



Linnæus University

Sweden

Master's Thesis

**The Impact of International Buyer-Supplier
Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the
Ready-Made Garments Industry: A Case Study
of Bangladesh**



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Semester: Spring 2023

Subject: Business Administration with
specialization in International Business
Strategy.

Course code: 4FE81E



Abstract

In this research, we explore the impact of international buyer-supplier relationships on sustainability practices in the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry, concentrating specifically on the context of Bangladesh. The root of this investigation centers around unpacking the influence of global business interconnectivity on operational approaches at the supplier juncture, with a specific emphasis on sustainability. Two core research queries were set as the guiding posts for this investigation: (1) What is the impact of international buyer-supplier relationships on sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh? and (2) How do different types of buyer-supplier relationships influence this impact? Drawing from the theoretical discourse, the study ventured to hypothesize those certain elements of international buyer-supplier relationships - the relational dynamics, enduring alliances, and the commitment of international buyers to sustainability - have a positive bearing on sustainable practices within the Bangladeshi RMG industry.

To provide empirical support to these assumptions, a quantitative study involving 66 managers working within Bangladesh's RMG industry was undertaken. Utilizing covariance-based descriptive statistics as our analytical tool, we proceeded to examine the validity of our hypotheses. The findings provided a resounding confirmation, highlighting that attributes like trust, commitment, open communication, and long-term partnerships favorably influence the incorporation of sustainable practices. Moreover, it was observed that the commitment of international buyers to sustainability, demonstrated through the enforcement of standards and initiatives to support suppliers, has a substantial influence on suppliers' operational strategies, elbowing them towards the adoption of sustainable and ethical business practices. These insights shed light on how international buyer-supplier relationships impact global trading dynamics and underscore the intensifying significance of sustainability in modern business ethics. This research extends the theoretical discourse on international business, supply chain management, and sustainability. Additionally, it offers pragmatic insights for managers operating within Bangladesh's RMG industry, accentuating the necessity to cultivate enduring, trust-centric relationships with international buyers and to align their operational strategies with the global shift towards sustainable business practices.



Keywords

Sustainability, Buyer-Supplier Relationship, International Buyers, International Business, Bangladesh RMG



Acknowledgment

A thesis paper is one of the crucial parts of any master's degree. Writing a thesis paper requires a lot of patience, dedication, and consistent effort. At the end of the report, it has been realized that although the experience of producing a research paper was challenging but the lesson, we learned in every step will help us in our future undertakings, both academic and professional.

Firstly, we would like to convey our heartfelt gratitude to our examiner Dr. Richard A. Owusu, who carefully examined our every progress and provided thoughtful feedback. Moreover, we would like to extend our gratitude to our supervisor Heidi Coral Thornton who has been very supportive from the beginning in choosing the research topic, shaping our thoughts in the right direction, and helping us think critically. She has been always there whenever we needed any direction, even it was a minor thing.

Secondly, we would like to thank our classmates, specifically our opponents who spent their valuable time analyzing our report. Their constructive feedback helped us improve the quality of our thesis paper and the positive feedback motivated us to make it more precise as well as informative. Apart from this, we would like to thank each other whose combined effort made this thesis a productive one. Everyone's equal effort, dedication, and sincerity are truly appreciated.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank our respondents who took part in our questionnaire living far away from Sweden. As the report depends on the questionnaire for data collection, without the respondent's cooperation, it would not be a successful one. We are truly grateful for everyone's individual support in this regard.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jesmin Sabnam, Farhana Hoque and Fariha Ishrat Jahan



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List of Abbreviations

- ANOVA – Analysis of Variance
- BGMEA - Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association
- BSR – Business for Social Responsibility
- CSR – Corporate Social Responsibilities
- DV – Dependent Variable
- GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- GPP – Green Procurement Practices
- IAD – Institutional Analysis & Development
- IBCS – International Buyers’ Commitment to Sustainability
- ISPRMGB – Impact of Sustainable Practices in the RMG of Bangladesh
- IV – Independent Variable
- NBSR – Nature of Buyer-Supplier Relationship
- NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
- RMG – Ready Made Garments
- SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
- TBSR - Types of Buyer-Supplier Relationship
- VIF – Variance Inflation Factor



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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter contains an overview of the current situation of RMG industry in Bangladesh. The background part highlights the facts how Bangladesh is doing in terms of managing supplies to different foreign countries, what is the impact of apparel manufacturing on the industries sustainability, and lastly a brief justification behind choosing this topic. The later parts consist of identifying the research gap, research question, research objective, delimitation, and analyzing few literatures to figure out what research has been done already on this topic to obtain relevant knowledge.

1.1. Research Background

The Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector is a vital force in Bangladesh's economy, contributing significantly to national GDP, employment creation and export earnings. Over the past three decades, this sector has experienced remarkable expansion with an influx of RMG units, construction of physical infrastructure and enhanced human capital development. The RMG sector contributed 9.25% to the GDP and 81% of total export earnings (Bangladesh Bank, 2022). Mia and Akter (2019) reported that the RMG sector has grown into Bangladesh's leading export industry, accounting for 83.9% of national export in 2017-2018. With significant growth over 25 years, it now directly employs around 4 million people, providing employment opportunities and alleviating poverty in the country.

According to Sarkar, Qian and Peau (2020) despite the major contribution to the country's GDP, the rapid expansion of this sector has a tremendous negative impact on the country's environment and its ecological sustainability which has become a global burning issue nowadays among companies, academics, governments, and the international organizations. Apart from the environmental impacts, Huq, Stevenson and Zorzini (2014) stated that the RMG industry deals with the human aspect of sustainability as well, which includes human rights (e.g., child labor and freedom of assembly), health and safety (e.g., safe work environments and training), and community. (e.g. charitable, philanthropic initiatives), etc. The sustainability challenges in the RMG sector of Bangladesh have been the subject of considerable attention from academics, policymakers, and international organizations. In particular, the role of international buyer-supplier relationships in addressing these challenges cannot be ignored. International buyers play a vital role in the RMG industry, as they drive demand and have a significant influence on supplier practices (Bag et al., 2022).



As such, buyers' sustainability requirements and practices can significantly affect supplier sustainability practices and, ultimately, the industry's sustainability outcomes.

According to Hoque and Rana (2019), capability development among garment suppliers has become a significant factor meeting buyers' demand. The researchers further investigated how buyer-supplier relationships influence the capability development and performance improvement of garment suppliers, particularly within a cross-border context. Through multiple embedded case studies and qualitative research methods, the findings of this study indicate that buyer-supplier relationship types and governance have a substantial effect on suppliers' capability development and performance improvement. Furthermore, working environments, organizational performance, and buyer's business model all influence these relationship types and governance structures.

Buyer-supplier relationships play a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices in various industries, including the RMG sector. According to Bag, S. et al. (2022), collaborative buyer-supplier relationships have a positive influence on supplier social sustainability. The impact of buyer-supplier relationships on sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh is particularly crucial given the sustainability challenges faced by the sector. As Bag, S. et al. (2022) noted, sustainable practices in the RMG sector are necessary to address issues such as poor working conditions, low wages, and environmental degradation. Collaborative buyer-supplier relationships can positively impact the sector's social sustainability, thereby contributing to the industry's overall sustainability outcomes.

The findings of Hoque, Stevenson and Zorzini (2019) highlight the importance of the buyer-supplier relationship in promoting sustainability practices in the garment industry of Bangladesh. The study demonstrated that the behavior of buyers towards suppliers can have a significant impact on the suppliers' capability to implement sustainable practices. Thus, buyers must provide support to suppliers in terms of infrastructure, technical proficiency, and compliance protocol. The international buyer-supplier relationship is key to the growth and success of Bangladesh's RMG industry. These connections shape capability development, performance improvement, as well as working conditions for garment suppliers. Therefore, studies on buyer-supplier relationships, working environments, and organizational performance are necessary to gain a comprehensive insight into global value chain management within this sector.

Islam (2015) explores the advantages, impacts, and gaps of green procurement practices (GPPs) within Bangladesh's RMG industry. Many garment companies are striving to improve



their operations and products' environmental performance; GPP is a logical extension of this work. Islam (2015) further studied the garment industry of Bangladesh to identify their sustainable practices, which included procuring, purchasing, and producing recycled and environmentally preferred products. These practices encompass different functions such as raw materials purchase, machinery purchases, packaging/distribution services, operations/office components/disposals and suppliers' engagement. Islam (2015) noted that these green procurement initiatives included purchasing Eco-Labelled machinery; buying sustainable raw materials; using bio-based packaging; and certification with Oeko-Tex-100 standards.

In Bangladesh's RMG industry, there is a gap between sustainable practices standards and what companies do. Though there may be some challenges in implementing sustainable practices, it is largely connected to sustainable development goals. To bridge this gap and regulate laws regarding sustainable practices, it is paramount that the buyers, i.e., companies specifically from the Western society must play a big role.

1.2. Problem Discussion

Bangladesh's RMG business has grown considerably as a result of exports to wealthy economies. As a global market participant, it is hard to disregard CSR and environmental challenges. The RMG industry demonstrates that the current state of worker rights and practices, ecological management, ex-post monitoring, risk management, low carbon technology, and transparency in corporate governance are not yet satisfactory, owing to the absence of poor law enforcement, inadequate stakeholder participation in acquiring their rights, the lack of implementation of backdated industrial laws and regulations, fragile unions, a lack of consumer rights groups, and high levels of transparency. These issues, according to regulatory authorities, cause CSR liable in Bangladesh's RMG business. (Saha, Akhter and Hassan, 2021).

Being one of the key economic drivers of Bangladesh, the RMG sector faces numerous sustainability challenges that pose significant social, economic, and environmental risks. These challenges include poor working conditions, low wages, and environmental degradation, among others. The sector's sustainability challenges are further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disrupted global supply chains, reduced demand, and led to job losses and income insecurity for millions of workers. The sustainability challenges faced by the RMG sector in Bangladesh call for urgent attention from policymakers, industry practitioners, and other stakeholders.



One of the key factors that can influence the sustainability outcomes of the RMG sector is buyer-supplier relationships. International buyers play a crucial role in driving demand for RMG products and can exert significant influence on supplier practices. However, the sustainability requirements and practices of international buyers vary, and their impact on supplier sustainability practices and, ultimately, the sector's sustainability outcomes is not well understood. This presents a significant challenge for RMG suppliers, who must navigate multiple and often conflicting sustainability requirements and practices from different buyers.

The ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector in Bangladesh is a huge sector and its impact on economy is remarkable. Especially this sector improvement opens new scope for employment which is directly influencing countries economy. Our concerning area of this research paper is how buyer-supplier relationship will influence the sustainability of the RMG sector in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, the garments sector is mainly focused on exporting of finished products and textile raw materials across the globe. Thus, the RMG industry is based on exporting, buyers play a significant role in terms of decision making, implementing new rules and policies. Here we connect our idea of a buyer-supplier relationship in sustainability practices in the Bangladesh RMG sector with internationalization. Developed countries rules and regulations in terms of labor rights, infrastructure requirements, wages, safety issues, waste management, and order handling are more organized and sustainable than developing countries. Moreover, when buyer imposes their rules on suppliers regarding these issues that will initiate sustainability in the RMG sector to maintain standard according to their buyers' requirements. For example, most of the factories in Bangladesh lack of adequate infrastructure and safety rules. So, when buyers ensure these requirements are fixed will lead this RMG sector to sustain and grow further.

Furthermore, the existing literature on the impact of buyer-supplier relationships on sustainable practices in the RMG sector is limited, with little empirical research on the subject. Most of the existing research has focused on the influence of international buyers on labor standards and social compliance. However, sustainable practices in the RMG sector encompass a broader range of issues, including environmental management, resource efficiency, and social responsibility. Therefore, there is a need for more comprehensive and nuanced research that considers the impact of buyer-supplier relationships on various aspects of sustainability in the RMG sector of Bangladesh.



1.3. Research Question

Based on the research gap and problem discussion, the following research questions have been developed:

- 1) What is the impact of international buyer-supplier relationships on sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh?
- 2) How do different types of buyer-supplier relationships influence this impact?

1.4. Research Objective/Purpose

The purpose of this report is to quantitatively examine the impact of buyer-supplier relationships and sustainability practices on the RMG sector's sustainability outcomes in Bangladesh. The report will specifically focus on the role of international buyers and their influence on supplier sustainability practices. The research will aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the various sustainability challenges facing the RMG sector and the role of buyer-supplier relationships in addressing these challenges through statistical analysis of primary data collected from supply chain practitioners in Bangladesh.

To answer the research questions, the report will employ a quantitative research methodology, drawing on primary survey data collected from supply chain practitioners in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. The report will use a covariance-based structural equation modeling technique to test the hypotheses and provide empirical evidence on the impact of buyer-supplier relationships and sustainability practices on the RMG sector's sustainability outcomes. The report will also check the dyadic perspectives of both buyers and suppliers to enhance research rigor and ensure that the results are reliable and valid.

1.5. Delimitations

The study is confined to the Bangladesh RMG sector. In the case of this research on international buyer-supplier relationships and sustainable practices in Bangladesh RMG sector, several delimitations need to be acknowledged.

First and foremost, this study is limited to the RMG sector in Bangladesh and does not consider other industries or sectors. This is because RMG is Bangladesh's leading exporting industry and has a significant effect on the country's socio-economic development, making it an appropriate focus for this research.



Second, the study is limited to garment manufacturers and international buyers; other stakeholders such as workers, local communities, or NGOs were not included. While these groups are essential in understanding sustainability practices in the RMG sector, this research focuses on the buyer-supplier relationship and its effect on sustainability practices.

Thirdly, this study is limited to an examination of sustainability practices within Bangladesh's RMG sector and does not encompass sustainability practices across other global textile and apparel industries. This is because there are unique challenges and opportunities unique to RMG in Bangladesh that warrant special consideration.



Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, a thorough literature review has been conducted that lays the groundwork for better grasping the research questions and hypotheses centered around how international buyer-supplier relationships affect sustainable practices within Bangladesh's RMG sector. The core literature review part has been divided into three sections. First, this chapter has looked at the Sustainability aspects by briefly discussing the basic concepts of sustainability followed by the sustainability practices within RMG industry in Bangladesh. Next, the chapter continues onto understanding the complex world of buyer-supplier relationships in Bangladesh's RMG landscape, scrutinizing the main factors that shape these ties. In the third section, the authors discuss the present state of the RMG industry in Bangladesh, emphasizing its role in the worldwide market and the obstacles it encounters.

As the discussion moves forward, the authors entered the realm of sustainability practices in the industry, shedding light on the diverse measures and tactics employed by stakeholders to enhance the sector's eco-friendly performance. After that, the chapter addressed the research hypotheses that emerged from the review of existing literature, and then, the chapter concluded with the creation of a conceptual framework. This framework will connect the dots between the various variables identified, setting the stage for a deeper analysis of how they intertwine within the Bangladeshi RMG industry.

2.1 Sustainability

2.1.1 General Concept of Sustainability

Virtanen, Siragusa and Guttorm (2020) defined sustainability as a community's ability to develop and sustain communal life via the management of the local natural resources in a manner that ensures the survival and mutual dependency between the inhabitants of both the community as well as the environment. Whereas Öndoğan, Öndoğan and Topuzoğlu (2022) summed up sustainability as utilizing today's resources while continuing to grow sustainably to pass along resources to future generations. The key concept of sustainability is that resources found in the natural world and the environment are finite. Therefore, it emphasizes careful utilization of these resources. Sustainability is a vast study area with numerous applications in



Similar to other industries, in the fashion and textile supply chain, the idea of sustainability is attracting more global attention. According to Nayak, Akbari and Far (2019) sustainability is primarily fueled by more stringent national and local legislation, consumer awareness, and heightened competitiveness. Therefore, in order to accomplish sustainable supply chain management, fashion businesses engage in research and development in the areas of environment, society, and the economy. Together these three areas are referred to as the triple bottom line (TBL) of sustainability.

Environmental sustainability focuses on improving the well-being of human existence (air quality, human health) while keeping human activities within the ecosystem's carrying capacity (such as available resources, energy, land, and water). Likewise, economic sustainability takes into account the optimal use of resources to optimize operational profit and market value. It also addresses natural resource substitution, reuse, and recycling. The social sustainability, on the other hand, concentrates on the social well-being of the people, striking a balance between an individual's needs and those of the collective (equity), increasing public awareness and cohesiveness, and encouraging involvement and usage of local labour and companies. (Olawumi and Chan, 2018)

2.1.2 Sustainability Practices in the RMG Industry of Bangladesh

The ready-made garments (RMG) industry is one of Bangladesh's most significant sectors for economic development. Recently, this sector has attracted much attention due to both its significance and sustainability challenges. To assess the level of sustainability in Bangladesh's RMG sector, several studies have been conducted. Salam and Senasu (2019) developed a 30-item sustainability index covering three dimensions - economic, environmental, and social. After careful analysis, it was evident that the dimensions aligned perfectly with the proposed framework, enabling the creation of a valid and dependable sustainability index for Bangladesh's RMG sector. According to Jaman (2023) the RMG industry in Bangladesh still faces multiple obstacles about sustainability. Bangladesh's RMG industry, measured against four pillars of sustainability - environment, economic, social and ethical - lacks performance in several key areas.



Salam (2018) conducted a study to assess the level of sustainability in Bangladesh's RMG sector. To do so, she utilized both her 30-item sustainability index and modified version of Barometer of Sustainability tool to measure overall development level within this industry. Overall, results indicated that overall sustainability levels across participating factories were acceptable; however, when separated based on size, there was an inverse relationship between sustainability level and RMG factory size - suggesting urgent action needs to be taken towards creating sustainable business strategies and practices within this industry.

For years, the social sustainability of the RMG industry in Bangladesh has been a concern. Carlson and Bitsch (2018) conducted a case study to identify key institutional factors related to social sustainability within this sector using an adaptation of the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework as its analytical frame. Results revealed that formal top-down approaches such as corporate codes-of-conduct or reforms to labor laws have little effect on issues pertaining to RMG supply chains. They recommend taking a more comprehensive and collaborative approach involving all stakeholders for greater social sustainability along the entire supply chains within this supply chain for RMG production.

Despite the challenges faced by Bangladesh's RMG industry, some progress has been made towards sustainability. Rahman (2021) conducted a study to assess how sustainable this industry was by analyzing life cycle assessments of different clothing items. They discovered that cotton-based garments had lower environmental impacts than polyester ones, suggesting that more focus should be put into using eco-friendlier materials to reduce its overall footprint.

2.2 Buyer-Supplier Relation

2.2.1 Buyer-Supplier Relationship Theory & Ethics

The buyer-supplier relationship has received a lot of attention from academics over the past few decades as an important field of research. There are a lot of theory regarding the buyer-supplier relationship management including transaction cost theory, social exchange theory and Resource based view (RBV) and many more. However, for the sake of this research the authors will discuss few of the theories which they found relevant in the context of ready-made garments industry.

According to Morsy (2017) buyer-supplier partnerships is divided into two types: arm's length and collaborative. The level of trust, commitment, ease of communication, relationship



duration, and reputation of both buyers and suppliers aid in distinguishing between relationships and, as a result, influence buyers and suppliers' decisions about the form of relationship they are willing to engage in. He defined the transactional relationship as a short-term focus, a broad supplier base, a need for a single specific transaction, very little to no degree of trust, and close monitoring, reflects the participation of buyers and suppliers in an arm's-length connection on one end. The opposite end of the spectrum represents a collaborative relationship, with a partnership being the most collaborative exchange that promotes mutual dependency, equal authority, a common comprehension, and knowledge sharing between buyers and suppliers.

Wu and Choi (2005) stated that the cooperative relationship encourages transparency and collaboration between the buyer and a supplier, whereas the competitive relationship displays information guarding and an arms-length relationship. He further added that a collaborative partnership encourages the buyer and suppliers to view one another as strategic partners and collaborate on a shared objective. On the other hand, in competitive partnership the buyer-supplier participate in a competitive relationship since both parties are worried about the dangers to their own businesses. Every time a buyer and a supplier engage in a transaction, both sides are equally concerned about the risks involved in the deal and what it could potentially mean for their relationship.

2.2.2 The Buyer-Supplier Relationship in Bangladesh's RMG Industry

The global supply chain industry is an integral factor in the development of economies worldwide. Bangladesh's textile sector, particularly Ready-Made Garment (RMG) production, contributes significantly to national income. Unfortunately, some Bangladeshi contract clothing manufacturers fail to abide by international health and safety regulations, potentially jeopardizing their relationships with international customers (Ansary and Barua, 2015).

According to Hasan (2017) The sustainability of BSR (Business for Social Responsibility) in Bangladesh's RMG industry is essential for both international buyers and local suppliers. Haesun, Bari and Sarker (2020) conducted a case study of the Bangladeshi contract clothing manufacturing industry to explore if such relationships can be sustained and enhanced through changes in collaboration levels. The study concluded that such transition may necessitate structural adjustments to business functions, adjustments to existing cost models, reengineering processes and altering certain governance parameters such as compliance protocol and



visibility. These findings indicate Bangladesh's RMG industry can sustain BSR (Business for Social Responsibility) if both parties are willing to make necessary structural and operational modifications.

The relationship between buyers and suppliers is of critical importance for Bangladesh's RMG industry. According to Frenkel and Schuessler (2021) international buyers' relationship with suppliers in Bangladesh is characterized by high levels of dependence, with buyers playing an increasingly dominant role within the value chain due to suppliers' limited bargaining power mostly small/medium-sized enterprises with limited financial resources and technical proficiency. This dependency may stem from lack of institutional support for small or medium-sized enterprises in terms of infrastructure or access to technology.

Furthermore, buyers' demands for sustainability practices have had a profound effect on the buyer-supplier relationship in Bangladeshi RMG industry. A study conducted by Grossi, Macchiavello and Noguera (2019) revealed that international buyers' demands have created an incentive among suppliers to adopt sustainable methods. As such, suppliers are investing in environmentally friendly technologies, improving working conditions, and promoting environmental responsibility to meet these demands.

However, this increased focus on sustainability practices has put additional burdens on suppliers to meet stringent compliance standards. The complexity of these requirements makes it challenging for suppliers to adhere to all requirements, leading to delays and higher costs (Frenkel and Schuessler, 2021). This can have a detrimental effect on the buyer-supplier relationship as well as lead to lost business opportunities for suppliers.

The buyer-supplier relationship is essential to the success of Bangladesh's RMG industry. With an increasing emphasis on sustainability practices, this relationship has been significantly altered with buyers taking a dominant position in the value chain. As suppliers increasingly adopt sustainable practices as requirements for doing business, suppliers in Bangladesh face both opportunities and challenges related to sustainability within this sector.

2.3 Overall Current State of the RMG Industry in Bangladesh

The Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry in Bangladesh is essential to the country's economy. It generates manufacturing jobs, foreign reserves, and women empowerment initiatives. With more than 4,600 RMG factories across the country which contributes 11.2% of GDP and 36% of manufacturing employment - employing 4.1 million individuals (adb.org,



2020). Women workers, with 61% employment rates, form the backbone of this industry and play an essential role in women empowerment and gender equity. Bangladesh holds a market share of 6.5% in global RMG trading, making it the second-largest exporter after China. It primarily exports to the European Union (62%), United States of America and Canada (21%). From 2016-2019, RMG exports experienced an annual average growth rate of 14.8% per annum, amounting to \$34.2 billion - accounting for 84.2% of total country exports (adb.org, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on Bangladesh's RMG industry. The government declared nationwide lockdown until April 25th, 2020, to slow the virus' spread; this caused all business and industrial activities to cease except for emergency services. Many international buyers have had to cancel or postpone confirmed procurement orders due to the closure of retail outlets across Europe, North America, Asia, and beyond. According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), international buyers have either cancelled or suspended \$3.16 billion worth of shipments from 1,142 factories, impacting 2.26 million workers as of April 18, 2020. Therefore, millions of workers are facing joblessness as new orders have dried up due to the decline in global apparel demand (Rumi et al., 2021)

Refuting government lockdown, thousands of RMG workers have taken to the streets across Bangladesh demanding arrear wages - with the situation becoming worse by the day. Although Bangladesh's apparel exports have seen impressive growth, the industry remains relatively stagnant; most items produced are basic ones with little added value and small profits. The report emphasizes that Bangladesh's garment industry has created jobs, granted rural young women some degree of independence, and helped boost the country's fragile economy. Yet it hasn't made similar strides in terms of job quality or value added to exports or increases to workers' real wages. (Kabir, Maple and Usher, 2020)

The Bangladeshi RMG sector pays a monthly minimum wage of BDT 8,000 (\$95), one of the lowest wages in the global garment supply chain. Therefore, in order to pay workers' salary every month, they need at least \$470 million each year. BGMEA president has appealed to international buyers to take delivery of goods already produced and pay only wages for items still under production (Jaman, 2023). Beyond direct humanitarian and business impacts, there will be significant decreases in foreign exchange inflows which create external sector vulnerabilities. Workers require immediate cash support for subsistence livelihood and the industry needs medium-term liquidity support to revive.



2.4 Hypotheses

Based on the literature review conducted, the following hypotheses has been developed.

H1 Nature of international buyer supplier relationship (e.g., trust, commitment, and communication) has a positive impact on sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh.

H2 Long-term partnerships between buyers and suppliers result in more effective implementation of sustainable practices compared to short-term contractual relationships in the Bangladeshi RMG industry.

H3 International buyers' commitment to sustainability (e.g., enforcement of sustainability standards, supplier support initiatives) has a positive impact on the sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

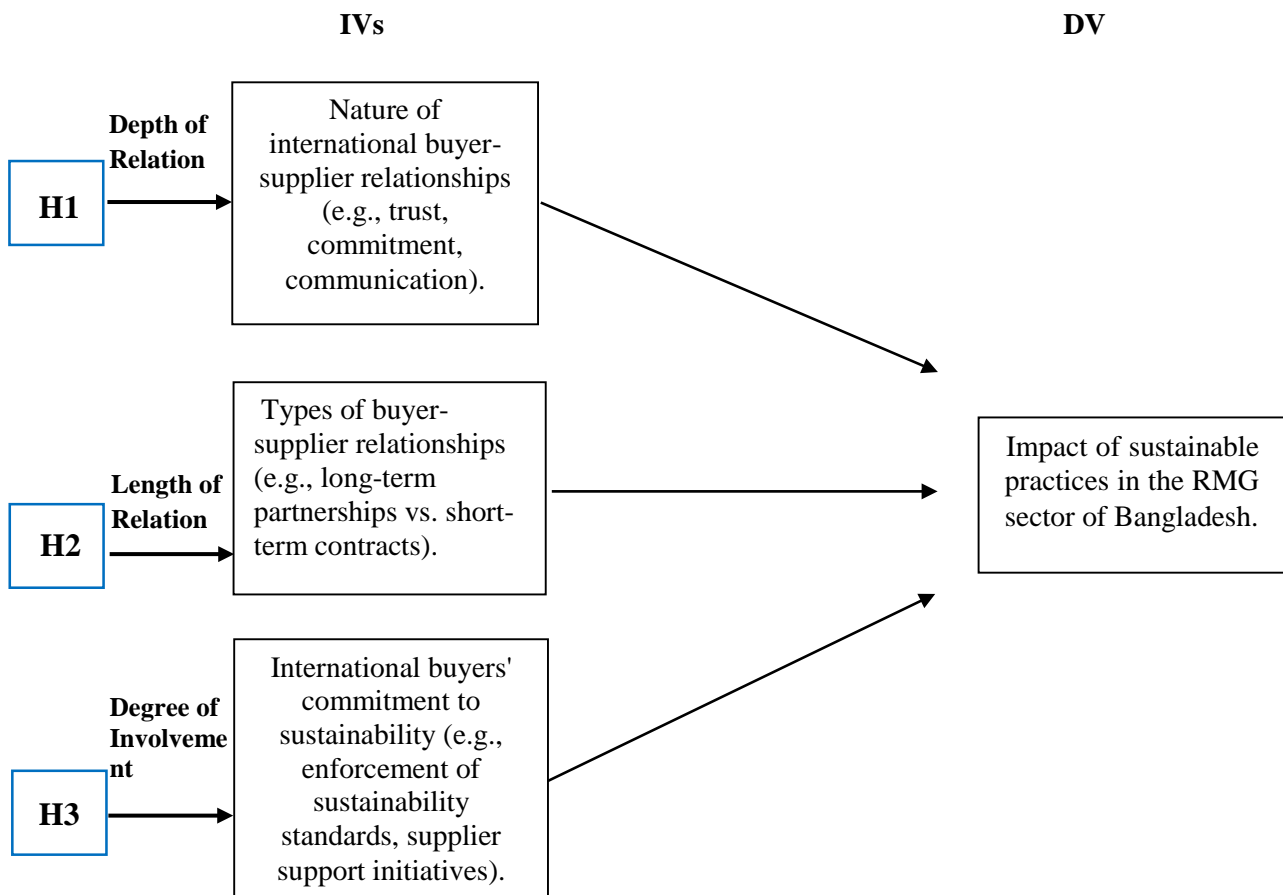


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



In this study, several variables are considered to better understand their influence on sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh, in relation to the research questions and hypotheses. Among the independent variables, the nature of international buyer-supplier relationships is a key focus, examining factors like trust, commitment, and communication that shape these interactions. This variable directly relates to the first research question, which seeks to understand the impact of international buyer-supplier relationships on sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. It also corresponds to the first Hypotheses, suggesting that higher levels of trust and commitment positively impact the adoption of sustainable practices.

Another independent variable of interest is the types of buyer-supplier relationships, ranging from long-term partnerships to short-term contracts. This variable is tied to the second research question, which investigates how different types of buyer-supplier relationships influence the impact on sustainable practices. The second Hypotheses is based on this variable, proposing that long-term partnerships result in more effective implementation of sustainable practices compared to short-term contractual relationships.

The third independent variable delves into the commitment of international buyers to sustainability, exploring the extent to which they enforce sustainability standards and offer support initiatives to their suppliers. This variable is linked to the research questions by examining the role of international buyers in promoting sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. It is also connected to the third Hypotheses, which posits that the degree of international buyers' involvement in supplier capacity building for sustainability significantly influences the adoption of sustainable practices in the industry.

The dependent variable is the impact of sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. This variable represents the outcome that the study seeks to explain and understand by investigating the relationships between the independent variables and their potential influence on the adoption and effectiveness of sustainable practices in the Bangladeshi RMG industry. The dependent variable serves as the basis for the research questions and hypotheses, aiming to uncover the interplay between buyer-supplier relationships and sustainable practices in the context of Bangladesh's RMG sector.



Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The research methodology chapter is an integral component of any research study, outlining the procedures and techniques that will be employed to answer research questions. This chapter seeks to provide an overview of how the study will be conducted, the methods used for data collection and analysis, as well as the validity and reliability of the outcomes. This chapter will begin by outlining the research design, followed by sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis strategies. A thorough discussion of ethical considerations will also be included.

3.1 Overview of the Study

This study aims to investigate the impact of international buyer-supplier relationships on sustainable practices in the ready-made garments (RMG) sector of Bangladesh. In the research methodology chapter, the approach and methods employed to explore the connections between the various factors shaping buyer-supplier interactions, their commitment to sustainability, and the subsequent influence on the implementation of sustainable practices in the industry are outlined. Building on the hypotheses and conceptual framework developed in the literature review, the study examines the nature of international buyer-supplier relationships, types of these relationships, and the commitment of international buyers to sustainability.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is the general strategy researchers employ to answer research questions. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), four philosophies can be identified: positivism, realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism. Positivism is a philosophical approach that seeks to generate knowledge based on empirical observation and the scientific method. Realism, on the other hand, acknowledges an objective reality independent of human perception. Interpretivism emphasizes the subjective significance people attach to their experiences while pragmatism seeks practical solutions for real-world problems. It holds that the social world can be studied using similar methods as those employed in natural sciences. This study will use the positivist philosophy, as it is suitable for exploring the relationship



between buyer-supplier relationships and sustainable practices in RMG industry. This involves using quantitative data and statistical analysis to test hypotheses and generate generalizable knowledge (Kruger and Mitchell, 2019). The positivist method allows testing hypotheses as well as establishing causal connections between variables.

3.3 Research Approach

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) describe three primary research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative research seeks to gain insight into participants' experiences through open-ended questions, observations, and interviews. Quantitative work utilizes statistical methods for measuring numerical data. Mixed methods research incorporates both approaches by collecting both qualitative and quantitative information simultaneously (Kruger and Mitchell, 2019).

For this study, a quantitative research approach was chosen as it involves collecting numerical data from an extensive sample to test hypotheses and draw conclusions. This allows statistical techniques to analyze the information and generalize findings across larger populations. Furthermore, since this investigation seeks to explore relationships between variables like buyer-supplier relationships, sustainable practices, and collaboration within RMG industries in Bangladesh, quantitative methods will be able to better explain research problems with greater objectivity and reliability.

3.4 Development of the Questionnaire

To create the questionnaire for this study, the authors carefully considered recent theoretical aspects of survey design, ensuring both validity and reliability (Hair et al., 2021). The four identified variables were the basis for formulating the questions; six to seven questions were derived from each variable. These questions were structured using a Likert scale, a popular method for measuring attitudes and perceptions effectively (Foddy, 2020).

The process of developing the questionnaire began with an in-depth review of relevant literature, focusing on the most recent publications. This allowed the authors to grasp key concepts and themes related to each variable (Flick, 2018). Consequently, the authors selected suitable questions to measure the intended constructs, adapting them to the specific context of the Bangladesh RMG industry (Fielding & Schreier, 2021). Since no pilot testing was



conducted, extra care was taken to ensure the clarity and comprehension of the questions, particularly as they were developed using the Likert scale.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting a representative sample from a larger population for analysis and generalization. Sampling is an essential element of research design, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019). To guarantee that samples are representative of the population and that results can be generalized to a larger audience, sampling should always be done correctly. Probability sampling and non-probability sampling are the two primary approaches for data collection through sampling (Detterman, 2019). With probability sampling, a random sample is drawn at random from an entire population using techniques like simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, and cluster sampling. Non-probability sampling refers to techniques such as purposive sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling that select a subset of the population rather than taking a random sample (Babin and Zikmund, 2016). The size and characteristics of the study population, its budget for research projects and other factors all play a role in deciding which sampling technique will be used. Thus, for this research paper the authors use Convenience non-probability sampling to find the accurate as well as reliable outcome.

3.5.1 Sources of Data

This study will attempt to collect samples from various different RMG companies in Bangladesh. Only organizations who produces garments for foreign buyers will be chosen for this study. Fortunately, the vast majority of all RMG companies in Bangladesh produces for foreign companies.

3.5.2 Sampling Process

Convenience non-probability sampling is a widely used technique in research where the selection of participants is based on their accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This type of sampling does not follow a random selection process, rather, participants are chosen because they are readily available and meet the basic criteria of the study (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Convenience sampling is particularly popular in exploratory research, pilot studies, or when time and resources are limited, as it allows for a quick and cost-effective method to collect data (Dörnyei, 2007).



However, convenience sampling also has its challenges and limitations. The primary concern is the lack of representativeness of the sample, which may lead to biased results and limit the generalizability of the findings to the larger population (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). This is due to the non-random selection process, which may result in an overrepresentation or underrepresentation of certain subgroups within the sample (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Additionally, convenience sampling is more susceptible to sampling errors and biases, as the researcher's subjective judgment plays a significant role in participant selection (Dörnyei, 2007). Consequently, researchers using convenience sampling must exercise caution when interpreting and generalizing their findings.

For this study, the authors utilized this sampling method to distribute questionnaires to the managers who are working directly with the international buyers in different RMG companies across Bangladesh. Initially, many of these questionnaires were emailed to potential respondents. The authors gathered these email addresses through various RMG websites. Moreover, the questionnaire was posted on various social media groups (mostly on Facebook and LinkedIn) to reach the targeted responses. The authors also utilized their personal connections in Bangladesh to reach certain managers working within this industry. Approximately, 150 emails were sent out and as many as 10 different posts were made across social media platforms.

The main purpose of survey research is to generate data which represent a specific group of people. While doing quantitative research deciding the sample size is very much essential to get an accurate result (Kotrlik and Higgins, 2001). As a researcher we understand that for quantitative research a small sample size would hinder the proper assessment. However, the authors were able to collect responses from 66 respondents which were very decent to establish our result.

3.6 Research Instrument

Research instruments are tools used to collect data in a study. For this one, the research instrument chosen was the questionnaire; this self-administered instrument contains questions designed to gather responses from participants. Questionnaires have become popular research instruments in social science research due to their proficiency, cost efficiency and capacity for collecting large amounts of information quickly and cost efficiently (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019).



This study will construct a questionnaire using variables identified in research questions. These variables will then be translated into specific questions that collect data from managers of selected garments organizations in Bangladesh. The survey will be created with Google Forms, an online platform that allows for creating online surveys and questionnaires.

This study utilized a questionnaire as the research instrument, as it allows for the collection of standardized data from an extensive sample of participants. This will enable statistical analysis and drawing conclusions regarding research questions. Furthermore, employing Google Forms to craft the questionnaire is advantageous since it makes distribution and collection easy while eliminating manual data entry.

Overall, the questionnaire is an appropriate research instrument for this study as it allows the collection of standardized data from a large sample of participants at minimal cost and effort. Furthermore, using Google Forms to construct the survey provides several advantages that will enhance the quality of collected information.

3.7 Operationalization

In operationalizing the research, each variable was distinctly defined and measured via a questionnaire composed of 26 questions, carefully designed to encapsulate the essence of each variable. Independent Variable 1 (IV1), the nature of international buyer-supplier relationships, was evaluated using facets such as trust, commitment, and communication. Independent Variable 2 (IV2), the types of buyer-supplier relationships, was assessed by differentiating between long-term partnerships and short-term contracts. Independent Variable 3 (IV3), international buyers' commitment to sustainability, was gauged via their enforcement of sustainability standards and supplier support initiatives. The dependent variable (DV), the impact of sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh, was measured by gauging the operational, social, and economic effects of these practices on the RMG firms.

For each variable, 6-7 questions were constructed, each tailored to probe into the specifics of the variable it pertains to, thus forming a comprehensive dataset from the responses received.



Below is the table of operationalization:

Table 1

Main Concept (Theme)	Sub Concept (Indicator)	Questions	Reasoning	Measurement Tool (Likert Scale)
Nature of International Buyer-Supplier Relationships	Trust, Commitment, Communication	Q1-Q6	The degree of trust, commitment, and communication in buyer-supplier relationships impacts sustainability practices.	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
Types of Buyer-Supplier Relationships	Long-term partnerships vs. Short-term contracts	Q7-Q13	The duration and stability of relationships influence the effectiveness of sustainable practices.	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
International Buyers' Commitment to Sustainability	Enforcement of Sustainability Standards, Supplier Support Initiatives	Q14-Q19	The commitment and involvement of international buyers in sustainability influence the adoption of sustainable practices.	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
Impact of Sustainable Practices in the RMG sector	Reduction in Negative Environmental Impacts	Q20-Q26	The adoption of sustainable practices results in lessened environmental harm.	1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

The operationalization table provides a detailed blueprint of how we've unpacked and measured the major constructs in our research. The four primary themes or main concepts examined in this study were: the nature of international buyer-supplier relationships, the types of these relationships, the commitment of international buyers to sustainability, and the impact of sustainable practices in the Bangladeshi Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector.



For each theme, we identified specific sub-concepts or indicators, such as trust and commitment, long-term partnerships vs. short-term contracts, and the enforcement of sustainability standards. We then created targeted questions aimed at eliciting information related to these indicators, ensuring that each theme was adequately covered. To provide a uniform scale of measurement across all themes and indicators, we utilized a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). From each variable, 6-7 questions were derived for our questionnaire, helping us to gain a more nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the research topic.

Our findings have shown that all the hypothesized relationships were supported. The nature and type of buyer-supplier relationships, along with the international buyers' commitment to sustainability, all proved to have a significant influence on the adoption and effectiveness of sustainable practices in the RMG sector in Bangladesh.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

When conducting empirical research, it is crucial to consider ethics associated with the study. To remain as unbiased and ethical as possible, the questionnaire will include a consent form at the beginning, whereby it will declare that no personal information will be collected and that the collection of data is strictly for academic purposes. Moreover, the consent form will also state that at any point of the survey, if the respondent feels uncomfortable, they have the full right to exclude themselves from participating in the study and that no responses collected till that moment will be recorded.

Moreover, it is also important to note that data of this nature is sensitive and therefore require protection. As the responses will be collected in Google form, it will be protected in Google drives which as two factor authentications enabled. This means that the data will remain highly secured and only the three authors of this paper would have access to this data.

3.8.1 GDPR

It is very important for the researchers to have the proper knowledge about General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) because of the involvement of personal or organizational data. It was amended by all the EU members which implies from May 25, 2018. The purpose of the GDPR mainly described by the Swedish Authority for the Privacy Protection as follows: “The General Data Protection Regulation exists to protect individuals’ fundamental rights and



freedoms, in particular their right to protection of their personal data.” (<http://www.imy.se/other-lang/in-english/the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/>). Thus, the researchers of this study decide to anonymize all the personal data of the respondents and the organizations to comply with the regulations GDPR because it is not accomplishing the foremost purpose of this research.

3.9 Authors Contribution

This is a co-authored thesis written by three master’s level students who mutually decided to work on this concerned area of international business. Although the final outcome of the thesis reflects the collaboration, hard work, and dedication of the authors, during the development phase, each of the authors was responsible for a specified part, and later they jointly revised the final manuscript.

First of all, the research topic had been chosen by Jesmin and Fahana and on the basis of that they submit the thesis proposal. Then Fariha joined with the group and agreed to work on this topic enthusiastically. Fariha, Jesmin and Farhana contributed to write the introduction part correspondingly. The literature review part was carried out mainly by Farhana with the support of Jesmin and Fariha. The research methodology has been written mainly by Jesmin. However, the decision regarding the research approach, e.g., quantitative approach, sampling process, has been taken mutually. Also, in the questionnaire development phase, all of the authors contributed equally and finalized it together. Data collection procedure mainly done by Jesmin and Fariha. Besides Farhana also support in this regard. The analysis part has been mainly carried out by Jesmin, with the support of Farhana. Farhana analyzed the data from the questionnaire and Jesmin has conducted a variety of tests and experiments as well as performed the calculations with SPSS. Finally, Jesmin and Farhana jointly wrote the conclusion. As the summary of work contribution, it can be finalized that approximately Jesmin contributed 35%, Farhana contributed 35% and Fariha contributed 30% to complete the inclusive thesis. Overall, the final manuscript is the combined effort of the three authors. Throughout the whole period, communication and understanding among the authors went smoothly, which is already reflected in our thesis.



Chapter 4: Empirical Findings

In this chapter, we elaborate the various statistical analyses conducted on the data collected from the questionnaire, which provided insights into the sophisticated relationship between international buyer-supplier dynamics and sustainability practices in the Bangladesh RMG industry. With the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), we performed a range of analyses, including reliability testing to assess the consistency of the questionnaire items, communalities analysis results to evaluate the shared variance among variables, and principal component analysis to examine the underlying structure of the data.

Moreover, a correlation matrix was utilized to identify the relationships between variables, while the model summary provided an overview of the regression model's performance. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was employed to determine the overall significance of the model, and coefficients were calculated to estimate the magnitude and direction of the relationships between variables. Finally, collinearity diagnostics were conducted to check for multicollinearity issues in the model. Through the application of these comprehensive analytical techniques, we were able to draw meaningful conclusions and better understand the interplay between buyer-supplier relationships and sustainability practices within the RMG industry.

4.1 General Analysis

In this part of the chapter, a detailed general analysis is going to take place regarding questions in the questionnaire.

The statistical evidence provided by our survey displays a predominant concurrence, constituting 89.4% of the participants, who unswervingly support and concur to the notion that the integration of sustainable practices gives rise to a robust and more competitive business model. Following this assertion, our survey results disclose a potent inclination towards sustainable operations in the communal territory.

There exists a high accord among the participants with 86.3% affirming the criticality of establishing trust between their organizations and international buyers as an incentive towards adopting sustainable practices. Similarly, the survey revealed that a slightly lower, yet



significant percentage of participants (84.9%) assert that their organizational commitment towards international clients' aids in advancing sustainability.

Communication, an aspect often overlooked, was emphasized by 87.9% of the participants who believe in its pivotal role in encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices, hence underlining its role as a facilitator of sustainable operations. This resonance is reflected by a significant 81.8% of participants expressing their belief that international clients trust in their organization's ability to maintain sustainable practices, exemplifying a high level of assurance in their sustainable operations.

Long-term relationships and associations with international clients have been underscored as being significant, with a vast 86.4% of participants concurring that these relationships bolster their organizational commitment towards sustainability and facilitate more effective implementation of sustainable practices. This agreement extends to the concept that short-term contracts can impose difficulties towards the adoption of sustainable practices, an opinion shared by a notable 68.2% of participants.

A substantial 72.7% of respondents strongly believe that short-term contracts with international buyers limit the resources available for promoting sustainable practices, while a large majority (87.9%) believe that long-term partnerships offer greater opportunities for capacity-building and training in sustainable practices. These findings underscore the value of long-term partnerships in fostering sustainable practices within the RMG sector.

Interestingly, despite a reduced number of respondents, the results indicate that building long-term relationships with buyers accelerates the expansion of international business, demonstrating the perceived benefits of these relationships.

The data suggests that international buyers play a crucial role in driving sustainability practices within the Bangladeshi RMG sector. A substantial 72.7% of respondents agree that international buyers enforce strict sustainability standards, and 65.1% of respondents agree that their company receives support and resources from international buyers to enhance their sustainability performance. Furthermore, 83.3% of respondents believe that international buyers actively engage in capacity-building initiatives to improve their company's sustainability practices.

Respondents also strongly agree (81.8%) that the sustainability criteria implemented by overseas buyers have positively influenced their company's operations and management.



Furthermore, a clear majority (72.7%) agree that their company's sustainability performance is frequently monitored and evaluated by international buyers.

In terms of environmental and social impact, 73.2% of respondents agree that the implementation of sustainable practices has resulted in a decrease in negative environmental impacts, and a significant 80.3% agree that these practices have led to an improvement in worker safety and well-being. These findings highlight the beneficial effects of sustainable practices on both the environment and the workforce within the RMG sector.

Regarding the broader reputation of the Bangladeshi RMG sector, 86.4% of respondents agree that sustainable practices in their company have had a positive influence on the sector's reputation. Additionally, a significant majority (86.4%) agree that adopting sustainable practices has made their company more appealing to international buyers. These findings suggest that sustainable practices have not only enhanced individual companies but also the reputation of the Bangladeshi RMG sector as a whole.

A substantial majority (90.9%) of respondents agree that being socially and environmentally responsible enhances their company's reputation with international buyers, implying that such responsibility plays a critical role in shaping a company's reputation. A similar majority (88.0%) agree that their company's dedication to sustainable practices contributes to more stable and enduring relationships with international buyers. Taken together, these findings underscore the role of sustainability and social responsibility.

Our data shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (89.4%) either strongly agree or agree that implementing sustainable practices leads to a stronger and more competitive business, with only a marginal few (6.1%) expressing disagreement. This overwhelming response underlines the belief in the efficacy of sustainable practices in strengthening business competitiveness, further establishing the case for sustainability in the Bangladeshi RMG sector. The high percentage of respondents who strongly agree (59.1%) illustrates the belief in the significant impact of sustainability practices, contributing to the competitive advantage of businesses and possibly leading to the attraction of more international buyers prioritizing sustainability.

The survey reveals that most participants (87.9%) either strongly agree or agree that the integration of sustainable practices has significantly improved their company's performance and productivity, while only a small percentage (6.1%) disagree with this assertion. The data suggest that sustainability practices play a key role in improving company performance and



productivity in the Bangladeshi RMG sector. The high percentage of respondents who strongly agree (67.4%) underscores the believed impact of sustainability practices, which may result in higher efficiency, productivity, and overall performance of companies that embrace them.

When asked whether the adoption of sustainable practices in their companies led to better relationships with employees, a majority of respondents (83.3%) agreed or strongly agreed, while a mere 6.1% disagreed. This response emphasizes the perceived importance of sustainable practices in fostering a positive relationship with employees in the Bangladeshi RMG sector. A substantial majority of the respondents (57.6%) manifested a strong agreement, thereby implying the potential influence of sustainability on employee relationships. It is plausible to consider that firms demonstrating sustainable practices tend to possess more satisfied and loyal employees, fostering an improved work atmosphere and possibly augmenting productivity levels.

With 83.3% of respondents either asserting strong agreement or agreement, our survey pointed out that the incorporation of sustainable practices has bolstered their firms' risk management capabilities. Merely a small percentage (6.1%) expressed disagreement. This suggests that sustainable practices exert a positive influence on a company's risk management capacity, especially within the RMG sector in Bangladesh. The fairly substantial proportion of respondents demonstrating strong agreement (57.6%) indicates the potentially substantial impact of sustainable practices on risk management. Thus, it can be deduced that firms embracing sustainable practices might enjoy enhanced risk management, possibly resulting in more stable operations and a robust business model.

The majority of the respondents (86.4%) strongly agreed or agreed that the adoption of sustainable practices has fortified their companies' resilience to business environment fluctuations, with only a small minority (7.6%) expressing disagreement. This information implies that sustainable practices hold a pivotal role in boosting a company's resilience amidst shifting business conditions, particularly in the RMG sector in Bangladesh. The significant percentage of respondents with strong agreement (57.6%) reflects their faith in the transformative impact of sustainable practices. Consequently, firms incorporating sustainable practices might be better equipped to adapt to alterations in the business milieu, thereby ensuring their long-term stability and prosperity.

Lastly, the survey data highlights that a significant majority of respondents (81.8%) strongly concur or agree that their firm's commitment to sustainable practices contributes to



Bangladesh's economic development, with only a small fraction (6.1%) disagreeing. This underlines the perceived significance of sustainable practices in fostering the nation's economic growth. The high percentage of respondents expressing strong agreement (59.1%) implies a considerable potential impact of sustainable practices on Bangladesh's economic development. Therefore, the adoption of sustainable practices in the RMG sector could significantly contribute to the country's overall economic expansion and development.

4.2 Summary of Questionnaire Data

After analyzing the input of 66 participants from various Ready-Made Garment (RMG) firms in Bangladesh, it is evident that the interaction between international buyer-supplier relationships and the implementation of sustainable practices within the RMG industry is a crucial area requiring exploration. This study acknowledged three independent factors and one dependent variable, encompassing the characteristics of international buyer-supplier interactions, the commitment of international buyers towards sustainability, and the impact of these variables on sustainable practices within Bangladesh's RMG industry.

The research instrument included 26 queries aimed at gathering relevant information on the influence of buyer-supplier dynamics on sustainability initiatives in the RMG industry. The received responses, measured on a Likert scale, affirm that enduring alliances with international buyers are contributing in advancing sustainable practices in the RMG industry. An overwhelming majority of respondents concurred that effective dialogue, trust, and cooperation with international buyers are paramount in promoting sustainable practices in the RMG industry.

Furthermore, the research discerned that the induction of sustainable practices in the RMG industry is shaped by factors such as international buyers' commitment to sustainability, the nature of the buyer-supplier rapport, and the presence of long-lasting partnerships. Short-term agreements were viewed as obstacles to the successful implementation of sustainability measures. Participants reported that the sustainability prerequisites put forth by international buyers have been accompanied in favorable transformations in their companies' operational and managerial protocols, enhanced employee safety and welfare, and elevated their upright within the Bangladeshi RMG sector.

The research outcomes propose that Bangladesh's RMG sector firms should prioritize fostering long-term affiliations with international buyers and embedding sustainable practices to



strengthen their global market competitiveness. Moreover, these firms should heed the sustainability specifications of international buyers and seamlessly integrate them into their operational mechanisms to safeguard and augment their industry reputation.

In the context of international business, these findings emphasize the significant role that robust and sustainable buyer-supplier relationships play in global trade dynamics. As economies become increasingly interconnected, the commitment to sustainable practices by international buyers can shape the operational strategies of suppliers halfway across the globe, as demonstrated in Bangladesh's RMG sector.

The establishment of trust-based, long-term partnerships with international buyers not only enhances the operational sustainability of suppliers but also strengthens their global competitiveness. As the world business landscape continues to prioritize sustainability, companies that align their practices with this trend can leverage these partnerships for access to larger markets and increased business opportunities.

Furthermore, the attention to international buyers' sustainability requirements underlines the global nature of contemporary business ethics and corporate social responsibility. This adherence serves to enhance the reputation of firms, especially in sectors like RMG where public scrutiny is high due to historical incidents. Overall, sustainable practices in buyer-supplier relationships transcend geographic boundaries and contribute to a more resilient and ethical international business environment.



Chapter 5: Analysis & Discussions

In this part of the paper, a thorough analysis is going to take place through the usage of descriptive statistics, which was conducted using SPSS version 26.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

As the foundation of quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics are mathematical procedures that summarize and interpret a dataset. It helps in conveying a broad image of data trends by utilizing measures such as mean, median, mode, and standard deviation (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2016).

The study presents descriptive statistics for the variables, which are the nature of buyer-supplier relationship (NBSR), types of buyer-supplier relationship (TBSR), international buyers' commitment to sustainability (IBCS), and impact of sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh (ISPRMGB). A total of 66 respondents participated in the study.

Table 2

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>					
	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>NBSR 1</i>	66	1	5	4.39	0.975
<i>NBSR 2</i>	66	1	5	4.32	1.055
<i>NBSR 3</i>	66	1	5	4.44	0.963
<i>NBSR 4</i>	66	1	5	4.15	1.041
<i>NBSR 5</i>	66	1	5	4.39	0.857
<i>NBSR 6</i>	66	1	5	4.32	1.055
<i>TBSR 1</i>	66	1	5	4.42	1.009
<i>TBSR 2</i>	66	1	5	3.82	1.080
<i>TBSR 3</i>	66	2	5	4.47	0.789
<i>TBSR 4</i>	66	1	5	3.98	1.116
<i>TBSR 5</i>	66	1	5	4.45	0.980
<i>TBSR 6</i>	66	2	5	4.30	0.911
<i>TBSR 7</i>	66	1	5	4.55	0.845



<i>IBCS 1</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3.83</i>	<i>1.171</i>
<i>IBCS 2</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3.95</i>	<i>1.073</i>
<i>IBCS 3</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.12</i>	<i>0.969</i>
<i>IBCS 4</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.06</i>	<i>0.990</i>
<i>IBCS 5</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.23</i>	<i>0.891</i>
<i>IBCS 6</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.15</i>	<i>0.996</i>
<i>ISPRMGB</i> <i>1</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3.98</i>	<i>1.222</i>
<i>ISPRMGB</i> <i>2</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.38</i>	<i>0.855</i>
<i>ISPRMGB</i> <i>3</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.35</i>	<i>0.969</i>
<i>ISPRMGB</i> <i>4</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.36</i>	<i>0.905</i>
<i>ISPRMGB</i> <i>5</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.29</i>	<i>1.019</i>
<i>ISPRMGB</i> <i>6</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.50</i>	<i>0.789</i>
<i>ISPRMGB</i> <i>7</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4.50</i>	<i>0.932</i>
<i>Valid N</i> <i>(list-wise)</i>	<i>66</i>				

The mean scores for NBSR ranged from 4.15 to 4.44, indicating that the respondents generally viewed trust, communication, and long-term relationships with international buyers as crucial for promoting sustainable practices in the RMG sector. The mean scores for TBSR ranged from 3.82 to 4.55, suggesting that the respondents' perceptions of buyer-supplier relationships varied depending on factors such as contract duration and partnership objectives.

The mean scores for IBCS ranged from 3.83 to 4.23, indicating that the respondents generally perceived international buyers as having some level of commitment to sustainability, but there was room for improvement. Finally, the mean scores for ISPRMGB ranged from 3.98 to 4.50, suggesting that the respondents perceived sustainable practices as having a positive impact on the environment, worker safety, and the reputation and competitiveness of the Bangladeshi RMG sector.



Table 3

Case Processing Summary		N	%
Cases	Valid	66	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	0.0
	Total	66	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the

After analyzing the data, it was found that all cases were valid, and no cases were excluded based on any variable in the procedure. The study's entire dataset was utilized to obtain meaningful results and provide insightful interpretations. This suggests that the collected data was well-prepared, structured, and consistent, which enabled a thorough analysis to be performed without the need to exclude any cases. As such, the findings and conclusions drawn from the analysis can be considered a robust representation of the participant's responses, thereby providing valuable insights for future research and policymaking.

5.1.1 Reliability Testing

Cronbach's Alpha is a reliability coefficient that measures the internal consistency or the average correlation of items in a survey instrument to gauge its reliability. It ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating higher reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

The Cronbach's Alpha for the 26 items used in the study was 0.964, indicating that the scale used to measure the variables had a high level of internal consistency. This means that the items used in the study were reliable and consistent in measuring the construct of interest.

Table 4

Reliability	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.964	26



5.1.2 Communalities Analysis Results

Communalities in factor analysis indicate the amount of variance in each variable that is accounted for by the factors (or components). Higher communalities values suggest that a greater proportion of a variable's variance is shared with other variables included in the analysis (Field, 2009). The communalities table shows the initial and extracted communalities for each variable in the study.

Table 5

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
NBSR 1	1.000	0.763
NBSR 2	1.000	0.834
NBSR 3	1.000	0.790
NBSR 4	1.000	0.664
NBSR 5	1.000	0.658
NBSR 6	1.000	0.832
TBSR 1	1.000	0.699
TBSR 2	1.000	0.744
TBSR 3	1.000	0.682
TBSR 4	1.000	0.576
TBSR 5	1.000	0.735
TBSR 6	1.000	0.727
TBSR 7	1.000	0.803
IBCS 1	1.000	0.717
IBCS 2	1.000	0.720
IBCS 3	1.000	0.653
IBCS 4	1.000	0.605
IBCS 5	1.000	0.577
IBCS 6	1.000	0.565
ISPRMGB 1	1.000	0.828
ISPRMGB 2	1.000	0.694
ISPRMGB 3	1.000	0.673
ISPRMGB 4	1.000	0.631
ISPRMGB 5	1.000	0.781
ISPRMGB 6	1.000	0.804
ISPRMGB 7	1.000	0.831
Extraction Method: Principal		

The initial communalities are all 1.000, which means that each variable has maximum common variance with all other variables in the study. The extracted communalities range from 0.565 to 0.834, indicating that the variables share a moderate to high level of common variance. This information is useful for assessing the adequacy of the sample size for conducting factor



analysis, as a low communalities value may indicate that the sample size is not sufficient. The extraction method used in this analysis was Principal Component Analysis.

5.1.3 Total Variance Explained Table in Principal Component Analysis

The Total Variance Explained Table reveals the degree to which each component (factor) contributes to the overall variance in the dataset. It helps in determining the number of components to retain for further analysis (Jolliffe, 2002).

Table 6

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	14.402	55.393	55.393	14.402	55.393	55.393
2	1.875	7.213	62.606	1.875	7.213	62.606
3	1.222	4.700	67.306	1.222	4.700	67.306
4	1.086	4.177	71.483	1.086	4.177	71.483
5	0.958	3.684	75.167			
6	0.825	3.173	78.340			
7	0.741	2.851	81.191			
8	0.578	2.224	83.414			
9	0.571	2.196	85.610			
10	0.458	1.761	87.372			
11	0.431	1.656	89.028			
12	0.400	1.538	90.566			
13	0.374	1.438	92.004			
14	0.309	1.188	93.192			
15	0.264	1.014	94.206			
16	0.256	0.985	95.190			
17	0.235	0.903	96.094			
18	0.202	0.779	96.873			
19	0.180	0.693	97.566			
20	0.147	0.567	98.133			
21	0.122	0.468	98.601			
22	0.102	0.391	98.992			
23	0.083	0.318	99.310			
24	0.080	0.307	99.618			
25	0.064	0.247	99.864			
26	0.035	0.136	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The Total Variance Explained table shows the amount of variance explained by each principal component in the analysis. The first principal component explains 55.393% of the total variance, the second principal component explains 7.213%, and the third explains 4.700%. The table also shows the cumulative percentage of variance explained by each principal component, with the first three principal components explaining 67.306% of the total variance. The



remaining principal components each explain less than 4% of the total variance. Overall, the high percentage of variance explained by the first few principal components suggests that the data has a clear underlying structure that can be captured by a few key dimensions.

5.1.4 Correlation Matrix

A correlation matrix is a table showing the correlation coefficients between many variables. Each cell in the table shows the correlation between two variables. It is used to summarize data, as input into a more advanced analysis, and as a diagnostic for advanced analyses (Lund & Lund, 2019).

The correlation matrix reveals that there are significant positive relationships between NBSR (Nature of Buyer-Supplier Relationship), TBSR (Types of Buyer-Supplier Relationship), IBCS (International Buyers' Commitment to Sustainability), and ISPRMGB (Impact of Sustainable Practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh).

Table 7

		Correlations			
		NBSR	TBSR	IBCS	ISPRMGB
NBSR	Pearson Correlation	1	.875**	.797**	.874**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	66	66	66	66
TBSR	Pearson Correlation	.875**	1	.860**	.827**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	66	66	66	66
IBCS	Pearson Correlation	.797**	.860**	1	.835**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	66	66	66	66
ISPRMGB	Pearson Correlation	.874**	.827**	.835**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	66	66	66	66

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

All these correlations are significant at the 0.01 level, indicating a high degree of association between the variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient between NBSR and TBSR is .875**, between NBSR and IBCS is .797**, and between NBSR and ISPRMGB is .874**. Moreover,



the correlation between TBSR and IBCS is .860**, between TBSR and ISPRMGB is .827**, and between IBCS and ISPRMGB is .835**. These strong positive correlations imply that sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh are likely to be influenced by the nature and types of buyer-supplier relationships and international buyers' commitment to sustainability.

5.1.5 The Model Summary

Table 8

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.903 ^a	0.816	0.807	2.24551	1.885
a. Predictors: (Constant), IBCS, NBSR, TBSR					
b. Dependent Variable: ISPRMGB					

The model summary shows the results of multiple regression analysis with ISPRMGB as the dependent variable and IBCS, NBSR, and TBSR as the independent variables. The results indicate that the model has a good fit, with an R-value of 0.903, indicating a strong positive correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The R square value of 0.816 indicates that 81.6% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables. The adjusted R square value of 0.807 suggests that the model accounts for 80.7% of the variance in the dependent variable, while the standard error of the estimate of 2.24551 shows the degree of accuracy of the predictions made by the model. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.885 is close to 2, suggesting that there is no issue of autocorrelation. The predictors in the model are the constant, IBCS, NBSR, and TBSR.

5.1.6 ANOVA Test

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is a statistical method used to test differences between two or more means. An ANOVA test is a way to find out if survey or experiment results are significant (Kutner, Nachtsheim, Neter, & Li, 2005). The ANOVA table shows that the regression model with the predictors IBCS, NBSR, and TBSR is significant in predicting the dependent variable ISPRMGB, with a p-value of 0.000.



Table 9

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1384.649	3	461.550	91.535	.000 ^b
	Residual	312.624	62	5.042		
	Total	1697.273	65			
a. Dependent Variable: ISPRMGB						
b. Predictors: (Constant), IBCS, NBSR, TBSR						

The F-value of 91.535 and mean square value of 461.550 indicate that the variance explained by the model is much larger than the unexplained variance. The sum of squares for the regression is 1384.649, while the residual sum of squares is 312.624. This suggests that the model is a good fit for the data and that the predictors are significantly related to the dependent variable.

5.1.7 Coefficients

In the context of regression analysis, coefficients represent the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. A coefficient describes both the strength and the direction of the relationship (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

Upon analyzing the coefficients, it was found that the NBSR and IBCS have significant positive impacts on the dependent variable ISPRMGB, with standardized coefficients of 0.568 and 0.376, respectively. In contrast, TBSR did not have a significant impact, as its standardized coefficient was close to zero.

Table 10

Coefficients ^a										
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error				Beta	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance
1	(Constant)	4.455	1.643		2.712	0.009	1.171	7.739		
	NBSR	0.590	0.119	0.568	4.960	0.000	0.352	0.828	0.227	4.408
	TBSR	0.007	0.132	0.007	0.053	0.958	-0.258	0.272	0.162	6.188
	IBCS	0.425	0.123	0.376	3.461	0.001	0.180	0.671	0.251	3.977
a. Dependent Variable: ISPRMGB										



The constant coefficient was found to be 4.455, with a standard error of 1.643. The Durbin-Watson statistic was calculated to be 1.885, which indicates that there is no significant autocorrelation among the residuals.

It is worth noting that the collinearity statistics show that the variables have low tolerance values, which suggests the possibility of multicollinearity. However, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values for all predictors are below the recommended threshold of 10, indicating that multicollinearity is not a major concern.

5.1.8 Collinearity Diagnosis

Collinearity diagnostics are used in regression analysis to determine if there is a high correlation between the independent variables. If high collinearity exists, it may be difficult to determine the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable (Belsley, Kuh, & Welsch, 2005). In this case, the model included the constant term and three predictor variables, namely NBSR, TBSR, and IBCS, with ISPRMGB as the dependent variable.

Table 11

Collinearity Diagnostics ^a							
Model		Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions			
				(Constant)	NBSR	TBSR	IBCS
1	1	3.968	1.000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	2	0.022	13.527	0.98	0.04	0.01	0.03
	3	0.007	24.178	0.00	0.51	0.00	0.66
	4	0.003	34.785	0.02	0.45	0.99	0.30

a. Dependent Variable: ISPRMGB

The table shows that the condition index for the model is 3.968, indicating that multicollinearity is not a significant issue. The eigenvalue for the first component is 1, while the values for the remaining components are considerably smaller, indicating that the first component explains the majority of the variance in the data.

The variance proportions column displays the proportion of variance in each predictor variable explained by all the predictors together. The values suggest that NBSR and IBCS are relatively more important in explaining the dependent variable compared to TBSR, as they have higher proportions of explained variance. Overall, the collinearity diagnostics indicate that the model has no significant multicollinearity issues.



5.2 Conclusion of Data Analysis

To come to conclusions with the analysis conducted, we have unearthed some significant insights through our statistical analyses about the dynamic collaboration between the variables we chose to explore. Unsurprisingly, our correlation analysis illuminated a potent positive relationship between NBSR, TBSR, IBCS, and ISPRMGB.

A crucial piece of our analytical puzzle was Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, tipping the scales at a robust 0.964. This high value is a nod to the reliability and consistency of our questionnaire items - a testament to the quality of our research instruments.

Our exploration took us to the commonalities table, which told a tale of a moderate to a high level of shared variance among the variables. This gave us confidence in the adequacy of our sample size, a crucial criterion for conducting a valid factor analysis.

Turning the pages of the Total Variance Explained table, we were greeted by a telling story - the first few principal components shouldered a significant chunk of the total variance. This suggested a clear and well-defined structure underlying our data, which could be encapsulated within a handful of key dimensions.

Our journey then led us to the realm of regression analysis, where NBSR and IBCS emerged as significant predictors of ISPRMGB. In this landscape, TBSR fell short of reaching the threshold of significance. The coefficients table unravelled another layer of this story - NBSR held the highest standardized coefficient, suggesting its leading role in influencing the outcome variable.

But our journey wasn't without its twists and turns. The collinearity diagnostics hinted at some level of multicollinearity between the variables, a factor to consider in interpreting our findings.

The data analysis and the correlation analysis of the variables (NBSR, TBSR, IBCS, and ISPRMGB), the hypotheses can be evaluated as follows:

Hypotheses 1 suggested that the nature of the international buyer-supplier relationship (NBSR), characterized by elements like trust, commitment, and communication, has a positive impact on sustainable practices (ISPRMGB) in the Bangladeshi RMG sector. The statistical evidence indeed supported this conjecture. The correlation analysis demonstrated a strong, positive relationship between NBSR and ISPRMGB, indicating that the inherent qualities of international buyer-supplier relationships, such as trust and commitment, positively influence the execution of sustainable practices within the RMG industry. This resonates with the



theoretical understanding that a harmonious buyer-supplier relationship fosters sustainable business conduct.

Hypotheses 2 was underpinned by the belief that long-term partnerships (TBSR) between buyers and suppliers result in a more effective implementation of sustainable practices (ISPRMGB) compared to short-term contractual relationships in the Bangladeshi RMG industry. While our correlation analysis did unveil a positive link between these variables, it was less robust compared to the other relationships. This indicates that while long-term alliances do encourage sustainability, their influence may not be as pronounced as the other variables in our model. This warrants further examination and the potential inclusion of more nuanced factors that might influence this relationship.

Hypotheses 3 suggested that the international buyers' commitment to sustainability (IBCS), demonstrated by the enforcement of sustainability standards and supplier support initiatives, positively affects the implementation of sustainable practices (ISPRMGB) in the Bangladeshi RMG sector. The statistical data validated this Hypotheses. A resilient and optimistic relationship was unveiled between IBCS and ISPRMGB. This implies that when international buyers endorse high sustainability standards and actively support their suppliers in implementing these, it enhances the latter's commitment to sustainable practices. This offers an interesting perspective on how international business ethics and corporate social responsibility can be effectively disseminated across global supply chains.



Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Conclusion

This final chapter marks the culmination of our exploration into the impact of buyer-supplier relationships and the commitment of international buyers to sustainability on the sustainable practices in the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector of Bangladesh. We now turn our attention to synthesizing our findings and deriving meaningful conclusions and recommendations.

The role of the three independent variables - the Nature of International Buyer-Supplier Relationships (NBSR), the Types of Buyer-Supplier Relationships (TBSR), and International Buyers' Commitment to Sustainability (IBCS) - has been thoroughly investigated. The dependent variable, the Impact of Sustainable Practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh (ISPRMGB), was evaluated in the context of these independent variables, allowing us to delve into the intricate dynamics of these relationships and their effects on sustainability in the RMG sector.

In the preceding chapters, we systematically scrutinized the relevant literature, formulated our hypotheses, described our research methodology, and presented an exhaustive data analysis. Our study was anchored on an empirical investigation, employing robust statistical methods. The high internal consistency of our scale, the validity of our cases, and the clarity of the underlying data structure, all testify to the reliability and robustness of our findings.

6.1.1 Answering the Research Questions

The purpose of our research was to address two pivotal questions concerning the impact of buyer-supplier relationships on sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. Our findings, as detailed in Chapter 4, provide robust answers to these questions, which we will now summarize and interpret.

To answer the first question, we investigated the nature of international buyer-supplier relationships (NBSR) and international buyers' commitment to sustainability (IBCS). Our study reveals that these relationships significantly impact sustainable practices in the RMG sector. This is evidenced by the strong positive correlation between NBSR, IBCS, and the impact of sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh (ISPRMGB). We found that a healthy



and trusting relationship, characterized by open communication, fosters sustainable practices. This result implies that buyers and suppliers who commit to building a trusting, communicative relationship can positively impact sustainability in the RMG sector.

Moreover, our analysis shows that the commitment of international buyers to sustainability is a critical driver of sustainable practices. Respondents generally perceived international buyers as having some level of commitment to sustainability but also suggested there is room for improvement. This finding suggests that an increased commitment from international buyers to enforce sustainability standards and support initiatives can further enhance the impact of sustainable practices in the RMG sector.

Addressing the second research question required an examination of the types of buyer-supplier relationships (TBSR). We discovered that the impact on sustainable practices varies depending on the type of buyer-supplier relationship. Long-term partnerships were generally viewed as more beneficial for promoting sustainable practices than short-term contracts. The reason is, long-term relationships often allow for deeper trust, improved communication, and a greater mutual commitment to sustainability, as partners have a vested interest in each other's success.

The statistical correlations discovered between our variables have not only confirmed some of our initial assumptions but also unveiled new insights that contribute to the existing body of knowledge. We found strong positive correlations between the nature and types of buyer-supplier relationships, international buyers' commitment to sustainability, and the impact of sustainable practices in the RMG sector. This suggests a profound interdependence between these factors that necessitates further exploration and attention.

6.1.2 Theoretical Implications

This study enriches the theoretical understanding of the influence of international buyer-supplier relationships on sustainability practices in the global garment industry. By demonstrating the value of trust, long-term commitment, and communication, the research provides empirical support to the theories of relationship marketing and supply chain management.

Further, the research contributes to the growing body of literature on sustainable supply chain practices by focusing on geography and industry that has been under-explored in the existing literature. The findings also extend the understanding of how sustainability standards and



initiatives enforced by international buyers can drive operational and strategic changes in supplier firms.

6.1.3 Managerial Implications

For managers in the Bangladeshi RMG sector, this research offers concrete insights for strategic decision-making. The study underscores the importance of nurturing long-term, trust-based relationships with international buyers, emphasizing that these partnerships could foster the effective implementation of sustainable practices.

Managers should also be aware that the commitment of international buyers to sustainability can significantly shape their operational strategies. Adherence to these sustainability standards can not only enhance the firm's reputation but also contribute to increased business opportunities on an international level.

The study also highlights the need for Bangladeshi RMG firms to develop a strategic focus on sustainability, aligning their practices with the global shift towards ethical and responsible business operations. In doing so, they can bolster their competitiveness in the global marketplace, ensuring the longevity and success of their firms in an increasingly conscious business environment.

6.2 Limitations

While traversing the academic journey of our investigation, we encountered a series of hurdles that restricted the breadth and depth of our empirical data collection. We were operating on a transcontinental plane anchored in Sweden while our study's epicenter was in Bangladesh. This geographical distance presented a significant challenge and was a limiting factor in our ability to gather a large, diverse sample.

Since we have to follow a strict deadline for our dissertation submission, time was against our pursuit of larger sample. Within this constrained timeline, we could only amass 66 responses for our survey, a sample size that, while insightful, could be viewed as relatively modest in the grand scheme of our research domain. This limitation implies that our findings, although illuminating, may not encapsulate the vast complexity and diversity of the Bangladeshi RMG industry in its entirety. Hence, the results should be interpreted with caution.



Further complicating matters was the calendar's overlap with the cultural observance of Ramadan, followed by the celebratory period of Eid in Bangladesh. This convergence of factors potentially impinged on the availability and responsiveness of our respondents, which may have further limited the breadth of our dataset. In retrospect, these intricacies of cultural, temporal, and geographical factors pose critical reflections and learnings for conducting international business research in future endeavors.

The journey thus far has been illuminating. With each step, we have gained a deeper understanding of the nuances and intricacies of sustainability practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. Now, we intend to translate these insights into tangible recommendations, with the hope that our study will inform and influence the practices of international buyers, suppliers, policymakers, and other stakeholders committed to fostering sustainability in the RMG sector of Bangladesh. Let us now proceed to draw these vital recommendations.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of our study, we recommend the following actions for future researchers and managers in the RMG sector of Bangladesh:

Enhancing Sustainability in the RMG Industry: The Role of Regional and Government Policies in International Business Context: The findings of this research elucidate the consequential role of regional and government policies in fostering sustainability within the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry in Bangladesh, especially when viewed through the lens of international business. Even as the study highlights the power of international buyer-supplier relationships in promoting sustainability, it implicitly accentuates the indispensability of corresponding policy support. Regional or governmental policies can lend additional weight to these relationships by introducing rigorous environmental and social standards, establishing incentives for sustainable business practices, and crafting capacity-building programs to equip suppliers with the skills needed to meet these international standards. In an international business context, the need for a robust, compliant regulatory framework becomes paramount. This framework, by aligning with the commitments of international buyers, can ease their integration into the local market, ensuring their sustainability objectives are not lost within local operational constraints. In sum, the research posits that intertwining well-orchestrated regional or governmental policies with the dynamics of international buyer-supplier relationships can forge a conducive ecosystem, driving the RMG industry towards embracing sustainable and ethical business practices.



Further Probing into Buyer-Supplier Dynamics: Our research uncovered a noteworthy positive correlation between the characteristics and forms of buyer-supplier relationships and their effect on sustainable practices in the RMG industry. This offers a ripe area for subsequent scholars to dig deeper into, possibly looking into the particular channels through which these relationships orchestrate sustainable practices.

Exploring Varied Sustainability Aspects: While our investigation was centered on the general impact of sustainable practices in the RMG arena, upcoming inquiries could delve into the specific arenas of sustainability, such as environmental stewardship, economic viability, and social equity. This might unravel a more granular comprehension of how buyer-supplier dynamics touch upon distinct aspects of sustainability.

Incorporate Additional Variables: Our research spotlighted the influence of buyer-supplier dynamics and buyers' dedication to sustainability, but other elements could also shape sustainable practices in the RMG industry. Future inquiries could inspect the role of components like legislative frameworks, customer inclinations, and competitive market pressures.



For Practitioners in the RMG Domain:

Cultivate Robust Buyer-Supplier Bonds: In light of the significant positive correlation between the quality of buyer-supplier relationships and sustainable practices, practitioners must nurture strong, trust-infused relationships with their international buyers. This might require refining communication channels, forging long-lasting alliances, and collaborating effectively to realize sustainability objectives.

Champion Commitment to Sustainability: Our research underscored that the commitment to sustainability demonstrated by international buyers is a pivotal element influencing sustainable practices. Consequently, practitioners should seek to collaborate with buyers exhibiting a robust dedication to sustainability and cooperate with them to uphold sustainability norms in the RMG sector.

Favour Long-Term Collaborations: Our results indicate that long-term collaborations tend to foster sustainable practices more effectively than transient contracts. As such, practitioners should endeavor to cultivate enduring alliances with their buyers, providing the stability and mutual trust necessary to spur investment in sustainable practices.

This investigation has illuminated the influence of buyer-supplier relationships on sustainable practices in the RMG sector. By integrating these recommendations, future scholars can expand upon this foundation, and practitioners can make more enlightened choices to bolster sustainability in the RMG industry.



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APPENDIX

Appendix A (Questionnaire)

5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A Case Study of Bangladesh

The purpose of this research is to determine

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A Case Study of Bangladesh. This research is only for academic purposes and no personal information will be collected. It is also important to note that the data will never be revealed to any company or other third party vendors and only the authors of this paper would have access to the data. If at any time, you feel uncomfortable, you may leave the questionnaire incomplete and no data will be recorded.

* Indicates required question

BASIC INFORMATION

1. NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION *

Nature of international buyer-supplier relationships (e.g., trust, commitment, communication) (IV 1)



2. Trust between our company and international buyers plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices in the RMG sector *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree



3. Our company's commitment to international buyers positively affects the implementation of sustainable practices in the RMG sector *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree



4. Effective communication with international buyers is essential for successfully adopting sustainable practices in the RMG sector. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

2

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Strongly Agree



5. International buyers express confidence in our company's ability to maintain sustainable practices in the RMG sector. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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3

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5

Strongly Agree



6. Collaborative problem-solving with international buyers contributes to the success * of sustainable practices in the RMG sector.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree



7. Our company's long-term relationships with international buyers enhance our commitment to sustainability in the RMG sector. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree

Types of buyer-supplier relationships (e.g., long-term partnerships vs. short-term contracts) (IV 2)



8. Long-term partnerships with international buyers lead to more effective implementation of sustainable practices in the RMG sector. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree



9. Short-term contracts with international buyers hinder the adoption of sustainable practices in the RMG sector. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree



10. Our company's long-term partnerships with international buyers include agreements on sustainability goals and objectives. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree



11. Short-term contracts with international buyers limit the resources available for implementing sustainable practices in the RMG sector *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

12. Long-term partnerships with international buyers provide more opportunities for capacity-building and training in sustainability. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

13. Our company's relationship type with international buyers significantly influences * our approach to sustainability in the RMG sector.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree



14. Building long term relationship with buyers accelerate the expansion of international business. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree

International buyers' commitment to sustainability (e.g., enforcement of sustainability standards, supplier support initiatives) (IV 3)



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

15. International buyers enforce strict sustainability standards that our company must ^{*} adhere to.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree



16. Our company receives support and resources from international buyers to enhance our sustainability performance. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

17. International buyers actively engage in capacity-building initiatives to improve our company's sustainability practices *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

18. The commitment of international buyers to sustainability directly impacts our company's efforts to adopt sustainable practices. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

19. International buyers' sustainability requirements have led to positive changes in our company's operations and management. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

20. Our company's sustainability performance is regularly evaluated and monitored by international buyers. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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5

Strongly Agree

Impact of sustainable practices in the RMG sector of Bangladesh (DV)



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

21. The implementation of sustainable practices in our company has led to a reduction in negative environmental impacts. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

22. Our company's adoption of sustainable practices has improved worker safety and well-being *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

23. Sustainable practices in our company have positively influenced the overall reputation of the Bangladeshi RMG sector. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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5

Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

24. The incorporation of sustainable practices has made our company more attractive *
to international buyers.

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

25. The adoption of sustainable practices has enhanced our company's long-term competitiveness in the global RMG market. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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5

Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

26. Our company's commitment to sustainable practices has resulted in more stable and enduring relationships with international buyers. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

1

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Strongly Agree



5/19/23, 4:02 AM

The Impact of International Buyer and Supplier Relationships on Sustainability Practices in the Ready-Made Garments Industry: A ...

27. Being socially and environmentally responsible, strenghten my company's reputation with international buyers. *

Mark only one oval.

Strongly Disagree

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Strongly Agree

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

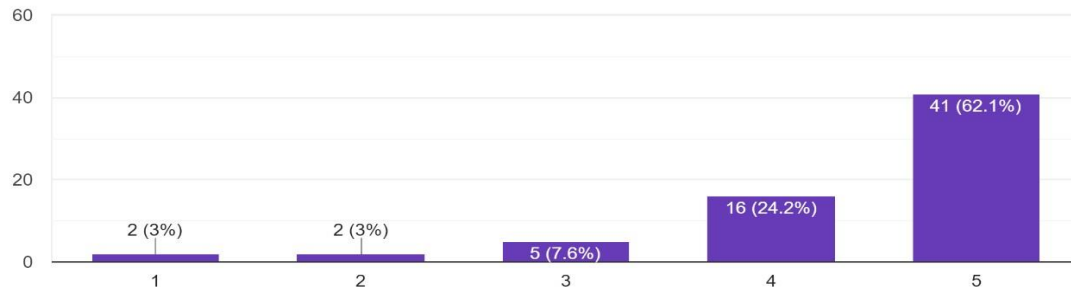
Google Forms



Appendix B (Data Charts)

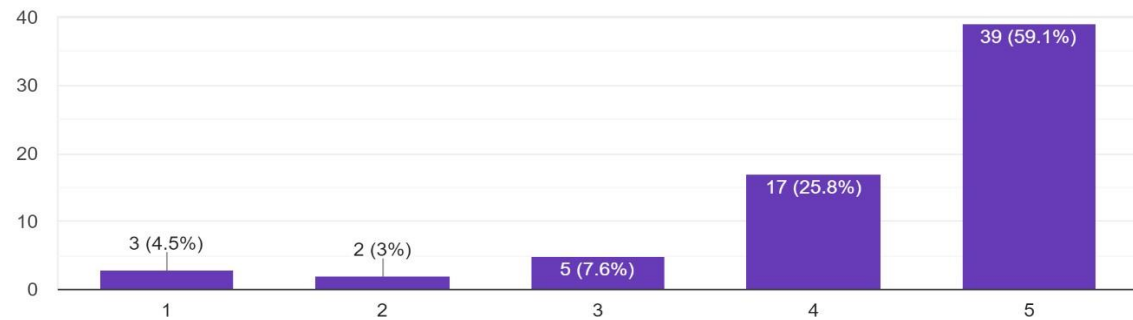
Trust between our company and international buyers plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices in the RMG sector

66 responses



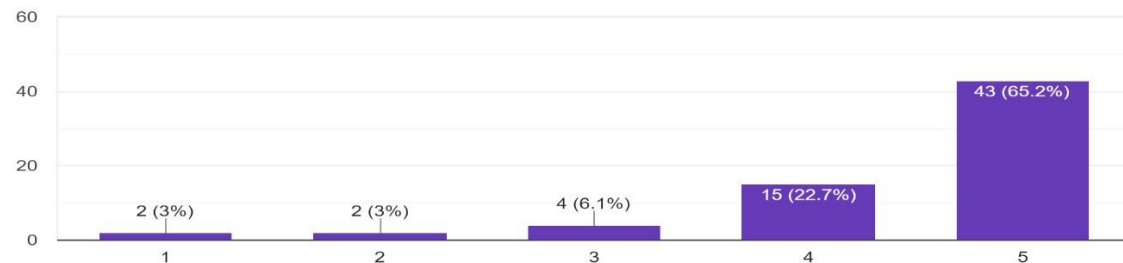
Our company's commitment to international buyers positively affects the implementation of sustainable practices in the RMG sector

66 responses



Effective communication with international buyers is essential for successfully adopting sustainable practices in the RMG sector.

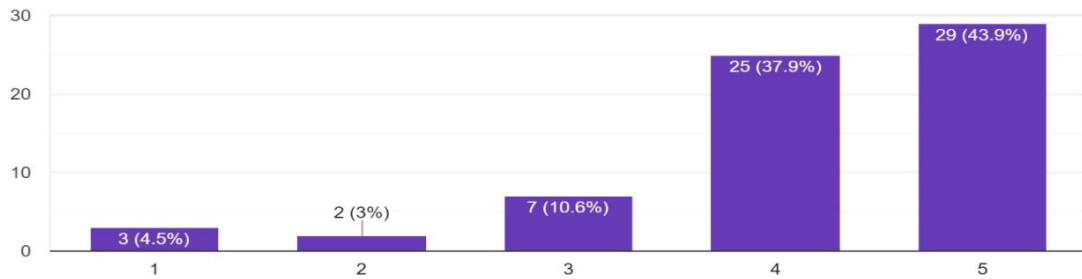
66 responses





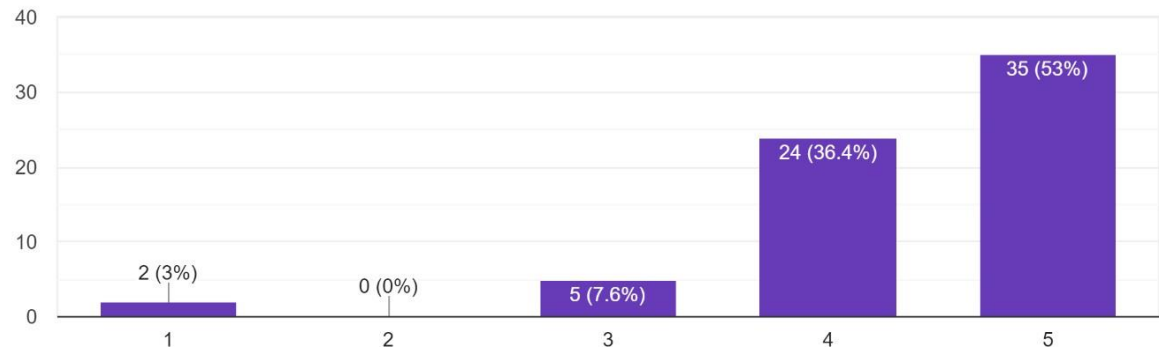
International buyers express confidence in our company's ability to maintain sustainable practices in the RMG sector.

66 responses



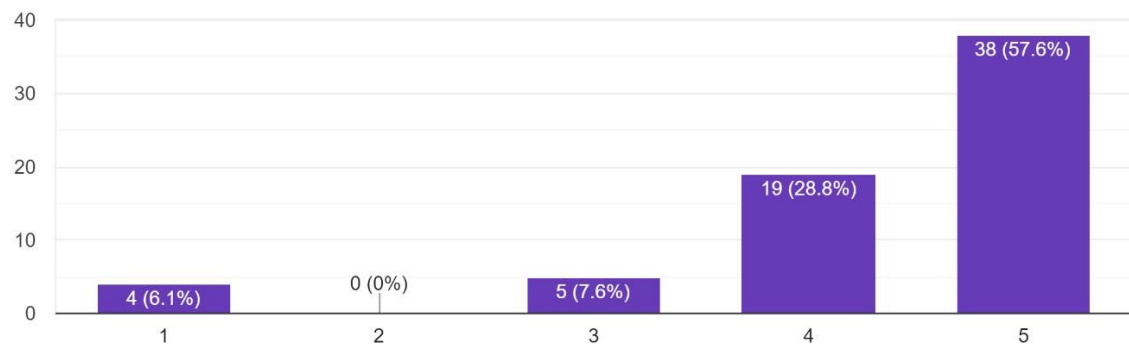
Collaborative problem-solving with international buyers contributes to the success of sustainable practices in the RMG sector.

66 responses



Our company's long-term relationships with international buyers enhance our commitment to sustainability in the RMG sector.

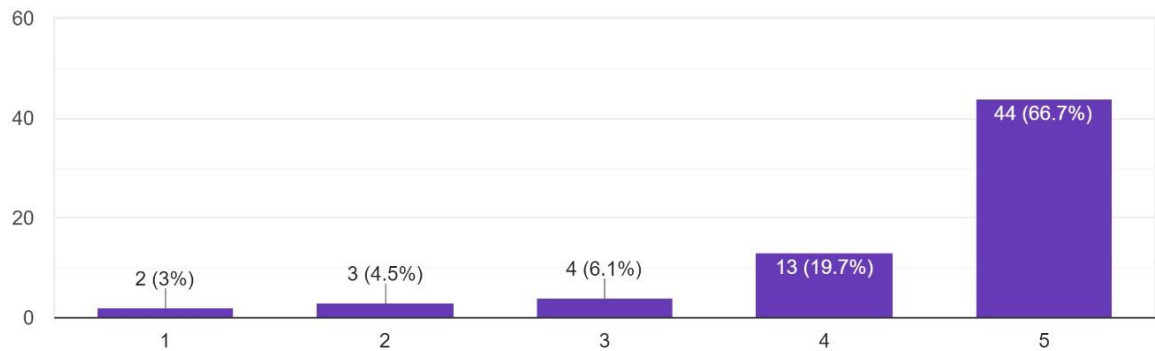
66 responses





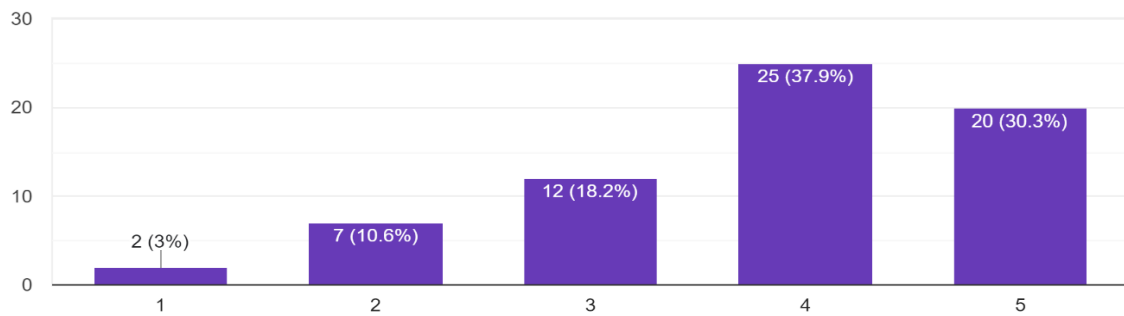
Long-term partnerships with international buyers lead to more effective implementation of sustainable practices in the RMG sector.

66 responses



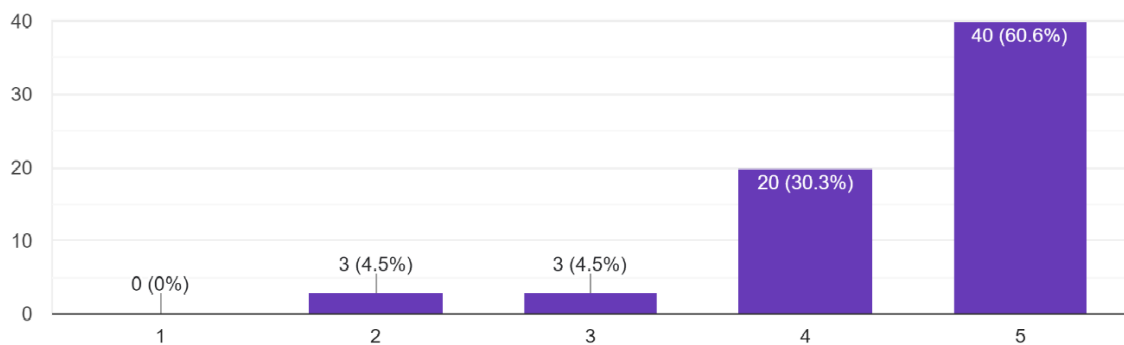
Short-term contracts with international buyers hinder the adoption of sustainable practices in the RMG sector.

66 responses



Our company's long-term partnerships with international buyers include agreements on sustainability goals and objectives.

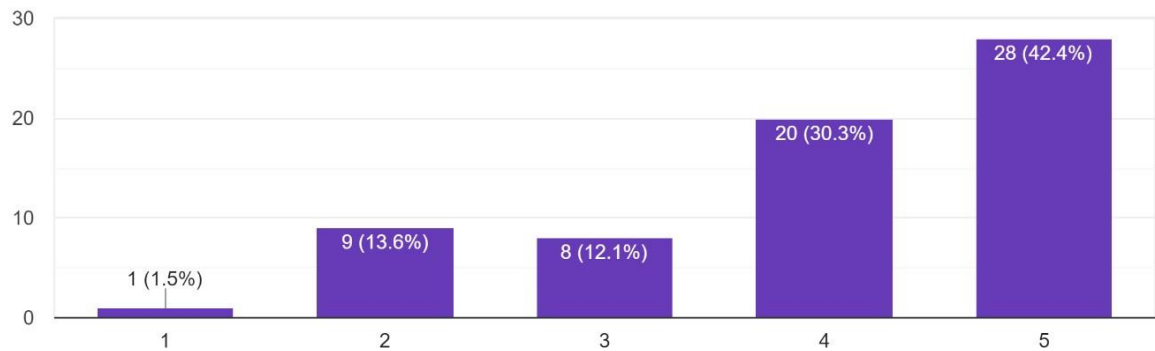
66 responses





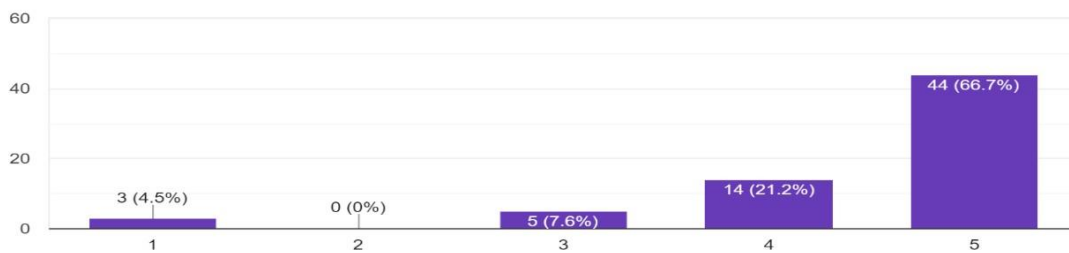
Short-term contracts with international buyers limit the resources available for implementing sustainable practices in the RMG sector

66 responses



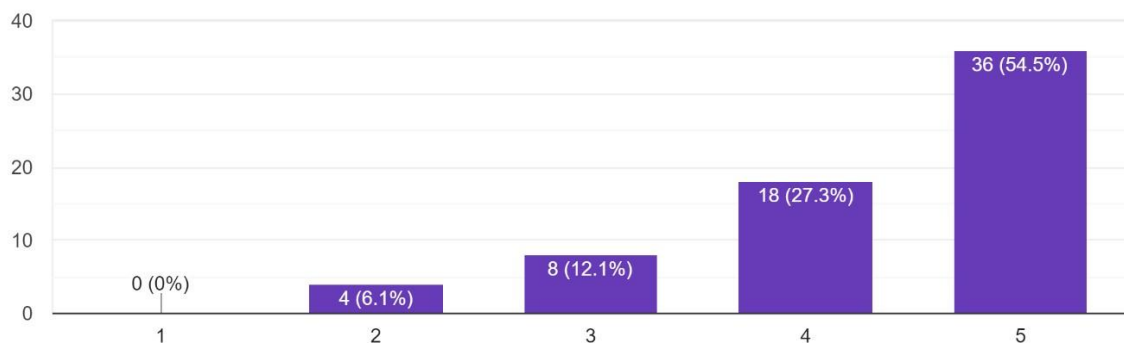
Long-term partnerships with international buyers provide more opportunities for capacity-building and training in sustainability.

66 responses



Our company's relationship type with international buyers significantly influences our approach to sustainability in the RMG sector.

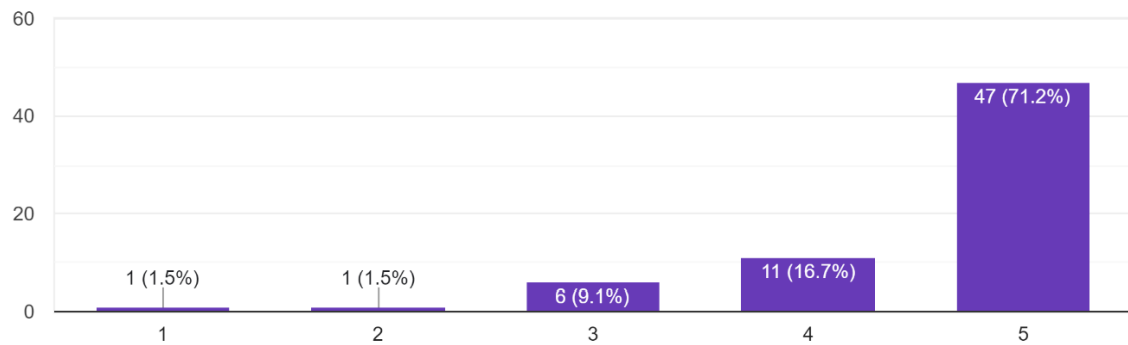
66 responses





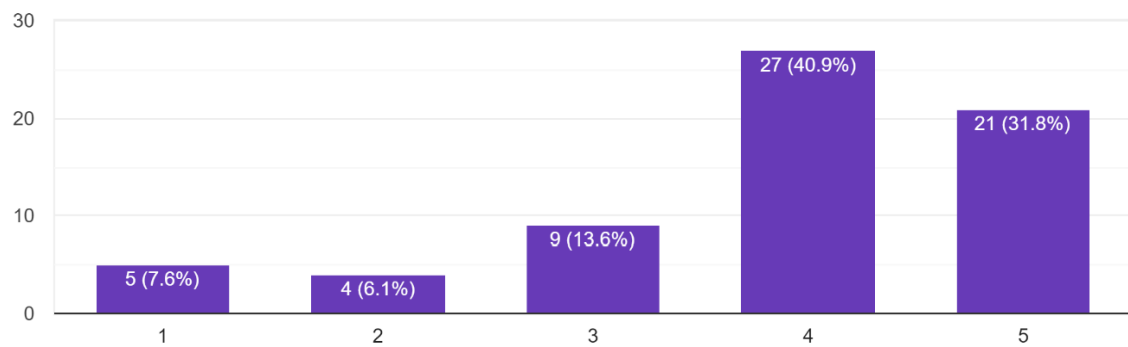
Building long term relationship with buyers accelerate the expansion of international business.

66 responses



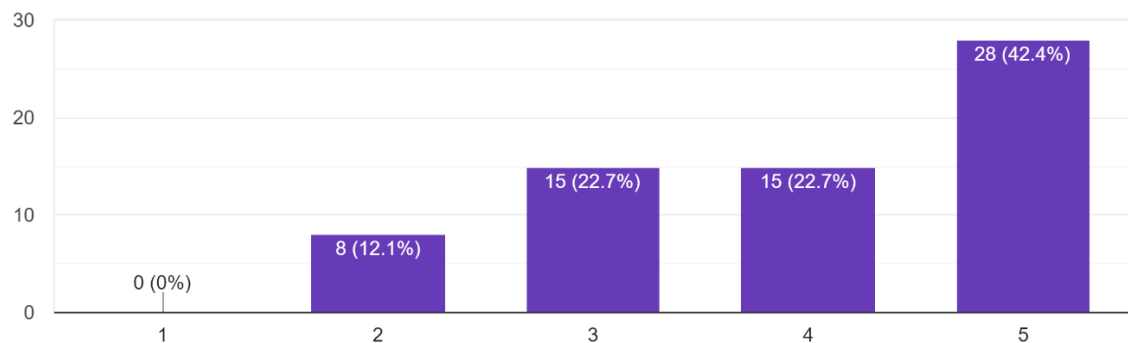
International buyers enforce strict sustainability standards that our company must adhere to.

66 responses



Our company receives support and resources from international buyers to enhance our sustainability performance.

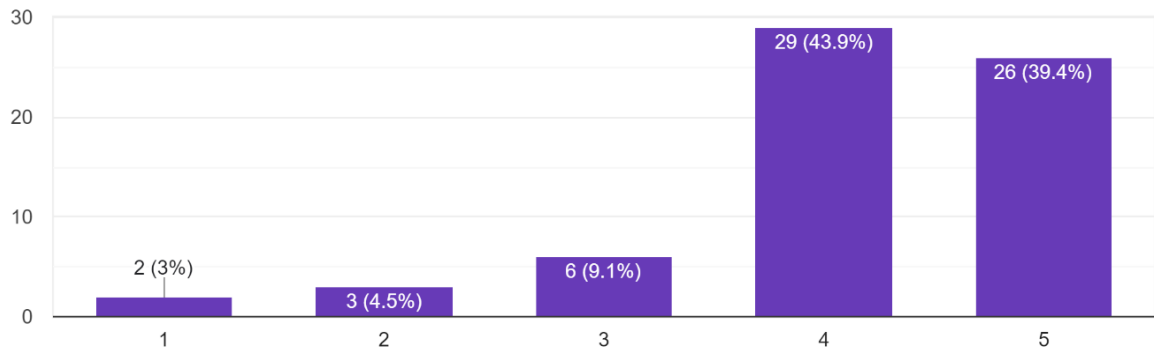
66 responses





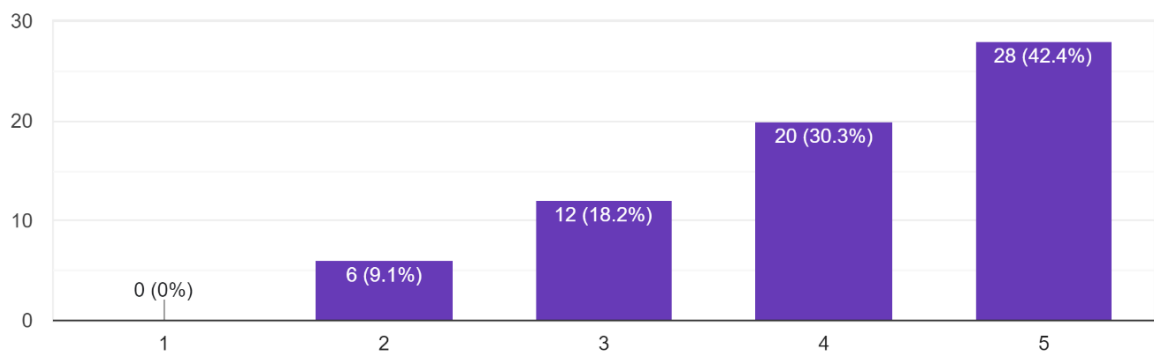
International buyers actively engage in capacity-building initiatives to improve our company's sustainability practices

66 responses



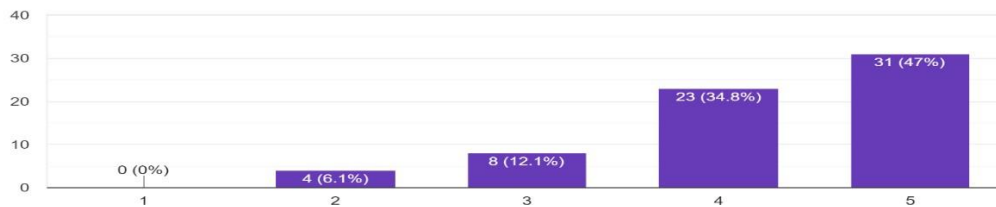
The commitment of international buyers to sustainability directly impacts our company's efforts to adopt sustainable practices.

66 responses



International buyers' sustainability requirements have led to positive changes in our company's operations and management.

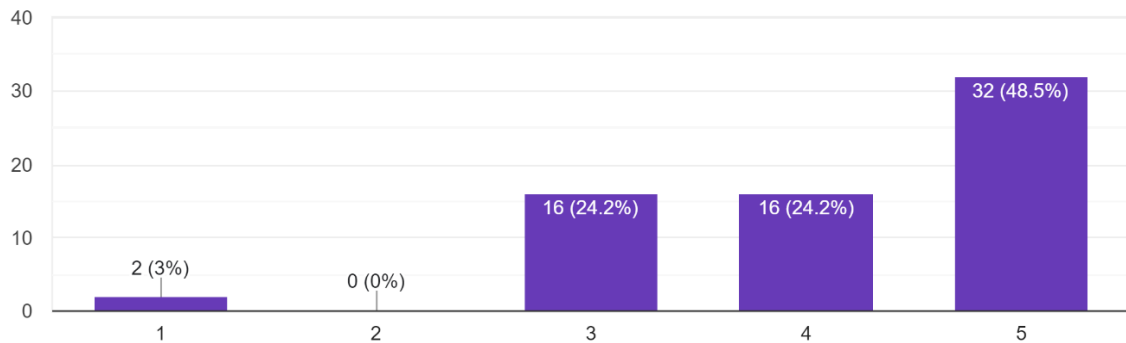
66 responses





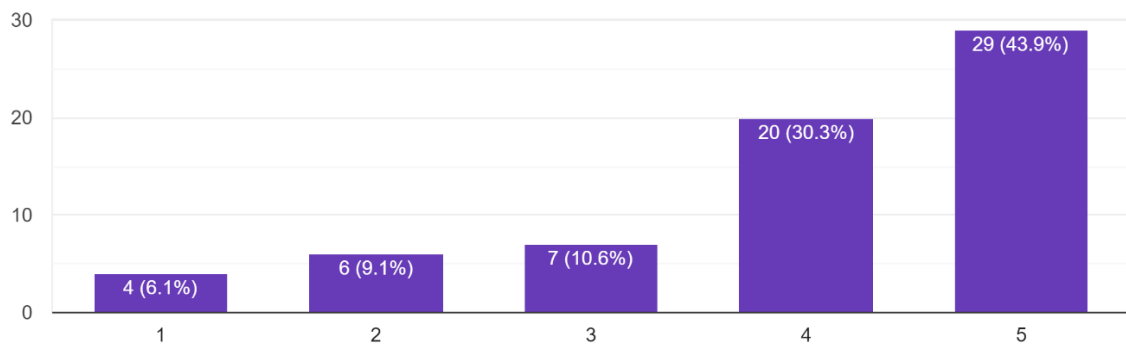
Our company's sustainability performance is regularly evaluated and monitored by international buyers.

66 responses



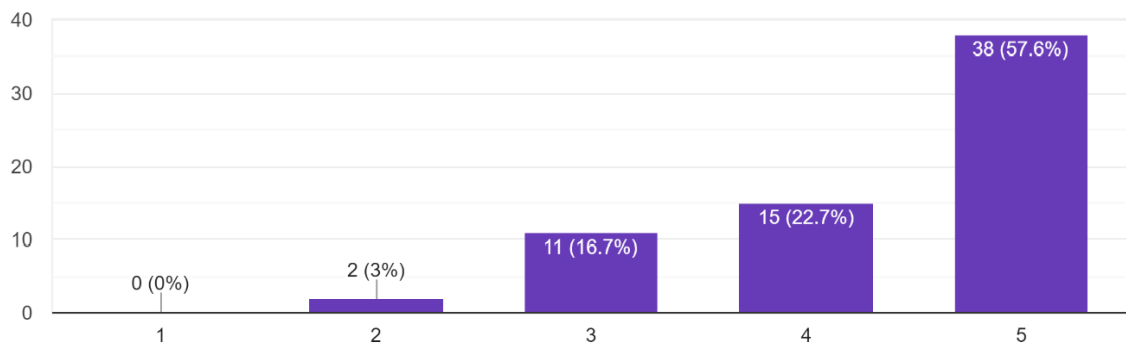
The implementation of sustainable practices in our company has led to a reduction in negative environmental impacts.

66 responses



Our company's adoption of sustainable practices has improved worker safety and well-being

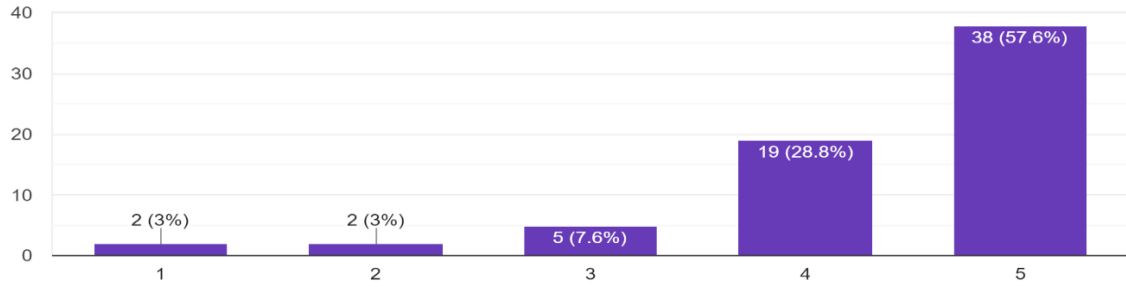
66 responses





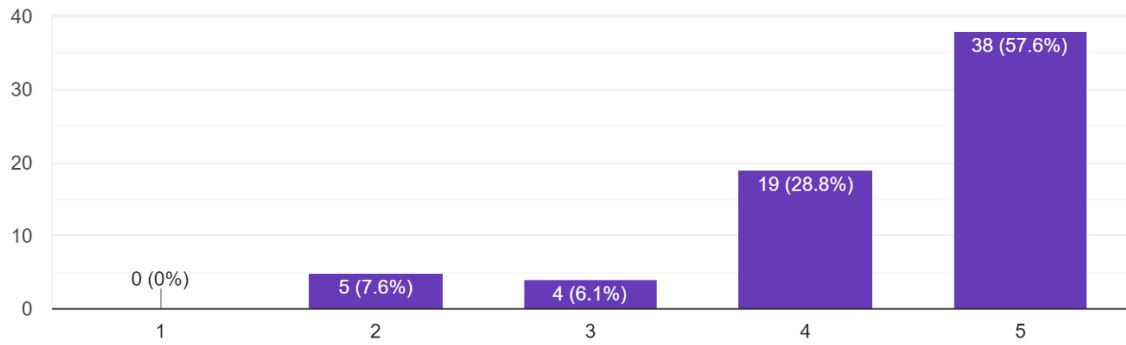
Sustainable practices in our company have positively influenced the overall reputation of the Bangladeshi RMG sector.

66 responses



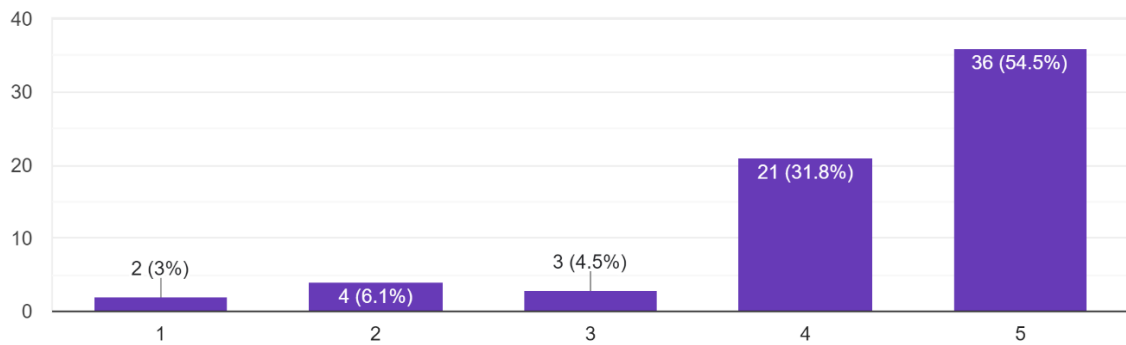
The incorporation of sustainable practices has made our company more attractive to international buyers.

66 responses



The adoption of sustainable practices has enhanced our company's long-term competitiveness in the global RMG market.

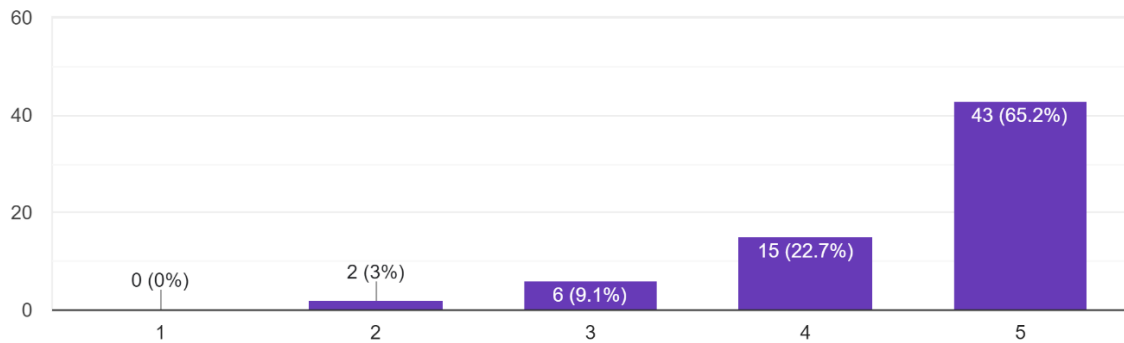
66 responses





Our company's commitment to sustainable practices has resulted in more stable and enduring relationships with international buyers.

66 responses



Being socially and environmentally responsible, strengthen my company's reputation with international buyers.

66 responses

