or service.

Quality and Grading are closely integrated in many industries, like leather production, agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Quality refers to the overall standard or excellence of a product or service, Grading is the process of categorizing products based on specific quality characteristics, defects, or other defining features. Grading essentially breaks down the broad concept of quality into specific, measurable criteria to determine how a product compares to others.

Grading systems are built on specific quality attributes. For example, in leather grading, quality

factors such as surface appearance, texture, imperfections, and flexibility define how a particular hide or leather product will be graded (e.g., A1, B2, C4, etc.). Grading is the mechanism that allows for the practical application of quality assessments, translating subjective concepts of excellence into a clear, standardized classification system that benefits both producers and consumers.

IMPORTANCE OF LEATHER GRADING

Ensures Quality Control: Grading allows manufacturers to select leather that meets the required standards for a particular product. This grading system ensures that products are made from appropriate leather based on quality and intended use. By identifying leather grades (e.g., A1, B2, C3), manufacturers can avoid using leather with significant imperfections that could affect product durability, aesthetics, or comfort.

Cost Management: Different leather grades come at different price points. Higher-grade leathers like A1 are more expensive due to their superior quality and rarity, while lower-grade leathers like C5 or D6 are more cost-effective. Understanding leather grades helps businesses manage their material costs based on the product’s market positioning. By using leather with defects in non-visible or less demanding areas of the product (like linings or insoles), manufacturers can make cost-effective decisions without compromising the overall product quality.

Supply Chain Management: Grading helps companies organize and manage their leather inventory by categorizing different types of leather according to their grade, which is useful for tracking stock levels, lead times, and production schedules. Grading, often linked with batch codes, allows manufacturers to trace the leather back to its source and verify whether it meets specific quality or sourcing standards. This is especially important for products in industries where quality control is critical, such as aerospace, automotive, and furniture manufacturing.



Raw Hide Grading: Raw hide grading occurs right after the hide is obtained from an animal and plays a significant role in determining how the hide will be processed into finished leather. The quality of the raw hide will directly impact the quality of the finished leather. Raw hide grading factors include-Size, Condition, Surface quality and Thickness.

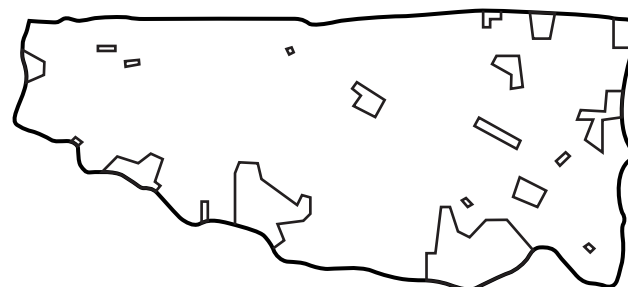
Wet Blue Grading: Wet Blue is the term used for processing and converting raw hides to tanned leather using chromium salts. The blue colour that gives these skins its name as wet blue, or in the blues is the chromium tanning agents, they create the light blue colour during its tanning process. The leather is tanned, but neither dried, dyed nor finished. The bluish coloring is produced by the chrome tanning agent (Chromium (III) oxide) resulting in a leather that has a characteristic blue-gray color, which is why it's called "wet blue."

Wet blue grading focuses on evaluating the quality of the partially tanned hide before further processing into finished leather. Wet blue grading factors include- Uniformity of tanning, Thickness, Defects, Softness and flexibility.

Leather Grading (Finished Leather): The grading of finished leather helps manufacturers decide which grade to use for specific applications. Leather grades help businesses manage production costs, maintain product quality, and meet consumer expectations for aesthetics, durability, and comfort. Higher-grade

leathers are used in luxury products, while lower grades are used in more cost-effective or functional items.

BASED ON CUTTING VALUE LEATHER MAY GRADE AS:



Grade A (Prime Cut Leather): This is the best quality leather with high cutting yield (i.e., a large portion of the hide can be used), no visible imperfections such as scars, blemishes, or stretch marks, ideal for products where appearance is crucial, such as luxury goods and high-end fashion.

Grade B (Standard Cut Leather): This leather has a moderate cutting value but may have minor imperfections, such as small scars or marks. These imperfections do not significantly affect the overall strength or durability of the leather but do reduce the usable area slightly.

Grade C (Commercial Cut Leather): Grade C leather has more imperfections than Grade A or B. These imperfections may include larger scars, stretch marks, or discolorations that make certain parts of the hide unusable for premium products. The leather is still strong and functional but may require careful planning to minimize waste during cutting. Budget footwear, industrial products, and products where the visual aspect is not as critical.

Grade D (Low Cut Leather): This is the lowest grade in terms of cutting value. It contains many defects, scars, and blemishes that reduce the amount of usable leather. The leather may still be used in less demanding applications, but it requires careful cutting and may result in a high amount of wastage. Typically used in industrial-grade products or for applications where aesthetics is not important.

SATRA GRADING SYSTEM

SATRA grading refers to a leather grading system developed by SATRA Technology Centre. The SATRA grading system provides a detailed, scientific approach to assessing leather, with a focus on factors like strength, durability, appearance, color consistency, and flexibility. This ensures that

■ **QUALITY**

manufacturers can assess the suitability of leather for specific end uses, enabling better decision-making in production and quality control. SATRA Leather Grading confirms:

Quality Assurance: Helps manufacturers maintain high standards of leather quality by identifying weaknesses or defects early in the production process.

Consistency: Ensures that the leather used in production is consistent in terms of both physical and visual properties.

Performance Prediction: Assists in predicting how leather will perform in various conditions over time, which is crucial for product longevity.

Informed Decision-Making: Allows companies to select the right type of leather for specific applications, reducing waste and improving efficiency in the production process.

SATRA GRADING CRITERIA

A Grade: Leather that is uniform, highly durable, with minimal imperfections. It has excellent performance properties and is suitable for high-end applications.

B Grade: Leather with some minor imperfections or slight color variations. It is still durable and suitable for most standard applications.

C Grade: Leather with noticeable imperfections or reduced durability. It may be more affordable but is best suited for less demanding uses or lower-cost products.

SATRA FIVE-POINT GRADING SYSTEM FOR LEATHER

Quality Coefficient	Grade	Representative Coefficient
100 to 95.1	A	97%
95 to 90.1	B	93%
90 to 85.1	C	88%
85 to 80.1	D	83%
80 to 75.1	E	87%
75 to 70	F	73%

ALTERNATIVELY A1, B2, B3, C4, C5, D6, AND U73 CODES UNDERSTANDING THE LEATHER GRADING SYSTEM AS BELOW

A1 Excellent Quality Leather: This is the highest quality leather, used for luxury goods and high-end products.

B2 High-Grade Leather (Minor Imperfections): Leather with minor imperfections that do not significantly affect its performance or usability.

B3 Moderate Quality Leather (More Imperfections): Leather with more noticeable imperfections than B2 but still functional.

C4 Low-Grade Leather (Significant Imperfections): Leather with clear and noticeable defects that affect appearance and durability.

C5 Lower Quality Leather (Major Defects): Leather with major defects and imperfections that severely impact its appearance and performance.

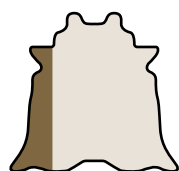
D6 Poor Quality Leather (Heavy Imperfections): D6 grade leather is the lowest quality leather typically available.

U73 Unique Code or Batch Identification: The U73 designation may represent a batch code, special product, or type of leather within a specific grading system.

These grades are essential for manufacturers to evaluate and select the right leather for their intended use, balancing cost, aesthetics, durability, and functionality.



THE TANNERY GRADES



Belly



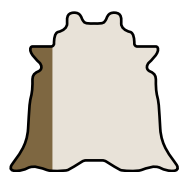
Double Belly



Bend



Double Bend



Butt



Double Butt



Shoulder



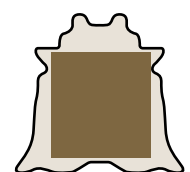
Double Shoulder



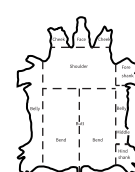
Side



Whole Hide



Single Cut Area



When purchasing hides or pieces of leather material, it can be very common to see “A,” “B,” “C,” “D,” and “TR” (tannery run) grade hides. These grades refer to tannery grades applied by the tanner.

TR1 is considered to be premium leather, specifically a high-quality grade for leather used in footwear production. TR1 leather usually has a consistent color and texture, with very few, if any, visible imperfections (such as scars or stretch marks). TR1 leather is often used in the production of luxury shoes, high-end boots, and other premium leather footwear.

TR2 is another grade in the SATRA leather grading system, specifically related to leather used for footwear. It is a step below TR1 in terms of quality, but it is still considered a good-quality leather, especially in mid-range products. TR2 may have slight color or texture variations, making it less uniform than TR1 leather. These imperfections might be more noticeable upon close inspection, but they do not impact the leather’s functionality. The surface may have minor flaws such as light scars or stretches, but these are typically small and do not compromise the overall usability.

TR3 leather is of good quality but is a step lower than TR2 in terms of surface quality, durability, and appearance. TR3 leather has more visible imperfections than TR1 or TR2, such as scarring, stretch marks, or other natural irregularities in the leather. These imperfections may affect the overall aesthetic but do not significantly impact the leather’s performance.

aesthetic but do not significantly impact the leather’s performance.

TR4 is a lower-quality leather grade compared to TR3 and is generally considered the lowest level of leather. TR4 leather has noticeable imperfections and defects such as deep scars, tears, rough textures, or significant grain inconsistencies. These flaws are more pronounced, and much of the leather’s surface may not be usable for premium or even mid-range products.

Effective Quality control and Grading system the benefits of durability, comfort, and timeless elegance of leather and play a crucial role in determining the quality and appearance of leather products. By combining effective grading systems with rigorous quality control, manufacturers can consistently deliver high-quality leather and leather goods.

About Author

Mr. Firoz Alam Talukder, has gained as a seasoned ESG practitioner of Leather and Footwear industries with both academic and professional track records. He is also certified auditor and practitioner for LWG internal auditing and preparation, SLCP, SEDEX, SO14001, CMM, CrVI, H2S assessment, ZDHC (RSL/MRSL) and more sustainability performance indicators for the industry. He is also member of LWG Tannery of the Future Group and Traceability Working Tannery of the Future Group and Traceability Working Group.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BANGLADESH LEATHER & FOOTWEAR SECTOR INSIGHTS SURVEY REPORT 2025

The Bangladesh Leather and Footwear Business Insight Survey 2025 offers a comprehensive analysis of the prevailing business environment within the country's leather, footwear, and allied industries. This report presents a thorough evaluation of the sector's performance in 2024 and provides informed projections for 2025. By gathering insights from industry professionals and stakeholders, the survey captures emerging trends, key challenges, and anticipated growth opportunities.

BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN 2024: A YEAR OF MIXED FORTUNES

The year 2024 was marked by both progress and obstacles in Bangladesh's leather and footwear industry. The sector demonstrated resilience despite global economic uncertainties, with steady export performance and consistent domestic demand. However, the industry encountered several critical challenges that shaped its business landscape.

Exports remained a major driving force for the sector, with a marginal increase in revenue compared to 2023. Global demand for Bangladeshi leather and footwear products persisted, but supply chain disruptions and rising raw material costs exerted pressure on profit margins. Manufacturers faced the dual challenge of maintaining competitive pricing while absorbing escalating costs. Stricter environmental and labor compliance standards made it imperative for manufacturers to upgrade their operations, often requiring significant investments. While some larger companies adapted to these changes, many SMEs struggled to meet international buyer expectations.

Bangladesh experienced a major political change in 2024, and political unrest greatly impacted July and

August. Inflation and cost escalation were notable concerns in 2024, as rising wages, energy prices, and currency depreciation increased production expenses. Manufacturers were forced to navigate these cost pressures while maintaining affordability for both domestic and international markets.

Despite these challenges, most of the respondents to this survey said that the Turn Over (TO) of their businesses in 2024 compared to previous year was either strongly Increase (25.5%) or Increase (36.6%), 14.8% respondents business was stable whereas other 23.2% consider their business either decrease or strongly decrease.

BUSINESS PROJECTIONS FOR 2025: A CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

As the industry moves into 2025, stakeholders anticipate gradual improvements backed by strategic shifts in production, marketing, and sustainability initiatives. According to the survey, 82.4% of respondents are optimistic about their business turnover in 2025, expecting an increase—either a strong increase (38.4%) or a moderate increase (40%).

This positive outlook is largely driven by factors such as rising consumer demand, expansion into new markets, improved supply chain efficiency, and technological advancements. Meanwhile, 10.2% of respondents anticipate their business turnover will remain stable, similar to last year, possibly due to steady market conditions or cautious business strategies. On the other hand, 7.4% foresee a decline in their turnover, with 3.7% expecting a decrease and another 3.7% predicting a strong decrease. Challenges such as economic uncertainty, increased competition, and cost pressures may contribute to

this negative projection.

A significant majority of respondents anticipate a rise in product prices in 2025, with 13.9% expecting a strong increase and 47.7% predicting a moderate increase, totaling 61.6%. Meanwhile, 29.9% believe prices will remain stable, and only 9.3% foresee a decline. The expectation of rising prices could be attributed to several factors, including increasing raw material costs, supply chain disruptions, higher labor wages, and inflationary pressures.

Additionally, geopolitical uncertainties and changes in trade policies may contribute to price volatility. On the other hand, the minority expecting a price decrease may be considering factors such as market saturation, declining consumer demand, or improvements in production efficiency. A majority (62.5%) of respondents expect their overall business situation to improve in 2025, driven by factors such as increasing market demand, strategic investments, and anticipated policy support. Meanwhile, 15.7% believe their business conditions will remain unchanged, possibly due to stable market conditions and consistent operational performance. However, 16.2% of respondents expressed concerns that their business situation may worsen, citing challenges like economic uncertainty, rising costs, and global supply chain disruptions. Additionally, 5.6% were unsure, reflecting hesitation amid unpredictable market dynamics and evolving industry trends.

According to the survey results, a majority of respondents hold a positive outlook on investment opportunities in the leather and footwear industry. About 21.8% expect a strong increase in investments, while 38% anticipate a moderate rise. This optimism could be driven by factors such as growing global demand, increased government incentives, or advancements in sustainable and value-added manufacturing. Meanwhile, 22.7% of respondents believe that investment levels will remain unchanged from the previous year. This stagnation could stem from economic uncertainties, market saturation, or challenges in accessing financing. On the other hand, 17.6% of respondents are less confident and expect a decline in investments. Potential reasons for this pessimism may include rising production costs, regulatory constraints, shifting trade policies, or concerns about global economic slowdowns. These mixed perspectives reflect the dynamic nature of the industry, where investment trends are influenced by a combination of market conditions, policy frameworks, and industry-specific challenges.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR 2025: NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY

In 2025, political uncertainty (37.5%) stands out as the most significant concern for the leather and footwear businesses. This is driven by shifting government policies, trade restrictions, taxation changes, and overall instability in governance, which can directly impact investment decisions, supply chains, and business confidence. Economic uncertainty (26.9%) follows closely, fueled by inflation, interest rate fluctuations, currency depreciation, and unpredictable global financial conditions that affect consumer purchasing power and business planning.

Insufficient order demand (8.8%) is another challenge, influenced by changing consumer preferences, slow post-pandemic recovery in key markets, and increasing competition from synthetic alternatives and lower-cost manufacturers. The rising cost of labor (8.3%) adds further pressure, as wage hikes, labor shortages, and higher compliance costs for worker safety and welfare put additional financial strain on businesses.

Other critical concerns include the escalating cost of raw materials due to supply chain disruptions, energy price fluctuations, and sustainability requirements. Exchange rate volatility affects import and export pricing, making businesses vulnerable to currency depreciation. Additionally, regulatory changes, including stricter environmental and labor laws, increase compliance costs. Geopolitical tensions and global trade conflicts further disrupt sourcing, logistics, and international market access, adding to the overall uncertainty for the industry.

FOR DETAILS REPORT:

<https://footwarexchange.com/bangladesh-leather-footwear-sector-insights-survey-report-2025-issue-2/>



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