MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ONLINE SHOPPING & THE POSSIBILITY TO FACILITATE ITS GROWTH: A STUDY IN RAJSHAHI CITY, BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Many studies have been conducted on Bangladeshis' online shopping habits, but only some on students' attitudes. With the recent growth of online shopping worldwide and the unexplored potentiality in the country's northern region, this topic is worthy of deeper understanding. The main objective of this study is to have an in-depth knowledge of students' attitudes toward online shopping in Rajshahi city, Bangladesh. This study collected data from 87 randomly selected students from March 2022 to May 2022 from different educational institutions in the city. Various statistical tools, including mean, standard deviation, pie charts, column charts and Likert Scale, have been employed to examine the students' attitudes. The results of this study show that most students are proficient internet users, although they mostly use it for recreational purposes. However, 92% of them have shopped online at least once. Moreover, this study also revealed that the most frequently purchased products by the students are clothing (35%), books (30%) and electronic products (22%). The results from the Likert Scale analysis found that 36 students agree and 24 strongly agree that they are overall satisfied with their online shopping experience despite facing problems like late delivery and receiving damaged products. Therefore, the study's findings suggest that online retailers must focus on improving the marketing aspect of their business, ensuring the quality of their products and maintaining time flexibility throughout the delivery period.

INTRODUCTION

Online shopping is a type of e-commerce. It is buying and selling over the internet and electronic media. On the internet, it refers to a vendor's website that sells products or services directly to the customer utilizing a digital shopping cart or digital shopping basket system and allows credit card, debit card, or mobile banking payment (Wambui, 2010). The convenience of purchasing online is beneficial not only to consumers but also to retailers. Moreover, buyers have an obvious advantage when the internet allows them access to both the global and the national market. This enables buyers to compare costs across areas, discover whether prices vary by different companies, and obtain information about alternative items. In this manner, people conduct an in-depth study on the internet before even engaging in conversation with a salesperson. As a result, how they arrive at decisions has undergone significant evaluation (Delafrooz et al., 2010).

Consequently, retailers ensure that their websites and other online portals present an accurate image of their businesses in the online world. They expand their customer base by selling directly online. Because of their having shops on the internet, their revenues would be unrestricted by the number of clients who could visit their brick-and-mortar location. Because of the World Wide Web, they may sell their products in other cities, states, and even countries, eliminating geographical restrictions. Therefore, the sellers also benefit from improved and more efficient access to the worldwide market thanks to the availability of the internet.

The widespread availability of internet access among consumers and the adoption of e-commerce practices among business owners, as well as the speed with which and the ease with which goods and services can be traded on a

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local, national, and international scale, have all contributed to the meteoric rise in popularity of online shopping over the past few decades. Because of this, online shopping has developed into one of the defining aspects of the modern era of the internet. According to research by the Center for Communication Policy at the University of California, online shopping has become the third most common kind of internet activity, coming in directly after web browsing and instant messaging (Desai, 2003).

Online shopping has become the easiest and most suitable mode of shopping because most people are busy and loaded with hectic schedules. As a result, online shopping has obtained a vital position in the 21st century by establishing a new pattern of shopping, becoming an essential lifestyle component, and expanding into a global perspective. Shopping for goods and services such as clothes, gadgets, and even animals on the internet are gaining ground rapidly and becoming increasingly common. This phenomenal rise of online shopping has probably been spurred by some factors, including the introduction of numerous online retailers and traders, a growing number of manufacturers coming to consumers directly, consumers seeking more excellent value in their purchases, expansion of product and service size, greater variety and choice of goods to consumers, sustained strength of the economy, the proliferation of group buying sites, increasing level of sophistication and comfort, and so on. So, whether at home, in the office, or abroad, consumers may and do make all their purchases online. This is particularly the case in recent times when the pandemic spread worldwide. Customers can spread the word quickly and readily about sales, coupons, and other enticements like cash on delivery and other price breaks for online purchases. Online shopping is becoming increasingly popular in the Asian region. This is especially true in India and Bangladesh. Compared to Bangladesh, India was quicker to embrace fashion (Hassan et al., 2010). In addition to well-known companies like Amazon and eBay, they operate other websites devoted to products like apparel, home furnishings, and cuisine.

As a result, Bangladesh still needs to be further along in developing this sector. There are a variety of factors at play here, and the objective of this research is to ascertain the attitudes of consumers toward online shopping, with a particular focus on the attitude of students because students are usually heavy internet users. This may allow for identifying potential solutions to problems related to the expansion of online shopping in Bangladesh. Presently, many individuals in Bangladesh, especially younger generations, like to shop online and buy things from various brands and firms that they either need help locating locally or are not sold in their neighbourhoods. Therefore, internet shopping is now playing an essential role in everyone's life, particularly for students and people with a hectic living schedule who reside in megacities like Dhaka and Chittagong. This is because online buying allows for greater convenience. In addition, many specialized items, such as books, electrical goods, and other things, may be purchased in Dhaka but are not available in other cities. People typically prefer to travel a short distance to get what they want. When the cost in terms of money, time, and well-being associated with going to Dhaka is considered, it is possible that they would choose to exercise the option to visit the shop online rather than going there in person. The perceptions of people who shop online will be analyzed in this study in the hopes of gaining a better understanding of how beneficial online shopping is. The main objective of this research is to analyze the students' perspective towards online shopping to determine how far the growth of online shopping has taken place in the economy of Rajshahi city.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been devoted to analyzing the factors that form the general attitude of online shoppers, and it is noticeable that significant research has been conducted in Bangladesh, too. Hossain et al. (2013) noted that E-commerce in Bangladesh has recently evolved into a highly effective business tool. It stipulated that Bangladesh must address network connectivity and electronic payment difficulties. This research paper identifies security difficulties, a complex checkout process, the inability of customers to locate things, and the inability to touch and feel a product. Desai (2003) determined that e-marketing is a condensed version of "electronic commerce" that creates business-to-consumer transactions. Even though the concept of e-tailing is no longer in its infancy, it will continue to evolve as progressive e-commerce requirements serve as a powerful driver for the growth of e-marketing. The concept of e-marketing differs from the direct shopping experience of various products and services.

Similarly, Hassan et al. (2010) provide an inside look at the web marketing efforts of various Bangladeshi business marketers. This is a quantitative study that utilizes both secondary and primary data. He discovered that many companies in Bangladesh still need a website. This article argues that access to high-speed internet is required to boost online marketing practices nationwide.

Bhatt (2014) claimed that online purchasing is increasing in popularity among people, particularly the younger generation, but in the current environment, for e-marketing to become equally popular among all age groups, it will need to travel further. Additionally, the study found that consumers' attitudes are evolving with time. Numerous variables, such as cash-on-delivery, customization of orders or websites, home delivery, etc., make online buying highly convenient. In addition, Delafrooz et al. (2010) discovered that consumers' attitudes regarding online purchasing were influenced by utilitarian orientation, convenience, price, and a more extensive selection. Therefore, e-retailers should stress a more user-friendly function to provide utilitarian clients with an efficient means of locating what they require.

Moreover, Jarvenpaa et al. (2000) investigated how customers' perceptions of a store's size and status influence their trust, risk perception, attitudes, and propensity to shop there. They recognize a correlation between online business customer trust and the stores' presumptive reputation and breadth. Kiyici (2012) attempted to determine the impact of online purchasing familiarity, income, and credit card ownership. According to his findings, the teacher of male students is better familiar with them and has a more positive attitude than the instructor of female students. Similarly, Li et al. (1999) discovered that consumers who purchase more regularly from online businesses are more concerned with suitability and

less concerned with practice. Since they are time-constrained and are okay with purchasing things without touching or sensitivity, these buyers consider appropriateness to be the most important determinant of their purchasing decisions.

According to Varadarajan (2010), consumer behaviour studies individuals, groups, processes, and organizations. He attempted to understand consumers' decision-making processes, both individually and collectively. It emphasizes individual consumers and their features, including demographic and behavioural characteristics, to comprehend what customers desire. In addition, Wambui (2010) uncovered the features of online shopping adopters among college students and the reasons for non-adoption and adoption of online shopping. The study outcomes demonstrated a high degree of awareness of online shopping but a very low rate of its utilization. Concerns about financial security and reluctance to provide personal information online were identified as causes for the underutilization of online buying. Among the reasons mentioned for the rise of online shopping were the convenience of purchasing things from anywhere in the world and the availability of a vast selection of products. Rajshahi is the most important city in Northern Bangladesh, while Dhaka, the nation's capital, is located far away. In addition, things such as literature, gadgets, etc., are exclusive to Dhaka and cannot be found in other cities. Considering the cost of money, time, and health associated with a visit to Dhaka and that individuals prefer to avoid going far to get what they want, they may visit the shop online. As a result, online shopping is growing in popularity in this city. This critical topic concerning the northern region of Bangladesh has been the subject of several studies in Bangladesh, but only some have focused exclusively on Rajshahi city. In light of this fact and that students are the most frequent internet users, the purpose of this study is to investigate how students in the city of Rajshahi perceive online shopping.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design
The cross-sectional, exploratory and descriptive research design is used for this study because it allows for assessing the selected topic when there are time and budget constraints. Primary data have been used to develop, specify and achieve the objectives.

Data Collection Method
Two types of data were collected. Structured questionnaires were used to run a survey for collecting primary data. The study was conducted through a personal interview with respondents to collect research-related information, and the information they gave was directly recorded on the questionnaire. The primary data were collected from March 2022 to May 2022. Secondary data were collected from previous research studies on the subject matter, related articles on online portals, various journals, and various educative websites.

Sample Size and Sampling Method
The sample size of 87 students was selected randomly from major educational institutions in Rajshahi City, including Bangladesh Computer Council, Rajshahi College and the University of Rajshahi. The sampling procedure used is a non-probability sampling method, that is, convenience sampling.

Questionnaire
The questionnaire designed contains two sectors. In addition to the personal details that ask for the respondents' name, gender, age, education and marital status, these two sections are designed to collect general relevant information and specific research-related information.

Tools and Techniques
Various tools such as percentage analysis, scaling technique, tabulation, graphical and average mean have been used to conduct the study properly. This can be summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. Tools & Techniques Used in the Study

Statistical tools	Purposes	Software used
Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, standard error, sample variance	The analysis of the impact of variables reflecting students' aspects on online shopping.	Excel 16
Likert Scaling	The analysis of student's perception of online shopping	Excel 16
Column chart	The frequency of online shopping by the students	Excel 16
Pie Chart	The general state of growth of online shopping	Excel 16

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Due to the extensive targeting options available on the internet, online commerce has enormous potential. As a result, many businesses and entrepreneurs use the internet to reach their consumers. Accordingly, a more profound comprehension of online shopping and the consumers' attitude toward it is crucial for effectively using this consumer engagement channel. It is essential to comprehend how customers perceive online shopping, the obstacles they experience, the benefits they obtain, and the factors that attract them to online shopping.

The Impact of Various Aspects of Students on Online Shopping

A survey with a structured questionnaire was conducted to analyze the impact of the various aspects on students, such as education, internet literacy, online activity, website usability, connection suitability, choice, reasoning and available payment method in online shopping. The survey found that more male students are shopping online than female students in general. This is probably because women still like to feel, see and touch the product before purchasing. However, an increase in the spending power of women might change that scenario.

The data collected from the survey to analyze the aspects of consumers is analyzed in Table 2, which shows the responses given by the students measured through mean, standard deviation, standard error and sample variance.

Table 2. Sample Statistics of the Impact of Specific Aspects of Students on Online Shopping

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Sample Variance
How would you describe your proficiency on the internet?	87	5.011	2.43	0.487	1.74
Where do you mostly use the internet?	87	2.088	2.022	0.41	1.42
What type of internet connection do you use?	87	2.50	1.87	0.375	1.009
Is your connection suitable?	87	0.696	1.42	0.27	0.577
What is your main purpose for using the internet?	87	6.54	3.06	0.612	2.70
Have you ever shopped online?	87	0.278	0.939	0.191	0.264
Which do you prefer?	87	1.25	1.67	0.31	0.83
Why are you choosing to shop online?	87	4.87	3.75	0.73	4.06
Which payment method do you typically use?	87	4.45	4.41	0.87	5.56

As found by the survey, 56% of respondents are advanced internet users, while 32% are intermediate and 12% are a novice. The respondents use the internet at both places, such as home and work. Most of them have a suitable connection, and surprisingly they prefer using Wi-Fi over mobile internet despite the latter's availability and low costs. All of these have a positive impact on the growth of online shopping. As those with advanced and intermediate proficiency on the internet and suitable internet connection, all of them have preferred online shopping over physical shopping and have shopped online at least once. However, 48% of the respondents still use the internet mainly for recreation, while only 28% use the internet mainly for shopping. Of the respondents who have shopped online, almost 50% use the cash delivery method as a means of payment. This is primarily because of reliability issues and a lack of credit/debit card availability. This also negatively impacts online shopping as cash on delivery as a payment method is slow compared to faster methods such as Bkash and credit/debit card systems.

The Frequency of Online Shopping by the Students

The survey found that though students mainly use the internet for recreation and education, 92% of the respondents have shopped online at least once. This is mainly because of changing lifestyles and taste patterns. As life is increasingly fast-paced, more people are moving to online shopping for the advantages such as time-saving, low price, product variety, etc. However, there is a possibility that only a few particular goods are brought online. Therefore, this may reflect something other than the actual growth of online shopping. Figure 1 shows in what frequencies students have shopped online. As the figure shows, 40% of students frequently shop online, while 8% never shop online. For a more specified view, the shopping frequency of respondents in the last six months is shown in Figure 2: This figure will help to understand the purchasing behaviour of online shoppers as the frequency shows the acceptance of the internet as a shopping medium. It was found that 32% of the students have shopped every two or three weeks, 24% shopped monthly, 20% shopped once every two weeks, and only 16% shopped online weekly, while 8% have never shopped online. Though there is a possibility that the respondents who shop online at various time intervals might shop only for a particular product, still this figure is a positive indicator of the growth of online shopping.
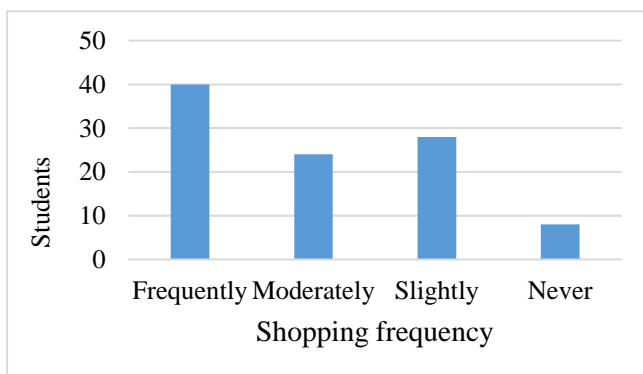

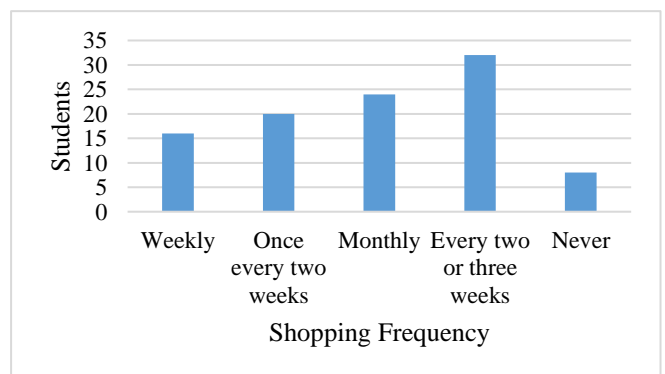Figure 1. Shopping Frequency of Students

Figure 2. Shopping Frequency of the Students in the Last Six Months

The Perception of Students on Online Shopping in Rajshahi City
Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world, so online shopping might be a relief for many consumers. Many people use the internet regularly, and all of them can become online shoppers if they want to. The country can also reduce its unemployment in various ways through the online shopping industry. Despite all these facts, the perception of online shoppers on online shopping in terms of various views is mixed. A survey was conducted to understand the perception of students, which can be shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Sample Statics for Students' Perception of Online Shopping

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Online shopping is mostly Dhaka based	11	22	3	28	23
2.	Online shopping is inconvenient in Rajshahi	13	20	13	35	6
3.	Online shopping websites need more advertisement.		25	7	43	12
4.	Information provided on the sites is easily readable, accurate and sufficient.		17	14	46	10
5.	Online shopping sites provide suitable price comparisons.		21	11	46	9
6.	The service quality of sellers is satisfactory		7	43	25	12
7.	Ordered goods not arriving on time or at all	13	31	9	24	10
8.	Ordered goods getting damaged during transport	12	33	12	30	
9.	Online shopping delivers the ordered goods at home without the need to travel	7	11	7	38	24
10.	Your expectations and quality of genuine products frequently match.		7	12	31	37
11.	You are overall satisfied with your experience of shopping online.		6	21	36	24

As shown in Table 3, 28 students agree, and 23 strongly agree that online shopping is mostly Dhaka based. This is probably because Dhaka, the capital and the country's most densely populated city, has the most potential for online shopping. Consequently, online shopping has been found inconvenient in Rajshahi City. It can be stated that it might also be inconvenient in other major cities like Rangpur, Khulna, etc. Despite having internet proficiency and a suitable internet connection, this odd is occurring primarily because of the need for more good advertisements in online shopping.
Moreover, as the table shows, ordered goods often arrive on time and sometimes late. Furthermore, these ordered goods sometimes get damaged during transport. Despite all these drawbacks, the students' expectations and quality of genuine products often match. That is probably because of the facilities provided by the online shopping shops, such as sufficient and accurate information on the website, decent service quality and straight home delivery. Therefore, most of the students are satisfied with their overall experience of shopping online.

The General State of Growth of Online Shopping
One of the ways to assess the growth of online shopping in Rajshahi city is to examine the categories of goods bought by online consumers and their visits to online shops. Figure 3 shows students' frequent visits to different online shops in Bangladesh. It is noted here that only five shops have been considered for simplicity despite a lot more being available. However, these five shops are relatively more familiar; therefore, the analysis might reflect the nature of visits to online shops by the students.
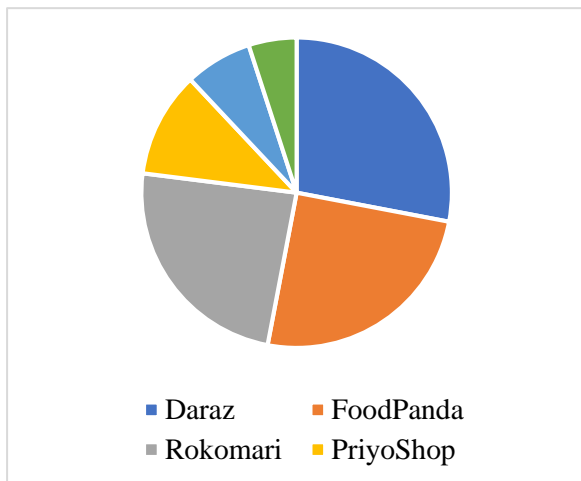

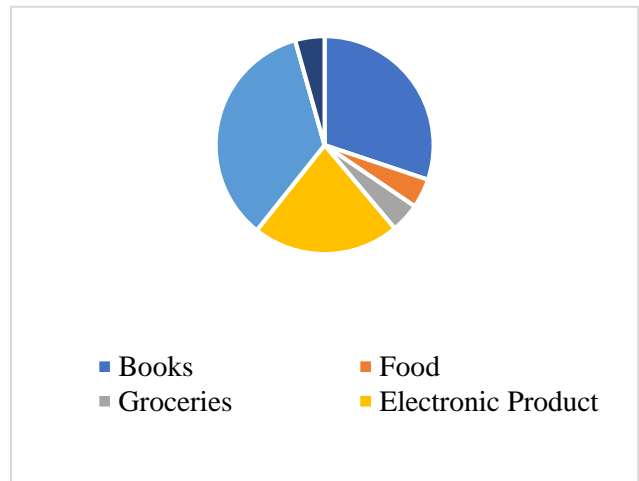Figure 3. The General Usage of Online Shopping Sites by the Students

Figure 4. The Usual Products Brought by the Students on Online Shop

As the figure shows, consumers mostly visit Daraz (28%), Food Panda (25%) and Rokomari (24%). This is probably because of these sites' availability, familiarity, access, and services. More importantly, these sites are heavily promoted by advertisement through online sites like social media and print media. In terms of goods, it is noted that online travel tickets have been overlooked in the survey. Due to the availability and easy access to travel websites, products like train and air tickets are readily available and traded nationwide. However, the survey's focus was on the other necessary goods bought by the consumers online, shown in Figure 4. As shown in the figure, the most common products brought by students are clothing (35%), books (30%) and electronic products (22%). The reason behind buying these three kinds of products is that they can be quickly returned in case the students' expectation is different from the product quality or there is a defect in the product, provided that the shopping sites have a return and refund facility. Trading products like groceries, food and services are limited but significant. The miniature trading of these goods is taking place online because related online shopping sites are available only to limited access or need to be sufficiently promoted and therefore are unknown to some consumers. So, the growth of online shopping still has a long way to go before it can be considered a significant industry in the economy.

CONCLUSIONS

Different perspectives on the attitudes of students toward online buying were shown in this study. Because gaining a grasp of customer attitudes toward online shopping and enhancing the elements that inspire consumers to purchase online is an essential step in fostering the expansion of online shopping. This study has focused mainly on the elements that drive students to purchase online in order to determine which factors are the most appealing to them. This study found that most students consider themselves proficient internet users, most consumers use the internet at home and at work, and surprisingly, they prefer Wi-Fi over mobile internet despite the latter's advantages. Despite the fact that most students use the internet for recreation, a vast majority have at least made an online purchase. In addition, it is revealed that a sizeable proportion of students prefer online shopping over physical shopping, and as a result, they frequently visit online shopping sites. Clothing, electronic products, and books are the most frequently purchased items online, and consumers' need for knowledge about online shopping is cited as the primary barrier to the process. Depending on the above findings, various recommendations may be made. A large, multi-media advertising effort should be launched to promote online shopping as a viable alternative to conventional shopping. It is vital for commercial organizations to cultivate favourable customer perceptions of their activities and services, as well as to improve the security and privacy of online transactions, in order to increase the number of target consumers and their attitudes. In addition, online merchants should adopt a complete privacy policy for their clients on the sharing of personal information in order to alleviate their security concerns, and both consumers and merchants should be educated on online buying. The government has a significant role in promoting online shopping on a national scale by bringing together online shopping experts to organize meetings, conferences, seminars, etc.

The findings and recommendations will provide online merchants and the government with a clear and comprehensive picture of the precise variables that drive individuals to shop online. In addition, based on the preceding debate, the future of online shopping in the city of Rajshahi is quite promising. Customers can save money and time by purchasing items online. However, the success of online shopping will be contingent upon its popularity, brand image, and specific promotional policies.

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