

Prospects and Challenges of Women's Empowerment: A Study on Online Clothing Stores in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Bangladeshi women are lagging behind in terms of economic empowerment. However, ICTs have the potential to empower women in entrepreneurship through social media. Also the Bangladeshi retail industry has witnessed major changes with the availability of Internet in Dhaka city. No doubt the most common sector of retail market today is the clothing segment, especially the e-clothing market. Since 2010, multiple online clothing stores, initiated by housewives, working women and female students, have emerged. This study explores how women in Dhaka are using ICTs, especially social media, to empower themselves through e-commerce. This paper attempts to find out the prospects, barriers and challenges of women-owned online clothing stores. This paper conducted in-depth interviews with ten women, who run online clothing stores. This paper concludes with a discussion of prospects, barriers and challenges of maintaining online clothing stores and strategies adopted by female entrepreneurs to attract consumers.

Key Words: *ICT, Empowerment, e-commerce, Social Media, techno-feminism*

1. Introduction

E-Commerce has become an important part of everyday life for the consumers of the 21st century. In the context of the developing world, e-Commerce projects are considered “potential goldmines” for women empowerment. The study is motivated by the potentially powerful role that information and communication technologies (ICTs) can play in empowering women (Maier, S., and Nair-Reichert, U, 2007). “ICT allows women’s increased participation in political, social and economic arenas and supports empowerment for

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themselves, their families, and their communities". In this context, e-commerce, e-retailing projects facilitate the empowerment of women. Therefore, this paper focuses on the prospects and challenges faced by women in managing e-commerce/e-retailing projects through social media. With the advancement of digital technology in Bangladesh, consumers' shopping behavior has shifted greatly. Nowadays, progressive consumers go shopping on the web. The banking sector of Bangladesh had already seen the introduction of Internet payment systems that helped fund transfers and payments of utility bills (All about Online Shopping. 2013). They observed that the Internet population style of Bangladesh was also contributing to the development of the Asian countries, which ensured a 450% development from 2000-2007. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's latest National Media Survey placed the total Internet users in Bangladesh at 30.48 million as of January 2013. The Facebook population in Bangladesh is now 3.39 million. Facebook adds one new user from the country every 20 seconds (Arora, J. 2013). The online shopping trend in Bangladesh started around the year 2010(Asia B2C E-Commerce Report, 2011). Sites like Akhoni.com, Clickbd, Cell Bazaar, and Bikroy.com, among others, were established. A representative of Akhoni.com stated that Bangladesh was making progress in IT sector day by day. As a result, more and more people are getting access to Internet, social media, smartphones, etc. Bangladeshi e-commerce industry always believed that it was just a matter of time before people started shopping online like the rest of the world (Asia B2C E-Commerce Report, 2011). Moreover, the billion dollar e-commerce industry in neighboring India was something that encouraged Bangladeshi online sites to go forward (Asia B2C E-Commerce Report, 2013).

In the context of heavy traffic in Dhaka, online shopping saves people a sizable amount of time that they can utilize elsewhere. E-retailing in Bangladesh includes purchase of durable products such as electronic items, home and kitchen appliances, and personal items such as clothing, jewelry and other accessories. Attributed to broadband and mobile penetration, 3G, using credit cards or bKash, cash on delivery, Internet banking has led to a surge in online transactions. Around the same year that is 2010, Facebook gained considerable popularity among Bangladeshis as an active social networking platform.

Moreover, online payment methods such as BKash and e-banking made monetary transactions simpler. However, many people avoid online shopping because they cannot touch and feel the product in person. There had been many reported cases where unscrupulous individuals took advance payments and either disappeared or delivered the wrong items. Some others took so long to deliver the ordered items that customers were left wondering whether they would ever get the items they had ordered (Asia B2C E-Commerce

Report,2011). ICT and Women Empowerment In 2002, E-commerce and development hailed e-commerce as a “potential goldmine” for women in the developing countries because of its great potential for women empowerment (Bhowmik, R., China, S. and Daoyi, S. 2012). ICTs are increasingly promoted as a key solution for comprehensive development, poverty eradication and the empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups such as women and minorities in the Global South. However, experience has also shown that the effective application of any new technology must recognize that technologies are not gender neutral, neither in design, nor in implementation(Chen, Y. H. and Barnes, S. 2007).ITs have the potential to “redefine traditional gender roles” and that “the spread of IT-enabled services has been immensely beneficial for both women and men, especially those who have limited skills or lack of resources to invest in higher education”(Maier, S., and Nair-Reichert, U. 2007).Often the fear that it may change or shift the power structure creates hurdles in their paths. Many women are also uncertain about their professional opportunities once they get married.

In addition, juggling household responsibilities and work responsibilities can be very challenging and may result in women opting out of the ICT-driven developmental efforts (Maier, S., and Nair-Reichert, U. 2007).It must be noted that although culture may and does inhibit women's ability to engage in economic opportunities, it is not static and does not preclude women from all sorts of agency. It has been pointed out that culture can open paths to power (Dawn, S. K. and Kar, U. 2011). Therefore, successful ICT for development projects work within a culture assuming that women are resourceful, and if given the opportunity, will exercise their agency for change (Dawn, S. K. and Kar, U. 2011).

2. Rationale of the Study

Women Empowerment means empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities. ICT & Online clothing stores are one of the greatest medium for women in establishing strong and stable empowerment in the field of online business. The following are rationality of the study -

- Increasingly newer digital and social media platforms are giving women a voice in their own defense.
- ICT helps women to think strategically about technology and it has ability to manage time and resources.

- Online clothing stores are creating an opportunity to connect and encourage a global & local network of gender-responsive businesses and to support women-led enterprises.
- ICT is creating voluntary participations of women that create self-dependency and self-development.
- ICT helps local women entrepreneurs in developing eagerness to accept responsibility for development and implementation of new ideas and views.

3. Scope of the Study

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been increasingly promoted as a key solution for comprehensive development, poverty eradication and the empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups, such as women and minorities in the global & local communities. ICT-based business initiatives and e-commerce projects in particular, have been hailed as “potential goldmines” for women's empowerment. However, research and experience show that to be successful, projects must balance the need to overcome structural barriers to women's advancement with sensitivity to the limited space within which many women in the global and local navigates.

4. Objectives of the Study

This study is an attempt for achievement of two major objectives of online clothing stores in Bangladesh.

A. Main Objective

The main objective of the study is to assessment the current status about online clothing stores in Bangladesh.

B. Specific objectives

To obtain main objective, the other supportive objectives need to be attempted, which are –

- a. To explore factors that amount to the growth of women-owned online clothing stores in Bangladesh.
- b. To find out the barriers and challenges that the women-owned online clothing stores in Bangladesh face.
- c. To determine the strategies adopted by female owners to persuade their customers online.

5. Literature Review

This paper first discusses some prior works of foreign scholars, who worked on prospects, growth and challenges of maintaining online clothing stores. This section starts with an

overview of the current e-commerce situation in Asia, especially in Bangladesh. Then it moves on discussing the growth, barriers and challenges of the e-retailing industry. The literature review ends with a study framework which talks about liberal feminism and techno-feminism as a study framework. Current e-Commerce Situation in Asia E-commerce is identified as selling, buying, distributing, marketing, and servicing of products online. Nowadays an increasing number of dealings in global trade are carried out online. Japan, China and India are the most significant e-commerce bases in the Asia-Pacific region (All About Online Shopping, 2013).

80% of the Japanese online audience visited retail websites. B2C E-Commerce sales in South Korea reached more than 10 billion EUR. It is also noticeable that besides mobile commerce, social commerce is also a growing trend in South Korean online retail. B2C E-Commerce in China is expected to grow by more than 30 percent annually between 2010 and 2016 (Hilbert, M. 2011). Overall, clothing, fashion, shoes and bags, as well as computers and household appliances are among the most popular online product categories. Also a growing number of Chinese residents use social networks to purchase products online (Hilbert, M. 2011). Major B2C E-Commerce players have launched operations in the Indian market as well. In July 2012, online mass merchant Flipkart had the highest number of unique visitors, followed by Snapdeal, another mass merchant, and Jabong, online retailer of clothing and accessories. The most purchased online product categories in Vietnam in 2012 were clothing and household goods, followed by food and beverages (Howladar, M. H. R., Mohiuddin, M. G. and Islam, M., M. 2012).

There is no doubt that ICTs can help women gain employment and increase their income through e-businesses. Some claim that women are technophobic and that men are better users of the digital tools, while others argue that women enthusiastically embrace digital communication (Dholakia, R. R., Dholakia, N., and Pedersen, B. 1994). Men like the Internet for the experiences it offers, while women like it for the human connection it promotes (Eroglu, S. A., Machleit, K. A. and Davis, L. M. 2001). Therefore, It is stated that women rule the social media world. It is also reported that the monthly number of female visitors to twitter was 40 million more than masculine visitors (Fallows, D. 2005). It can be also said the millennial is the "social shoppers." They talk to their friends about their fashion purchases and are influenced by the input they receive. LollyWolly Doodle, a women-owned retail company selling kids clothes, does most of its selling on the Facebook, using the social networking site to set prices, take orders, forecast production and even market and design cloth (Harcourt, W. Ed. 1999).

Entrepreneurs, who could not afford to put up a website, started to recognize the potential of Facebook. Thus was the rise of Facebook business. It started with the sale of clothes – salwarkameez and sarees of different home-based boutiques (Asia B2C E-Commerce Report,

December, 2011). The chances of losing sales from the physical shop are slight, but the potential to increase sales through their website could be enormous” (Asia B2C E-Commerce Report, 2013). Exactly the same thing happened in Bangladesh. The women-owned clothing store Style World started its journey with a physical showroom at the Pink City Shopping Mall in Gulshan in 2005.

Recently, Style World also started operating through Facebook to attract customers beyond the borders. Designer duo Eeman Ahmed and Farah Deeba – brainchild of Andem – started out on Facebook and eventually grew their business to such an extent that they have now become an established fashion brand with their own flagship store in Banani (Asia B2C E-Commerce Report, February, 2011). Also, Facebook emerged as a platform for exposure for aspirant female designers. It is also noticeable that the female owners of online clothing stores come from all walks of life – teachers, doctors, students, housewives, IT professionals, and designers. What started out as a part time business or hobby soon turned into a moneymaking venture that they had dreamed. Since there are no salespersons, customers can speak directly with the owners and build a rapport, resulting in enhanced brand loyalty and customer satisfaction.

5.1 Present e-Commerce Situation in Bangladesh

In this area, the existing literature that focuses on online shopping in Bangladesh discusses about country’s present e-commerce situation and the developments in online shopping intentions among Bangladeshis. The number of IT users in Bangladesh is increasing rapidly. Bangladesh had 450,000 Internet users in 2007 and all the districts headquarters had cyber cafes (Kinsey, 2013). Online commerce also increased gradually. The size of the domestic market was estimated to grow to more than Tk300 core in a year (Kinsey, 2013).. On the other hand, the youth, accounting for more than 35 percent of the total population, gives Bangladesh an edge to choose e-commerce (Kinsey, 2013). Moreover, the high-income and -educated people, who are the major customers online, live in major the towns, where network infrastructure is comparatively better. According to the paper, an overview on the current online shopping trends across the country Dhaka shops for fashion clothing, shoes and jewelry in e-retailing. Chittagong-based online retail stores sell desktop, laptop, tablet and notebook computers, Khulna-based sites toys and baby products, Rajshahi-based ones music, movies and games wholesales; and Sylhet-based websites for sports and outdoors(All About Online Shopping, 2013).

5.2 Growth and Challenges of e-Commerce

After reviewing literature, some important growth factors were revealed that boosts online shopping. Customers prefer shopping online because it can be done quickly and at affordable

prices (Laisuzzaman, I. M., Imran, N., Nahid, A. A., Amin, M. Z. and Alim, M. A. 2010). Online shopping is more convenient and makes price comparisons easier (Maier, S., and Nair-Reichert, U. 2007). Thus, an online buyer saves precious time, extra efforts and money while buying online as compared to buying from physical stores. The most important thing in traditional retailing is setting up physical stores (Maneja, C. A. 2002). According to them, it is largely determined by the cost of real estate and the various physical objects required for creating sounds, aromas, colors and lighting. In this context, Ane-Retailing eliminates the need for maintaining expensive and fancy showrooms. Instead, what attract customer attention to online stores are the "great deals," (Asia B2C E-Commerce Report, 2013). The emergence of nuclear families and the latest trends in social networking have acted as growth factors for online clothing stores (Asia B2C E-Commerce Report, 2013). Social media not only drives people to make online purchases, it also drives an equal volume of in-store sales. Today's common scenario is customers are browsing online in every alternate day and buying offline. It can be also seen that half of the social media-related purchasing takes place within one week of sharing the ultimately purchased item. Risk associated with privacy and security also holds back people from going for online shopping (Maier, S., and Nair-Reichert, U. 2007). People are not merely concerned about security of value but also about trust in the information society, and how information is used by the government and businessmen. Therefore, the lack of trust discourages online consumers from participating in e-commerce (Rosser, S. V. 2005).

5.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The present study claimed that women underestimated their actual usage skills which led to lower ICT efficiency as well as shortcomings in their general attitudes towards computers (Dholakia, R. R., Dholakia, N., and Pedersen, B. 1994). "Men are more interested in technology than women, and they are also more tech savvy" (Eroglu, S. A., Machleit, K. A. and Davis, L. M. 2001). Women were seen as being more likely to be technophobic (Dholakia, R. R., Dholakia, N., and Pedersen, B. 1994). This type of reasoning is in line with a longstanding argument that technology is gendered. In contrast to those findings, some case studies and anecdotal evidence show that ICT can and are empowering women in the developing countries. ICTs enable meaningful participation and make female voices heard, as proven by the role of digital networks in feminist movements (Wajcman, J. 2004). In short, ICTs can be "powerful tools for women to overcome discrimination, achieve full equality, wellbeing and participation in the decisions that determine their lives and the future of their communities" (Dholakia, R. R., Dholakia, N., and Pedersen, B. 1994). At this point, Concept

of technofeminism can be used as the optimal solution to barriers blocking women's access to the management of new technologies (Hegman 2013). Techno feminism proposes to reinforce the social mechanisms necessary to favor the full inclusion of women in the use of technology. This would avoid the so called "digital gap" and recover a sphere, traditionally associated with the masculine, for women (Hegman 2013).

5.4 Women Empowerment through ICT

Respondents reported that when they saw young women running online clothing stores profitably and that the stores could be operated from home, it motivated them to start their own online clothing stores. For the upcoming designers, their passion for fashion and designing motivated them to start online clothing stores. Housewives wanted to earn some money so that they could contribute to the household expenditures. Most of the respondents started it as a part time business but later they decided to make it their primary occupations because their stores had been doing extremely well and earning handsome profits. Housewives took up online clothes selling as their full time occupation. Moreover, they can advertise their online store via social media. Therefore, it reduced their marketing cost substantially. The high cost of setting up and decorating a physical showroom was also put out of the equation.

All respondents use social media for informing, raising awareness, showcasing their products, setting prices, and giving delivery information. They also offer sales promotions and discounts through Facebook. One respondent has a plan to promote her store through video advertisements on Facebook soon. Through Facebook, the respondents can even attract customers from outside the country. "It got me customers from around the country and even from abroad. I have foreign customers and also business partners," another respondent narrated. All respondents reported that their self-esteem improved when they found their store was doing well competitively.

5.5 Growth Factors of Online Clothing Stores

When asked about the growth factor of online clothing stores, all respondents agreed on the point that they did not need to take the hassle of setting up physical stores. They can offer lower prices than the market prices because they do not need to pay for showroom rents, air conditioning, training employees, electronic machines and packaging.

- a. They just need to pay a minimum cost to the delivery personnel. All the respondents also agreed that the increased use of social networking sites expanded their business.

A growing number of young adults use Facebook and Twitter now which actually helped these women to track down their perspective customers.

- b. Moreover, good word of mouth reviews from her social media friends help them to expand their businesses. All respondents reported that the growth of mobile communication, especially the 3G services provided by the mobile phone companies led to the growth of the online retailing as people have greater round the clock access to the Internet. “
- c. This fosters the ease of getting connected with clients,” one respondent narrated. Another respondent described: “My customers can check my online page instantly whenever I upload a new catalog especially during festivals, boosting my sales.”
- d. Half of the respondents agreed that electronic transactions made payments easier for their customers outside Dhaka. Also, payment became more convenient for foreign customers because of Internet banking.
- e. The banks are bringing out new guidelines (like one time passwords and security questions) so that the online transactions can be made safe for the customers. Others reported that their customers preferred to pay them through Bkash or payment on delivery. When asked about the emergence of nuclear families as a growth factor for online clothing stores, most of the respondents agreed that in the present era, nuclear families are increasing and both husband and wife are working.
- f. They have less time to go to the markets for purchasing commodities and therefore they prefer online shopping. They also pointed out that in nuclear families people prefer to spend more for themselves i.e. for clothing, make-up and accessories. Bangladeshis living abroad boost the growth of online shopping significantly.

5.6 Barriers to Online Clothing Stores

When asked about the challenges and barriers of maintaining an online clothing store, the respondents identified unavailability of Internet access. Six respondents reported that in some areas the broadband connection was slow. “No Net, No Business,” one respondent said. Also they are unable to contact with their customers when electricity goes off. However, four respondents said they were always connected with the Internet using Wi-Fi and 3G. The second barrier that the respondents identified was the absence of “touch-feel-try” experience. Customers prefer to touch and see the product before buying. Customers often say: “It looks like it is of my size but what if it does not fit well,” one respondent said. Therefore, the fact

that online stores cannot offer the facility of “touch-feel-try” is a barrier. The respondents did not see the untimely delivery of products as a barrier in their business. Seven respondents reported that they tried to deliver their products within 24 hours. Another respondent reported that she delivered her products in nine days. Two respondents reported that because of the recent political unrest in the country and the agitation programs like strikes and blockades, she failed to deliver her products on time. As a result, a customer got mad with her which hampered her reputation.

When asked about the lack of trust between buyers and sellers, the respondents reported that they sold quality products to their customers and that was why they had always been trusted. One respondent reported that she took 50% payment before taking orders because some customers cancel orders. Sometimes the customers are not sure about the quality of the product unless it was delivered to them. When asked about offline presence, the respondents reported that customers should be assured that online retailers are not only available online but offline as well. Therefore, the respondents always contact with their customers over the phone and meet them in person whenever they want. However, two respondents reported that they were not aware of cybercrime.

6. Research Methodology

6.1 Coverage of the Study

This research paper is confined to the study of the prospects of the women-owned online clothing stores in Dhaka city.

6.2 Method and Design

This paper’s design is exploratory, qualitative and descriptive. It utilized primary and secondary data. The primary data came from the open ended, in-depth and interactive interviews of women, who operate online clothing stores through social media in Dhaka city. Secondary sources include journal articles, reports on e-commerce and f-commerce, newspaper and magazine articles. Qualitative data was analyzed using an analytical deductive method and presented using matrices.

6.3 Selection of respondents

This present study selected ten women, who run online clothing stores on Facebook thus using the social media as a platform for women empowerment. The selection of respondents is purposeful – ten women, who see online business as their primary source of income. They import Indian/Pakistani designer clothes and sell it to the customers. Some of the women are

also trying to establish themselves as an upcoming designer by selling clothes of their own designs. These women are mostly housewives and students. Some of them are engaged in part time or full time jobs. The profiles of these online stores are given below.

6.4 Profiles of the Women-Owned Online Clothing Stores

Areej: It is founded February on 2013. It is an online fabric collection which sells quality Pakistani lawns for females at reasonable prices.

Wazalla: It is founded on June 2012. It sells unstitched Pakistani designer wears. They offer customers with elegant designer clothes that reflect their exclusive range of unstitched ensembles.

Viola: It is founded June on 2011. It provides customers with a variety of collections of women's clothing. The store tries to provide "unmatchable designs." They understand the demand for unique style of clothing and offer customers incomparable designs in the world of attire at very economic bundle prices.

Mitira's: It is founded May 2013. It offer smart casuals to semi-formals to exclusive party wear for females at unique prices. The boutique has a unique and exclusive collection of fabulous Kaftans, Kurtis and dresses.

Sumatra: It is founded on May 2011. It started off make people's life easier by facilitating shopping on the net (Facebook) sitting right at home. The online store presented a new refreshing clothing line for women at reasonable prices.

BTG Fashions: It is founded on March 2013. It targets fashion conscious women. It sells and promotes mostly Pakistani designer lawn at very competitive prices.

SIA Collections: It is founded on August 2011. It is an online boutique offering the latest Pakistani brand wears from various renowned designers and fashion houses. They sell genuine and quality products for fashion conscious and shopaholic women.

Serenity: It is founded on January 2012. It strives to bring beautiful and elegant dresses to the fashion sensitive Bangladeshi women. Serenity believes that every woman should have access to the latest designs and fashion trends in the country.

Aroush: It is founded on September 2013. It is an online store offering modern and trendy collections of men's wear, women's wear and accessories at reasonable prices.

Nananta: It is founded on February 2013. It means a partner of elegant personality. The store brings quality products like sarees, bed sheets and nakshikantha at standard prices and a lot of exciting offers from time to time to attract customers.

7. Research Findings

This section is divided into the following: Digital Inclusion/Exclusion, Gender Upbringing, ICT and Women Empowerment, Growth Factors of Online Clothing Stores, Challenges and Barriers of Online Clothing Stores and Strategies Adopted to Attract Customers Online.

- a. Most of the respondents reported that both men and women share household chores in their family.
- b. At times, my brother makes his own breakfast and my father helps in household chores,” described one respondent.
- c. Another one reported: “My father cleans home on Fridays. My mother always cooks because my father is not good at it.”
- d. Exception of sex role differences was found in case of only one respondent as she belonged to a conservative family. “At my home, only the women carry the household chores and take care of the children.
- e. However, the women always participate in decision making,” she said. The family members of the respondents possess positive attitude about women’s engagement in e-commerce.
- f. As the respondents belong to liberal and educated families, they have full support from their families. “All women in my family [including me] are in business. In fact, my family does not prefer women sitting at home as housewives,” one respondent stated.
- g. Another respondent narrated: “Starting an online store was the most risky decision for my family to invest in as this has never been practiced before. But my family trusted me and invested.”
- h. All respondents reported that their family members were satisfied in the fact that they all were now independent women.

Based on the study, the following are some of the related findings:

- Most of the respondents own laptops, tablets, iPad and iPhone and have broadband and Wi-Fi Internet connection at home.
- They use computer and Internet for various purposes including social networking, online shopping and e-commerce. They have full social support for using ICT.
- They use social media to promote their pages by sharing pictures, ideas, news and information about upcoming designs.
- The rise of 3G mobile Internet enabled customers to check online pages instantly whenever a new catalog is updated, boosting sales.

- Increased use of Internet banking made payment easier for customers abroad. Bangladeshis living abroad buy a substantial amount of clothes from these online stores.
- Most of the respondents belong to families that are modern and liberal and do not associate certain professions with certain genders.
- In most families, household chores are shared by men and women although there are exceptions. In all families, women participate in decision making and opinion sharing as the families sees men and women as equals.
- The respondents are able to strike a balance between work and life because they can handle their businesses from home.
- The respondents see unavailability of Internet connection as a barrier as broadband speeds are not fast enough in all areas and they are unable to use Internet when electricity goes off.
- The respondents do not see offline presence as a barrier to their business because their customers can contact them over phone and meet them in person before buying a product.

8. Recommendations of the Study

Online clothing stores play vital role in reaching utmost involvement of women in an online entrepreneurship. The literatures presented in this study explained the significant role of ICT in the development of women empowerment in Bangladesh.

- a. The study showed online clothing business should be guided and supervised by institutional and government and institutional supports.
- b. It would create safe and secured business environment within which women will be able to run their business accordingly.
- c. The study also revealed online businesses operated by women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh created wide range of social improvement as they are involving lots of skilful women from different class
- d. It is therefore recommended that the online clothing stores entrepreneurs' team should ensure more trainings and learning opportunity to create more skillful women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.
- e. The study also recommends that a proper managerial practice within online clothing business enables local clothing businesses enters into a global market that let our country in expanding clothing market around the world.

9. Conclusion

Compared to countries like the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, Bangladesh is still at the embryonic stage of e-shopping. Though online shopping has witnessed growth in Bangladesh, it is still not as pervasive as it is in the west. E-retailing in Bangladesh can be a success if the e-retailers serve their customers properly through e-mail, chat and mobile phones. The online stores should ensure that the customers have the right information and mechanism and feel safe and secure while transacting online. At present, researchers are focusing on the e-commerce and m-commerce industries in Bangladesh, environment of e-commerce in Bangladesh and developing online shopping habits among Bangladeshis. However, none of these papers has a gender perspective. They overlooked women's empowerment through technology and social media. It is hoped that this study will draw attention to how social media has changed traditional gender roles and encourage women, who are lagging behind in terms of economic empowerment because of their household responsibilities.

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