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Competitiveness of the Bangladesh apparel industry during the COVID-19 pandemic: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract: By using the NRCA index, this study investigates the competitiveness of Bangladesh's top five apparel products during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, data were obtained from UN Comtrade and UNCTADstat, covering the period from 2015 to 2022. The findings show that Bangladesh's share of the top five apparel products, classified as SITC 841, SITC 842, SITC 843, SITC 844, and SITC 845, and their competitiveness are increasing. Among Bangladesh's top five clothing products, SITC 845 exports have been consistently increasing. This study also reveals that the Bangladesh apparel industry maintained its competitiveness despite ongoing global uncertainty.

1.0 Introduction

Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) industry started its journey in the early 1980s. The industry has played a vibrant role in the country's socio-economic development. Among the world's largest clothing exporters, Bangladesh has achieved the second position after China, followed by Vietnam. The RMG industry of Bangladesh contributes almost 83% of the country's national exports in 2024 (UNCTAD Stat, 2025). Despite several challenges throughout its journey, the Bangladesh RMG industry has successfully overcome these challenges and maintained its competitiveness (Mottaleb & Sonobe, 2011; Alam & Natsuda, 2016; Barua & Ansary, 2017; Ashadullah, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh's clothing exports also decreased sharply in 2020, similar to those of other clothing exporters (Boudreau & Naeem, 2021). However, Bangladesh was again able to increase its exports in the world market in the first half of fiscal year 2021 (BGMEA, 2021). Available data on the COVID-19 situation indicate that Bangladesh, the world's second-largest clothing exporter, has undergone significant changes. For example, the size of clothing exports decreased by almost US$ 65 million from approximately US$ 490 million in 2019, when the pandemic started, to US$ 425 million in 2020, one year after the Pandemic (UN Comtrade, 2021). For Bangladesh,

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garment exports were also reduced by almost $6,500 million (from US$ 33,072 million in 2019 to US$ 26,571 million in 2020), a 20% decrease. For the 1st six months of 2021, it has increased to US$ 19,525 million, approximately 17% gratrer than the previous year (Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh, 2021). From 2015 to 2019, the world's clothing growth rate was 1.5%, but it contracted to 11.60% in 2020, during the pandemic. The global growth rate was 3.1% from 2015 to 2019, but it decreased to (-14.1%) during the pandemic from 2020 to 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed exceptional challenges to the worldwide clothing supply chain, considerably affecting Bangladesh, one of the world's leading apparel exporters. Hence, it is essential to understand the competitive position of Bangladesh's RMG industry, particularly the top five products during the pandemic, so that researchers, stakeholders, and policymakers can articulate effective recovery and development policies for the sector.

Several studies focused on short-term resilience, supply chain disruptions, and policy responses (e.g., Su et al., 2024; Ali et al., 2021; Mostafiz et al., 2022). Some studies have focused on global production shifts, while overlooking product-level competitiveness, for example, Castañeda-Navarrete et al., 2021; Hayakawa & Mukunoki, 2021 identified the immediate and continuing effects of the pandemic on manufacture, trade, and sourcing chains worldwide. Though wide-ranging research scrutinizing the COVID-19 pandemic's interruption of global value chains and apparel industries across countries (e.g., China, India, and Bangladesh), a significant gap remains in understanding the scenario of competitiveness of Bangladesh's clothing exports during the pandemic and how Bangladesh's apparel industry sustained its competitiveness amid continued global uncertainty.Therefore, this study intends to empirically analyze the competitiveness of the top five clothing exports namely, SITC 841 (Men's Clothing, Not Knitted), SITC 842 (Women's Clothing, Not Knitted), SITC 843 ((Men's Clothing, Knitted), SITC 844 (Women's Clothing, Knitted), and SITC 845 (Articles of Apparel, n.e.s) from Bangladesh in the world market amid the COVID-19 crisis.

This study assess the competitiveness of the Bangladesh garment industry by using available export data from 2015 to 2022, including total garments exports from Bangladesh to the world, as per the SITC classification code 84 from UN Comtrade, a statistical database of the United Nations (2021). Data on Bangladesh's exports in various years and global exports were obtained from UNCTADstat (2025). The data amounts are expressed in millions of US dollars. This study examines data from two time periods: from the year 2015 to 2019 and from the year 2019 to 2022, covering both periods before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were on clothing exports (SITC 84: Textile, Clothing, and Accessories) and identified the top five clothing items exported by Bangladesh. The reasons behind the selection of the top five products are that they account for nearly 77% of total clothing exports in 2022. For the other two products included in SITC 84, data were unavailable. Therefore, this study focuses on the top five RMG commodities. In the global clothing industry, almost 10% of clothing exports made by Bangladesh, entirely dependent on clothing exports without a strong backward linkage of raw materials. Hence, the examination of competitiveness is essential, as Bangladesh predominantly reliant on clothing exports. This research employs the Normalized Revealed Comparative Advantage (NRCA) index established by Yu et al. (2009) to assess the competitiveness of Bangladesh's apparel sector. Mostly, export

competitiveness is assessed by the Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) index. However, it has several limitations including sensitivity to scale and the risk of misrepresenting comparative advantgaes, particularl in dynamic markets affected by crises. The RCA's dependence on raw export shares can result in biased analyses during periods of significant change like the COVID-19 pandemic, which largely shifted export dynamics. In contrast to these limits, the Normalized Revealed Comparative Advantage (NRCA) might be a proper solution. It can normalized RCA scores across diverse product groupings and time frames. Different researchers including Siggel (2006), Ullah & Inaba (2012), Ashadullah (2021), and Hasan & Das (2025) conducted several studies to measure competitiveness by using NRCA index. Therfore, using the normalized RCA to assess Bangladesh's apparel exports competitiveness during the pandemic will provide comprehensive understandings into which areas maintain or lost their competitive status, enabling focused policy initiatives and strategic planning. Moreover, this method aligns with current academic and practical stnadards for analyzing comparative advantage in unstable environments.

Thus, this study empirically assessed the competitiveness of the top five clothing items exported by Bangladesh in the global market, employing the latest available data on clothing export from Bangladesh and the world. The rest of the paper is presented in four segments. The following section reviews existing research on the competitiveness of RMG products during the COVID-19 pandemic. The third section describes the data and methodology applied in this study. The fourth section presents the empirical results, and the fifth section presents the discussions. Finally, the conclusion and poliy recommendations wraps up the study.

2.0 Literature Review

Bangladesh's RMG sector is a cornerstone of its economy, contributing over 84% of total export earnings (BGMEA, 2023). The COVID-19 Pandemic has had a harsh impact on the clothing industry worldwide. The government implemented several policies to get rid of the situation. However, this paper evaluates the export competitiveness of Bangladesh's top five clothing items exports namely, SITC 841 (Men's Clothing, Not Knitted), SITC 842 (Women's Clothing, Not Knitted), SITC 843 ((Men's Clothing, Knitted), SITC 844 (Women's Clothing, Knitted), and SITC 845 (Articles of Apparel, n.e.s) during the pandemic.

Several research including Castañeda-Navarrete et al., 2021; Hayakawa & Mukunoki, 2021; Lu et al., 2024, have showed the short and long term impact of the pandemic on production, trade and global supply chains. The unique implications for developing economies like Bangladesh—where the apparel sector leads export earnings—remain under-examined. The prevailing body of research mainly emphases on macroeconomic shocks and global value chain (GVC) disorders, proposing partial understandings into how firm-level competitiveness developed in reply to these unique challenges. In the context of Bangladesh, early studies have largely highlighted the pandemic's short-term impact on the RMG sector, including supply chain interruptions, order cancellations, and employment amazements (Ali et al., 2021; Chowdhury et al., 2022; Amit, 2020). Numerous studies incline to stress on vulnerability and resilience rather than sustained

competitiveness. For example, Moazzem et al. (2021) studied the vulnerability and recovery routes of RMG enterprises. However, in what way these firms recreated their manufacture, logistics, or innovation capabilities to sustain or transfer competitiveness in global market was not adequately addressed.

Comparative research by Su et al. (2024), has examined that in what manner apparel industries in Bangladesh and China coped with the pandemic, featuring structural differences in their resilience mechanisms. However, these studies keep on descriptive and continually oversee the vibrant relationship between supply chain reformation, organized support, and firm-level competences that conclude competitiveness in post-pandemic environments.

In the same way, Mostafiz et al. (2022) argued about the GVC reorganization in the RMG industry, but their inquiry devoted on global supply chain governance than on national competitiveness elements. At a theoretical level, few studies have scientifically applied competitiveness structures—such as transaction cost theory or capability-based perspectives—to comprehend the changing position of Bangladesh's apparel industry amid COVID-19 troubles. Kamal and Yesmin (2022) explored competitiveness through the lens of transaction cost theory but did not incorporate pandemic-specific challenges such as digital renovation, compliance requirements, or shifting buyer–supplier relationships. Consequently, there rests a acute need to tie theoretical approaches with experimental evidence that captures in what way firms in Bangladesh adjusted operationally and strategically during and after the pandemic.

Furthermore, regional analyses (Raihan & Islam, 2024) and sustainability-oriented assessments (Leal Filho et al., 2022; Khurana, 2022) propose that COVID-19 enhanced structural changes in production and consumption patterns. However, there is little empirical research that connects these comprehensive renovations to Bangladesh's comparative advantage, innovation courses, or competitiveness relative to other countries that produce clothing. Given the sector's vital role in national development, understanding in what manner the pandemic restructured competitive drivers—cost efficiency, flexibility, buyer assurance, and resilience—represents an urgent research priority.

In addition, some studies focus on impact of COVID-19 on RMG sectors lean manufacturing, working environments and macro economic issues. For example, Hoque et al. (2023) found the challenges in applying and sustaining lean in RMG exporting plants and the customer–seller role in alleviating lean obstacles in a usual situation pandemic situation. Uddin et al. (2023), shows that how reatialers take the advantages through order cancellation, expecting reduced rate for the orders and offering lower prices for the products. Islam & Halim (2022) found that Bangladesh economy and RMG industry is impacted negatively by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In summary, the existing literature proposed varied understandings into the pandemic's economic and operational effects on Bangladesh's apparel industry, but lacks a inclusive exploration of product-wise competitiveness in the context of Bangladesh. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how the COVID-19 crisis impacted the competitiveness of the Bangladeshi clothing industry by using NRCA index.

3.0 Methodology and Data

This research aims to assess the competitiveness of the top five products of Bangladesh clothing industry's position during the COVID-19 pandemic period (from the year 2015 to 2019 is for the pre-COVID period, and from the year 2020 to 2022 is for the post-pandemic period. Trade data used in this study were obtained from the United Nations Comtrade database report, UN trade statistics, UNCTADstat, and the Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) reports. The datasets include export values of Bangladesh's apparel products, export value of world apparel export, and product-wise export value categorized according to the standard international trade statistics, revision 3, three-digit level (SITC) codes, for the years 2015-2019 (pre-pandemic period) and 2020–2022 (pandemic period). The apparel products were classified into relevant SITC categories, including SITC 841, SITC 842, SITC 843, SITC 844, and SITC 845 (Non-knitted Men's garments, Non-knitted women's garments, Knitted Men's garments, kniwtted women's garments, and high-value fashion segments) to analyze product-specific competitiveness.
The Normalized Revealed Comparative Advantage (NRCA) developed by Yu et al. (2009), measures trade competitiveness by comparing a country's export share of a product to its global export share. An NRCA>0 indicates a comparative advantage, while an NRCA < 0 suggests a disadvantage. This index is preferred over the traditional RCA due to its systemetic and normalized properties. (Widodo, 2009).
The RCA index, developed by Balassa (1965), measures a country's export strength in a product relative to global exports. An RCA>1 indicates a competitive advantage. However, RCA has limitations, such as asymmetry and upper-bound distortion (Yu et al., 2009). The NRCA index, proposed by Proudman and Redding (2000), normalizes RCA to allow cross-country and cross-product comparisons. The NRCA index is constructed based on Balassa's RCA index (1965) and is defined by the following equation. It is measured by dividing the share of a country's exports of the commodity of interest by its entire exports and dividing that figure by the share of world exports of the similar commodity by whole world exports:

$$RCA\ ab=(Xab/Xa)/(Xwb/Xw)$$

Where *X*ab refers to the export of commodity b by country a; *X*a is the whole export of country a; *X*wb is commodity b's world export, and *X*w represents total world export. An RCA index value more than 1 indicates that country a has a comparative advantage in exporting commodity b and vice versa. The RCA index is widely used to evaluate comparative advantage. It has also been used to measure export competitiveness in some studies (see Siggel [2006] for details). However, the RCA index has several limitations. One limitation is that it only specifies whether a country has competitiveness for a given commodity and cannot express its magnitude (Yeats, 1985). To fix these limitations, the NRCA index normalizes the RCA index, allowing for the evaluation of competitiveness across countries, time, and commodities. The values range between -0.25 and 0.25, with 0 being the neutral point. Lower figures indicate lower competitiveness. The following equation describes the NRCA index. It is calculated by subtracting the share of a country's export of the product of interest in its world exports by the share of world exports of the same country's product in total world exports:

$$NRCA\ ab = [(Xab/Xw)-(Xa/Xw)x(Xwb/Xw)]$$

Where *X*ab denotes the export of commodity b by country a; *X*a denotes country a's total export, *X*ab is commodity b's world export, and *X*w refers to the total world export. An NRCA index greater than 0 indicates that country b has a comparative advantage (competitive) in the export of the commodity and vice versa.

4.0 Empirical Results

Using the data in Table 1, the competitiveness of the RMG sector of Bangladesh is examined using Export Share (%), RCA, and NRCA index concerning the top five products classified as SITC 841 (Men's Clothing, Not Knitted), SITC 842 (Women's Clothing, Not Knitted), SITC 843 ((Men's Clothing, Knitted), SITC 844 (Women's Clothing, Knitted), and SITC 845 (Articles of Apparel, n.e.s). This analysis focused on the competitiveness of Bangladesh's apparel industry, specifically examining the top five apparel products from 2015 to 2022, to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the competitive standing of RMG goods. This portion estimates the leading five RMG products in global markets from 2015 to 2022. Table 1 shows an NRCA analysis of the top five RMG products in Bangladesh. According to this data, in 2022, the top five products accounted for 77% of national exports (SITC 841 at 18.1%, SITC 842 at 12.3%, SITC 843 at 6.1%, SITC 844 at 9.4%, and SITC 845 at 30.9%), compared to 73.8% in 2021, 77.5% in 2020, and 78.1% in 2019 (with SITC 841 at 20.4%, SITC 842 at 13.8%, SITC 843 at 5.2%, SITC 844 at 7.9%, and SITC 845 at 31.1%), just prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the contribution from the top five products was 78.2%, down from 82.9% in 2015, representing a 4.7% reduction. This share was 72.1% in 2016, 72.9% in 2017, and 71.5% in 2018. Table 1 further indicates that in 2022, SITC 845 exhibited the highest NRCA value (6.3), followed by SITC 841 (3.7), SITC 842 (2.5), SITC 844 (1.9), and SITC 843 (1.2). In 2021, these values were 5.8 for SITC 845, 3.2 for SITC 841, 2.3 for SITC 842, 1.9 for SITC 844, and 1.1 for SITC 843.

It was also shown that during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 and 2022, the NRCA value for all five RMG products (SITC 841, SITC 842, SITC 843, and SITC 845) increased, with SITC 844 remaining constant. In 2020, SITC 845 had an NRCA value of 5.7, with increases seen in the NRCA for all products except SITC 841 and SITC 842, which were at 0.03 and 0.02, respectively. Generally, knitwear products (SITC 843 & SITC 844) performed better than woven garments (SITC 841 & SITC 842), showing rising NRCA values after 2020. SITC 845 (miscellaneous apparel) remained the most competitive product during the pandemic. The products before the pandemic (SITC 841 & SITC 842) experienced declines but maintained their competitiveness.

Table 1: NRCA analysis of Bangladesh's apparel industry (2015-2022)

SITC code	Comodity Label	2015			2016			2017			2018			2019			2020			2021			2022		
		Export Share %	RCA Value	NRCA Value	Export Share %	RCA Value	NRCA Value	Export Share %	RCA Value	NRCA Value	Export Share %	RCA Value	NRCA Value	Export Share %	RCA Value	NRCA Value	Export Share %	RCA Value	NRCA Value	Export Share %	RCA Value	NRCA Value	Export Share %	RCA Value	NRCA Value
841	Men's clothing, not knitted	23.8	48.6	4.9	23.9	50.6	5.1	24.1	54.6	4.8	18.8	45.5	3.7	20.4	47.7	4.1	18.8	52.9	3.5	16.4	50.7	3.2	18.1	53.8	3.7
842	Women's clothing, not knitted	13.5	22.0	2.7	11.5	19.8	2.4	11.6	21.0	2.2	12.3	23.6	2.4	13.8	26.0	2.7	13.6	28.4	2.5	12.1	25.9	2.3	12.3	27.6	2.5
843	Men's clothing, knitted	5.3	26.3	1.1	4.9	25.8	1.0	4.9	27.7	1.0	4.7	28.4	0.9	5.2	31.5	1.0	5.3	34.6	1.0	5.7	36.1	1.1	6.1	39.1	1.2
844	Women's clothing, knitted	7.4	19.7	1.5	4.5	11.1	0.9	4.6	14.8	0.9	7.2	24.4	1.4	7.9	26.8	1.6	8.8	31.3	1.6	9.7	32.1	1.9	9.4	34.5	1.9
845	Articles of apparel, n.e.s.	32.9	34.8	6.7	27.4	30.6	5.8	27.7	33.0	5.4	28.4	35.0	5.5	30.9	36.3	6.2	30.8	35.8	5.7	29.9	37.9	5.8	31.1	40.7	6.3

Source: Author's calculation based on data obtained from UN comtrade & other sources.

Source: Author's calculation based on data obtained from UN comtrade & other sources.

As shown in Table 1, SITC 841 (Men's Clothing, Not Knitted) maintained the highest export share, reaching a peak of 24.1% in 2017 and sustaining a strong position. The NRCA value of the product over 8 years ranged from 3.2 to 5.1. These reliably high values indicate sustained comparative advantage and focus I this segement. Similarly, the export share of SITC 842 (Women's Clothing, Not Knitted) declined slightly from 13.5% in 2015 to 12.3% in 2022 , while its NRCA value remained modest (around 2.3 to 2.7).

This data replicates modest but solid competitiveness, with the potential for progress through modernization or market development. In addition, SITC 843 (Men's Clothing, Knitted) displayed a insignificant but stable upsurge in export share (from 53% to 6.1%), accompanied by a modest escalation in NRCA (from 1.0 to 1.2). The optimistic inclination shows upward specialization and comprehensive demand for knitted men's apparel though it still exemplifies a smaller share of total exports. In contrast, the export share of SITC 844 (Women's Clothing, Knitted) rose significantly from 4.5% in 2016 to 9.4% in 2022, with its NRCA increasing from 0.9 to 1.9, marks the robust upward path in both volume and comparative advantgaes, indicating a key growth area for the industry.

Finally, SITC 845 (Articles of Apparel, n.e.s), which grasps the second-largest export share (ranging from 27.4% to 32.9%), constantly exhibits high NRCA values (5.4 to 6.7). This extensive arrangement possible incorporates products with strong export performance and global competitiveness. The total apparel export peaked in 2015 at 82.9% and experienced a slight decline before reounding to 77.0% in 2022. NRCA values indicate a stable comparative advantage in the global market. However, a minor decrease in dominance may suggest emerging competition or shifts in global demand.

5. Discussions

Based on the investigation, this segment discusses the competitiveness of the top five apparel products in the Bangladesh apparel sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly interrupted global value chains, restructuring the competitiveness of export-oriented industries especially apparel manufacturing industries. Befor the COVID-19

pandemic, Bnagladesh held a strong position in global RMG exports, especially in knitwear and woven garments. The woven garments product (SITC 841 and SITC 842) were particularly affected by higher production costs compare to knitted items (SITC 843 and SITC 844). The pandemic led to order withdrawals, global supply-chain instabilities, and shut-down of factories, resulting in an 18% reduction in Bnagladesh's RMG exports in 2020 (World Bank, 2021). However, due to cost competitiveness and speedy retrieval, bnagladesh recovered its position by 2021 (BGMEA, 2022). It was found that, Bangladesh's RMG sector revealed resilient competitiveness (NRCA >1) in the aforementioned top five RMG products during the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by cost advantgaes and buyer diversification.

However, long-term sustainability requires upgrading to high-value segments and improving supply chain resilience. Moreover, lockdowns interrupted the import of raw materials, primarily from China, resulting in production postponements. However, the vertical integration of Bangladesh's knitted garments, classified as SITC 843 and SITC 844, enabled a quick recovery than woven apparel, which relies more heavily on imported facbrics. In addition to that, knitted garments gained a competitive edge trough the local sourcing of yarn and fabric, therby reducing their dependence on imports (BGMEA, 2021). In contrast, woven garments SITC 841and SITC 842 faced challenges due to greater reliance on imports and extended lead times (World Bank, 2022). Other apparel (SITC 845) exhibited moderate resilience, with the demand for personal protective equipment (PPE) helping to offset some losses. The COVID-19 pandemic critically verified the competitiveness of Bangladesh's apparel industry, as global supply chains faced troubles, consumer demand meaningfully dropped, and industrial processes had to pause or scale back. Notwithstanding these significant impediments, the country's RMG sector demonstrated extraordinary resilience and adaptableness.

Bangladesh capilalized on its robust production capabilities and affordable labor as the world's second-largest apparel exporter. It established relationship with international buyers to maintain its market position globally. Factories swiftly implemented health and safety measures to restart operations. At the same time, the industry demonstrated flexibility by pivoting towards the production of PPE and adjusting to evolving consumer preferences for more casual and comfortable clothing. Additionally, the Bangladesh government launched stimulus pacakges amounting to US$ 588 million to support RMG workers and factories.

Moreover, the duty-free import of raw materials and financial incentives for exporters enhanced competitiveness (Bangladesh Bank, 2020). Following the pandemic, the knitted category (SITC 843 and SITC 844) emerged stronger, while the woven sector (SITC 841 and SITC 842) was pressured to implement more efficient supply chains. Furthermore, the pandemic accelerated a strategic shift in the industry toward increased product diversification and sustaibaility. Realizing that relying solely on low-cost production would not ensure market presence, many factories in Bangladesh began investing in eco-friendly processes, improved working conditions certifications, and higher-value product categories, such as performance wear and technical textiles. This shift attracted forward-thinking brands seeking strong environmental, social ,and governance (ESG) compliance.

It enabled Bangladeshi producers to command higher prices. Concurrently, efforts to digitalize supply chain visibility—from block chain-based traceability to AI-driven demand forecasting—have improved the sector's competitiveness by reducing waste, optimizing inventory, and boosting on-time delivery rates.

Looking forward, the post-COVID environment offers both opportunities and challnges. While Bangladesh can leverage its reputation for large-scale, dependable manufacturing and onoing infrastructure enhancements, such as new export processing zones and access to deep-sea ports, it faces rising competition from countries like Vietnam, Cabodia, and India, where wages are increasing and governments are providing attractive investment incentives. The industry's capacity to maintain growth will depend on deepening vertical integration, reinforcing compliance with global labor and environmental standards, and ensuring that Bangladesh continues to be more that just a low-cost option, but a strategic ally to the world's leading apparel brands.

6. Conclusion & Policy Recommendations

Using the NRCA index, this study evaluated the competitiveness of the top five clothing products, namely SITC 841 (Men's Clothing, Not Knitted), SITC 842 (Women's Clothing, Not Knitted), SITC 843 ((Men's Clothing, Knitted), SITC 844 (Women's Clothing, Knitted), and SITC 845 (Articles of Apparel, n.e.s) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data analyzed in this study from 2015 to 2022 highlights significant trends & insights into the competitiveness of Bangladesh's top five apparel products before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was revealed that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bangladeshi apparel sector ensure sustainable resilience in the face of supply chain troubles and growing market demands. Though the competiitvenss of five apparel products (SITC 841, SITC 842, SITC 843, SITC 844, and SITC 845) was influenced by fluctuations in demand, supply chain interruption, and cost advantages. Despite various disruption caused by the pandemic, Bangladesh's apparel sector—particularly in knitwear products (SITC 844) and woven garments (SITC 842)—remained highly competitive. In addition, knitwear products from SITC 843 to SITC 844 and diversified apparel products (SITC 845) emerging as crucial performers. However, long-term competitiveness depends on automation, enhancing sustainability, and compliance to lessen dependency on inexpensive labor alone. While woven garments ranging from SITC 841 to SITC 842 remain introductory, future growth will depend on innovation, cost efficiency, and supply chain resilience. To maintain competitiveness beyond simple cost advantages, enhancing product variation, sustainability, and automation will be crucial. Therefore, to maintain its current competitive edge and long term sustainability amid global supply chain changes, Bangladesh's apparel sector may focus on product and market diversification.

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