



A Paradigm Shift in Shopping Culture of Bangladesh with a Progressive Participation of Women Entrepreneurs: Problems and Prospects; A Sociological Study

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Abstract: *In this era of modernization, people are getting more involved in the online world. As a result, E-commerce or online business has become a great scope for economic advancement and women empowerment at the same time. Women of Bangladesh are getting involved into the online business area and proving their excellence every day. But still they are facing barriers of the patriarchal society in every step. Nonetheless they are heading towards success while dealing with all the negativity and blockades. This paper tries to put light on the obstacles women are facing to do online business and it also tries to mention some possible ways to overcome them.*

Keywords: e-commerce, women, economy, online business

Introduction

Bangladesh is a developing country with US\$2,227 per capita income at present. ("Bangladesh surpasses India on per capita income", 2021) In this modern era of technology, online platform or E-commerce is playing a crucial role in the economic development of the country. Almost everything is going to the online platform which has become an easiest way to reach people these days. The rise of the online store has prepared for the dissemination of E-business. Up to this point, online based shopping is getting mainstream in Bangladesh, urging new contestants to open online based business entries for purchaser merchandise and family fundamentals. In the previous years, a huge number of internet shopping gateways or then again internet business stages dispatched activities, offering items and administrations from vegetables, garments, electronics to books and travel tickets. The pattern began after

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Bangladesh Bank cleared ways for installment by charge and Mastercard in the neighborhood money.(Chowdhury and Hossain, 2013)From last few decades, organizations have conducted commerce electronically by utilizing a assortment of electronic commerce arrangements. These assertions may incorporate any things that cannot be submissive electronically, such as terms of exchange, installment instruments, or execution traditions.(Ohidujjaman, Hasan and Huda, 2013)The booming online platform has become one of the major driving forces of the country in context of economical prosperity. On the other hand, women are actively participating in this economic growth of the country more than before. E-commerce or online business has made the path a little bit hassle-free for the women who are trying to be an active and strong part of the country's advancement. The country is getting more female entrepreneurs who are pushing the wheel of the country's economy. Business venture has been viewed as one of the significant determinants of industrial development both in the created and in the non-industrial nations. Women business owners have become significant parts in the innovative scene. Despite the fact that women need to play out a ton of family exercises including regenerative tasks, like childcare and doing housework, they can discover accomplishment through their own organizations.(Afroz et al., 2015)

Online business has become a significant piece of regular daily existence for the shoppers of the 21st century. With regards to the creating scene, online based business projects are considered "possible goldmines" for women strengthening. (Haque,2013) Yet, both the entrepreneurs and the consumers are facing problems while dealing with the online business. This paper is going to analyze problems faced by both women entrepreneurs and the consumers. At the same time, it will try to recommend some most possible solutions to mitigate the problems.

Research Objective

Online business or Electronic trade has gotten progressive changes the business. The beginning of web innovation made it conceivable. The entire world is encountering an enormous change in business, presently a day's web is utilized as a device for business. (Karim and Qi, 2018) Online business culture is getting popular in Bangladesh with a rapid speed. The fundamental aim of this paper is to discuss the problems and prospects of this practice. To achieve the main objective this paper will try to find out-

- The socio-economic problems faced by sellers and also the difficulties faced by the consumers while taking part in this quite new business culture
- The ways to mitigate the problems with the maximum use of the constrained resources within less time

Research Question

This research paper is going to focus on two questions-

- What are the difficulties faced by sellers? What is the acceptance level of online business among the consumers and what are the problems they face?
- What will be the possible way to overcome those blockades faced by both sellers and consumers?

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative research. Researchers have used analytical design for this research. Researchers did a survey to know the problems of the consumers and asked them about the possible solutions from their perspective. Secondary data are collected from journals, different online data bases, books, article and other research publications. This paper tried to dig out the problems of the entrepreneurs from a gender perspective. They focused on the women entrepreneurs and their problems in context of Bangladesh.

Literature Review

An entrepreneur is an individual who has the innovative characteristics, bears the danger gives capital and utilizes them in setting up business. They produce inventive business thoughts, accept new business open doors, make venture without anyone else or acquire, face challenge and appreciate benefit as an award of their undertaking and grow the business. (Ahammad and Moudud-Ul- Huq, 2013) In the modern era of development, not only men but also women are taking active part in the economy. They are not remaining as passive beneficiaries like they used to do before. The scenario is not very different in Bangladesh also. Bangladesh is as yet a developing nation, however wealthy in human asset. In Bangladesh women establish marginally not exactly 50% of the populace. Most of them are oppressed, under supported, ignorant and poor. There are insufficient business openings for women. Along these lines, monetary exercises, through independent work have gotten fundamental for possible working women. Disregarding less freedoms, numerous women have prevailing in business, yet they are still exceptionally little in number. (Afroz et al., 2015) Though women have started participating in the income generating activities, they are facing a lot of barriers as well. Women in Bangladesh face numerous difficulties in working together when their conventional jobs make them answerable for getting ready food to take

care of their families and providing family needs. The chance to extend their work past a family even out or foster different sorts of organizations is frequently ruined due to the strength of man-controlled society. Moreover, they don't get a similar admittance to preparing, administrations, necessary equipment, and financing as men. Women are additionally frequently obliged by laws or social segregation that keep them from possessing property, getting cash, and acquiring admittance to land and regular assets. Notwithstanding these obstructions, numerous ladies are associated with pay producing exercises, especially limited scope business exercises.(Chowdhury &Rabbani, 2013) They have to do more struggle compared to men to break the stereotypes and continue their work.

Apart from the socio-economic obstacles faced by the women entrepreneurs, this paper will also discuss the problems of the consumers at the same time. Online business or online based shopping has acquired huge changes the chances and difficulties for the business houses. From the customers' viewpoint, the line of boundary among nearby and worldwide business firms as well as items has limited where quality, esteem, time, accommodation, style and so forth matters a great deal. (Rahman, 2016)Internet retailing is a more helpful shopping channel for customers on the grounds that online stores offer more noteworthy time saving. That is perhaps the most prime explanation individuals need to favouronline based shopping. In any case, there is another essential issue which is 'Trust'. Absence of trust is quite possibly the most habitually referred to explanations behind shopper's not shopping on the online. Aside from this, others problems like- credit card fraud, inability to examine the product physically before buying, uncertainty about the product quality etc creates problems for the consumers while doing online shopping. (Suhan, 2015)In Bangladesh public cognizance about the advantages of information communication technology and its various employments is restricted among individuals. Environment setting like instruction, culture and other social viewpoints straightforwardly or by implication intervene the internet shopping conduct of consumers or buyers. (Ibid)

Theoretical Framework

The paper is going to focus on women empowerment through social media and also will discuss the consumer perspective. "Liberal Feminism" has been discussed to understand the concept of women empowerment for Bangladesh context. Scholars characterize liberal feminist concept as a feminist hypothesis that accepts sexual orientation disparity is made by bringing down access for women and young ladies to social equality and designation of social assets like training and employment. Liberal women's liberation is gotten from the liberal political way of thinking in the illumination time frame, and focuses on the centre thoughts of

self-sufficiency, widespread rights, equivalent citizenship, and majority rule government.(Bimer and Alemeneh, 2018) This theory supports women empowerment while ensuring equal rights for them like the society does for men. It also says that facilities for using technology should not be based on gender as technology is not a gender biased thing. This approach encourages women to participate more in the technological field as the men do. (Haque,2013)Women need innovation to partake in the cutting-edge world as equivalents. In the event that women are avoided from the plan of accepted practices at this phase of the technological development, their consideration later on will be considerably more confounded. However, with women demonstrated specialized abilities and the conceivably significant positive effect on their prosperity, the utilization of innovation and particularly ICT can be transformed into a chance. Numerous drives support women strengthening through innovation and online based systems administration assumes a basic part in the development of women's organizations. Different types of advanced articulation, for example, contributing to a blog, enhance women's voices and increment their confidence. Plainly, more gender adjusted admittance to innovation has incredible positive potential.(Why women need technology and technology needs women, 2014)

To understand the consumer perspective from a theoretical lens, researchers has tried to give a focus on the "Model of Attitude and Shopping".Jarvenpaa, and Todd proposed a demonstrate of state of mind, behaviour, and shopping purposeful towards Web shopping in common. Chang, Cheung, and Lai considered categories of factors, which drive online shopping movement. Seen characteristics of the net deal channel are the primary one which incorporates chance, online shopping encounters, advantage, benefit quality, believe. (Rahman et al., 2018)There are another nine components related with users' discernment of online shopping. The chance recognition of clients was the most discriminator between individuals buying online and individuals not buying online among those components. Other separating components were; control over, and comfort of the shopping handle, client benefit, reasonableness of stock and ease of utilize of the shopping location. (Vellido et al, 2000)Professionals have been attempting to offer so-called online procedures on a case-by-case premise utilizing their individual encounters, perceptions, and instincts. This approach gave rise to a huge number of clashing methodologies due to its need of dependable hypothetical establishment. As a result, organizations utilizing online methodologies for offering their items and benefit are finding that their desire distant surpasses the genuine achievement. (Chowdhury and Hossain, 2013) The acceptance of online shops in Bangladesh among the consumers can be showed as a framework like-

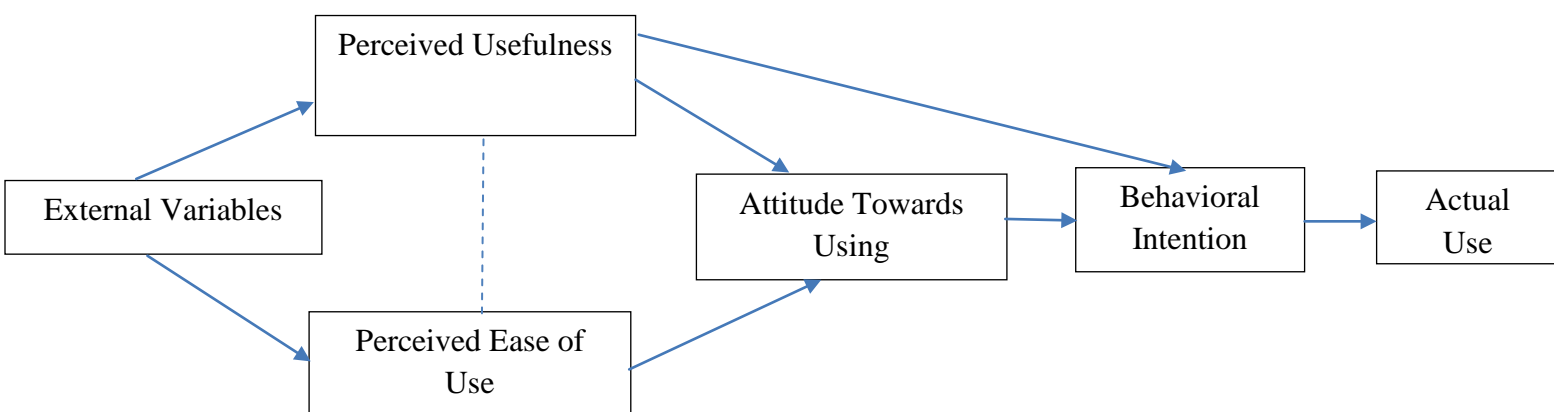


Figure: Base Model for Explaining Consumer e-shopping acceptance of the E-stores in Bangladesh (ibid)

Findings and Discussions

In this era of modernization, the users of internet are increasing everyday around the globe. Bangladesh as a prominent developing country is no exception here. In January, 2020 the number of total internet users of Bangladesh was 66.44 million. Between April 2019 and January 2020 total number of social media users in this country increased by 3.0 million (+9.1%). Social media penetration in Bangladesh stood at 22% in January 2020. (Kemp, 2020) This upward movement of the internet usage was a great support for the growth of online business in Bangladesh. Social media specially “Facebook” is the major place for interaction between the sellers and consumers. In recent time, the number of social media users also increased which helped the online business to grow in the fastest rate. According to a recent report of NapoleonCat (2021), “There were 48,230,000 Facebook users in Bangladesh in May 2021, which accounted for 28% of its entire population. The majority of them were men-69.1%. People aged 18-24 were the largest user group (21,200,200). The highest difference between men and women occurs within people aged 25 to 34, where men lead by 7,100,00.” This statistic clearly shows the possibilities of more growth of the online business in Bangladesh. Along with these prospects, there are some problems faced by the sellers while doing their business.

According to Parvin, Jinrong and Rahman, (2012), the women entrepreneurs of Bangladesh face many obstacles like- financial problems, lack of proper market information, poor infrastructure and utility supply, traditional technology, lack of skilled and trained manpower, complicated bureaucratic process and procedures. As distant as issue is concern for women business visionaries, restrictions exist within the frame of financial problems and social

dangers. Since women are modern in certain viewpoints of entrepreneurship, they confront limitations in many ways, causing preventions to their normal exercises. Male go between providers, temporary workers and exporters dominate the industry and take advantage of women segregation within the domestic and need of get to credit, supplies and information approximately the economy of their work. Ladies are disabled within the current centralized wholesale market set-up controlled by men.(Jahan, 2017)According to Nawaz (2009), There are a few other limitations which hinder business enterprise development among women of Bangladesh. These are- religious customs and social norms that stops women to go outside for work and earn financial solvency of their own, lack of infrastructural facilities available for women, lack of technological knowledge, problem in identifying the right entrepreneurs, poor managerial and technological skills compared to men, the burden of interest. Another major complication for women entrepreneurs in digital gender divide. From the previous discussion, there is clear picture of how women are less involved in online (social media) compared to men. Amid the 1990s, analysts were fast to watch that ladies tend to be latecomers to the advanced age. As a result, the unused innovation was famously depicted as a male space. Analysts claimed that those gender-specific contrasts had their beginnings within the truth that ladies belittled their real utilization aptitudes, which lead to lower self-efficacy to utilize ICT, as well as in their common states of mind toward computers. This sort of thinking is in line with a longstanding contention that innovation is gendered.(Hilbert, 2011) All of these together create blockades for women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh when they try to break the chain of patriarchy running for ages in the society.

On the contrary, to find out what kind of problems consumers face, researchers made a survey where 32 participants took part and the survey was done online. In the survey the age group of most of participants was 21-25 years (13 participants).

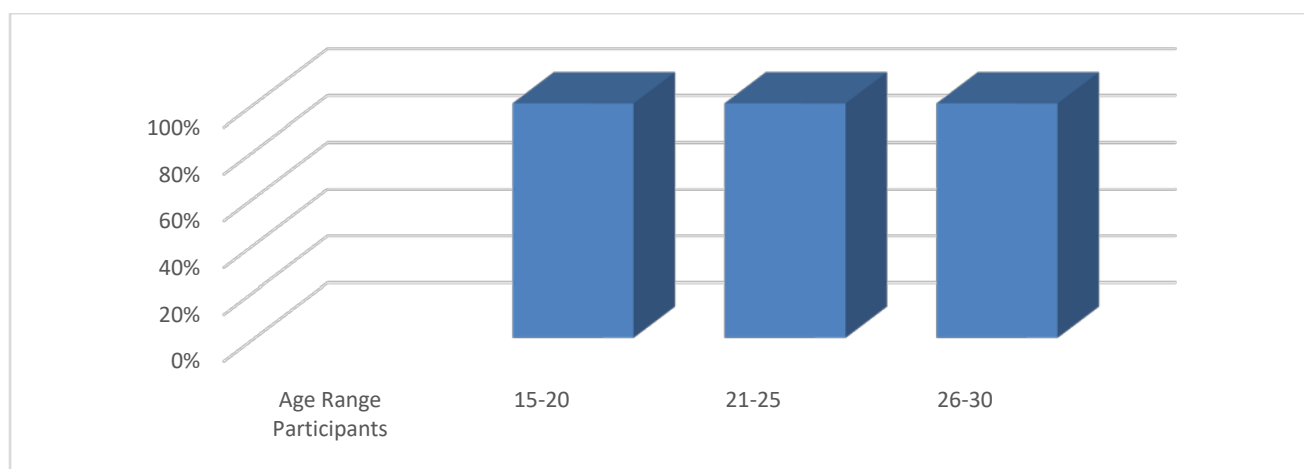


Figure: Age Range of Participants

In that survey 21 male persons (65.60%) and 10 female persons (31.30%) participated.

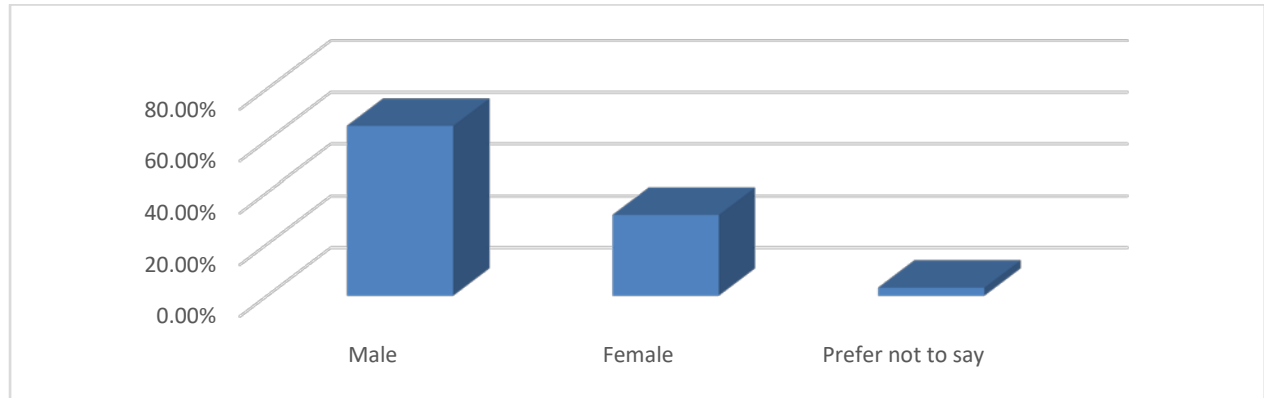


Figure: Gender of Participants

Later on, the researchers asked whether the participants prefer online shopping over traditional physical shopping. Most of them (46.9%) said they prefer traditional shopping culture more than today's online shopping practice.



Figure: Preference of Shopping Method among the Participants

It was quite surprising to know that, in this modern time of technological advancement most people prefer traditional shopping rather than online shopping. According to the participants they face some major problems while doing online shopping and that is why they prefer the traditional shopping method more. The problems they identified were-

- Late delivery- many online stores fail to deliver their product timely. This can be a result of less manpower and not having a suitable delivery service provider.
- Trust issues- in online shopping method, consumers have to buy product just seeing a picture and description given by the seller. It becomes hard for them to understand the product quality properly. This can also be resulted in fraud and scam to the consumers. Some of the participants complained about getting different product. Some

online shops do “eye-catching” marketing but in reality, consumers get low quality product.

- Return/exchange policy- Not having return or exchange policy has been marked as another negative side of online shopping. Sometimes consumers get low quality product and they cannot return it as such policies are absent. Thus, the sellers lose authenticity and trust of the customers.
- Delivery timing- many consumers face difficulties regarding the delivery timing of the products.
- Some of the participants pointed out the communication gap between consumers and sellers as a problem in online shopping.
- Price variations- consumers face price variations of same products among the online shops.

Recommendations

The initiation of online marketing methodology and the current headway of this specific showcasing approach have brought around numerous changes within the way of advertising an item or benefit to people. In any case, it has by one means or another scattered the traditional market and brought approximately changes in taste of the customers. (Mahmud, Imtiaz and Ahmed, 2019) After a long time of advancement of Bangladesh’s online shopping market, there has been a discernible increment within the number of online shopping platforms in Bangladesh. (Biswas, Nusari and Ghosh, 2019) At present time this sector is booming rapidly and creating a greater impact on national economy at the same time. Yet, consumers are facing some difficulties in this process. Researchers did a survey to get some suggestions from the consumers so that this platform can provide more improved service to them. The recommendations are –

- **Change in logistics and delivery system:** Logistics & transport system is one of the main pain point for both the consumer and the seller. Right now e-commerce businesses are getting most of their deals arranged from Dhaka city. But customers are ceaselessly complaining almost the conveyance framework. This needs to be fixed to keep the momentum going.
- **Complex online payment procedure:** Bangladesh is moving towards a cashless economy. But due to complexity and adaptability most of the e-commerce vendors can’t completely devour online payment framework for their e-commerce operation. Most of the online customer in Bangladesh still getting the hold of it. Also online

instalment expenses are higher (more than 2% per exchange). It's making the costing higher. According to Bangladesh Bank NPS payment stats there are 1,60,29,875 credit/debit/pre-paid cards issued in Bangladesh but still individuals prefer cash payment due to lack of trust. (NPSB data, 2021) Sellers needs to work on this aspect.

- Consumers have asked for more transparency between sellers and them. It will help to eradicate the communication gap between this two parties and will help to grow the platform more.
- A considerable role needs to be played by the policy makers as well. In a fast-changing business environment, with numerous challenges, arrangement help and authorization can offer assistance a division to thrive. One key issue can be to establish an online consumer protection act and create an infrastructure to enforce such an act. At present, many of the platforms are trying or develop their versions of consumer protection policies, but unless an administrative arrangement level drive is taken to make a uniform set of laws ensuring online shopper, tricks and fakes will still thrive. This recommendation is encourage fortified by the reality that there's a huge parcel of F-commerce (Facebook based shops) in our e-commerce sector.

Conclusion

What the Covid-19 did is that it exacerbated an as of now tricky circumstance. It excessively disturbed women's lives and jobs to a more prominent degree than men due to a couple of pre-existing components: the occupations and segments women tend to work in, childcare and residential duties and the pre-existing sexual orientation dissimilarity in business. Yet, through the pandemic, we've seen women's quality and continuance within the confront of misfortune. On the off chance that anything, this year has lit up how endless women's potential truly is. But this minute in time is delicate unless governments, monetary administrations and E-commerce associations come together to do three things: offer systemic bolster and programs to empower women to outlive and flourish in this modern ordinary, prepare them with abilities to explore the computerized world and support an impartial, available money related administrations framework that underpins women's work as an entrepreneur. It likewise decreases the chance of violence at home and society against women. (Roy, 2016) Women's Business through internet has upgraded their financial status and decision-making control. This has an effect on their social status with respect to increment in their administration capacity, gender balance and so on. (Hossain, 2018) The journey for women to offer their items online is still exceptionally new at this point. They have just started their expedition in this arena which needs more awareness and trainings to update their aptitudes utilizing ICT to realize the esteem included in economy and lifelong

learning. Vigorous promoting should be done since larger part of women have great item but need of publicizing aptitudes particularly through online platform. Specific laws should be made to expand their business even in the international level. Women of ours have just started to take their steps as entrepreneurs while dealing with all the negativity and patriarchal barriers of our society. More optimistic attitude towards them will help them to achieve greater success in near future.

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