

Women Entrepreneurship: New Direction for Future Economic Growth through E-Commerce in Bangladesh

Suraiya Akter

Universiti Kuala Lumpur, 1016 Jalan Sultan Ismail, 50250 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract: *E-commerce business has attracted widespread attention in recent years. Some e-commerce companies have appeared on the market and attracted huge attention such as Amazon, e-bay, Alibaba. By the demand of advance technology and popularity, e-commerce business is achieving all new heights in Bangladesh. There are many businesswomen appearing on the market to show their determination. However, there are many hindrances and complications in their path, but those female entrepreneurs need to improvise their attributes and accept challenges such as enlightening confidence, financial challenges, socio cultural challenge, government and institutional support, managerial skill development, training, expansion of market access in order to establish e-commerce business to enhance socio-economic growth in Bangladesh. On the contrary, it is important for women entrepreneur to overcome some issues to establish e-commerce business, such as lack of sufficient funds, not having proper supply chain and distribution process, lack of managerial experience, limited access of knowledge in IT sector. The objective of the study is to highlight the current status of e-commerce in Bangladesh and to classify how using e-commerce helps women manage and grow their business. Furthermore, this study will raise awareness among potential women, and contribute to social and economic progress in Bangladesh.*

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurship, E-commerce, Online business, Socio-Economic growth

1. Introduction

Women entrepreneurs play an important role in the world economy, which has attracted significant academic attention in recent years. The international recognition and popularity of e-commerce among businesses is mainly because it's easy to manage from home and carry out operations in the virtual market. In addition, it allows women entrepreneurs to enlarge their business internationally with less resources and costs. Prior studies on women's participation in the economy have focused mainly on specific job-related activities [1]. Manjunatha (2013) stated that there are very limited involvement of rural women in economic activities. The participation in various entrepreneurial activities will increase women's level of self-esteem and inspired them to explore different areas. Currently, women entrepreneurs are openly participating in the socio-economic sectors of Bangladesh (Akhter, 2017). E-commerce opens up enormous business opportunities, as it enables round-the-clock business 24/7. People feel relax to buy necessary products via online, where people able to use different method of payment for their transactions. The growth of e-commerce is helping women entrepreneurs create new ideas, market and work from home.

This paper will attempt to identify how the use of e-commerce help-support women in Bangladesh and progress their business activities. The study will focus on identifying women entrepreneurs in e-commerce who have helped raise awareness among potential women about the challenges and opportunities that will help them expand their business and ensure social progress in Bangladesh.

In general, women entrepreneurs are the largest underrepresented group and minority as well from the point of view of entrepreneurs, for instance, half of the population of European countries are female whereonly less than one

third of European businesses are led by women. However, it is now widely recognized that women as entrepreneurs make a significant contribution to the national economy worldwide in terms of job creation, economic development and wealth creation.

On the contrary to the widespread opinion of women entrepreneurs starting small and home-based enterprises, it turns out that women currently head the so-called "new economy companies" with success in high technology, professional services, life sciences. Thus, the need to expand their participation in the business world becomes important for future economic development.

2. Literature Review

The E-commerce sector has emerged as a new field of opportunity for women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, although some research has been done on the entrepreneur's development in that region. The use of ICT is perceived as an opportunity for developing countries such as Bangladesh, e-business activities can offset the lack of physical infrastructure, therefore, reduce some amount of investment.

E-commerce Definition

Regarding the working material in this study, Devendraet. Al., (2012) explained electronic commerce generally known as e-commerce, "involves the purchase and sale of products and services through electronic systems such as the Internet and other computer networks". Mellita, D., &Cholil, W. (2012) explained the characteristics and the role of e-commerce for women's empowerment in developing countries. Empowering women through e-commerce needs entrepreneurship; gender analysis, training, planning, designing, implementation, evaluation and attention to the impact of women live and women's conditions (Constantinidis, 2011).

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E-commerce and Economic growth

The involvement of women in entrepreneurship contributes to economic development and, at the same time, benefits the well-being of families, communities and the nation (Mishra, 2012). "The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is seen as a good opportunity for developing countries" (Kahttab and Qutaishat, 2012; FryadHenari and Mahboob, 2008). E-business activities can offset the physical organizational infrastructure or physical local markets.

Most of the studies indicated the hardship of rural women in managing the household, E-commerce is pertinent to ensure that rural women have their income and less dependent on others. A study in Brazil found that when a mother manages family/household income, the child's chances of survival increase by 20% (OECD, 2011). The demographic profile of the thirty respondents fits with the objective of this project which is to empower rural women, through an application of E-business model.

Customers are the main elements for an entrepreneur to decide whether to adopt e-commerce for their business. The decision to adopt e-commerce as a business strategy may depend on consumers and their trust in e-commerce sites (Shuhaiber et al. 2014). It takes time to accept the changes, and this applies to e-commerce as well, as customers do not know and are not popular in the field of electronic marketing. The current shopping culture may be an obstacle to the growth of e-commerce in developing nations. Due to the reason, entrepreneurs in developing nations are often fear to try new things and approaches (Alzubi et al. 2015). However, Alzubi, Aldhamour and Ali (2015) further mentioned that there are some additional factors affecting the adoption of e-commerce such as management skill, financial resources, and supply chain management.

E-commerce and Women Entrepreneur

Maier and Reichert (2007) advised that e-commerce can enhance women's self-esteem by providing them with individual autonomy and financial independence, enhancing self-esteem, self-development, and positioning women's self-image, which potentially can help to sell their own goods and broaden their connectivity in the society.

According to Siddiqui (2012) that women entrepreneurs face some difficulties rather than their male counterparts such as women's family responsibilities, gender differences, financial difficulties and low risk taker, their socio-economic status, entrepreneurial skills to improve.

Singh (2009) highlighted the main factors underlying women's entrepreneurship and the difficulties associated with starting a new business. Singh further mentioned that the obstacles to female entrepreneurship are mainly related to the lack of interaction with other successful entrepreneurs, gender discrimination, the low priority that bankers give to women entrepreneurs for business loans, lack of networks, and family responsibility.

3. Theoretical Framework

The findings of this study will contribute towards filling up knowledge gaps on setting up business in E-Commerce for women entrepreneurs. Although a lot of discourse exists on gender participation as far as social contexts, socialization, communication, paid work and unemployment and several other spheres, little is known on how the women will participate in E-Commerce industry in Bangladesh.

The findings of this study will add also to the literature of women's participation in the E-Commerce industry. The recommendations of this study, if adopted by policy makers among them marketers, will be significant in capacity building and advocacy for women empowerment in E-Commerce.

4. Theoretical Framework

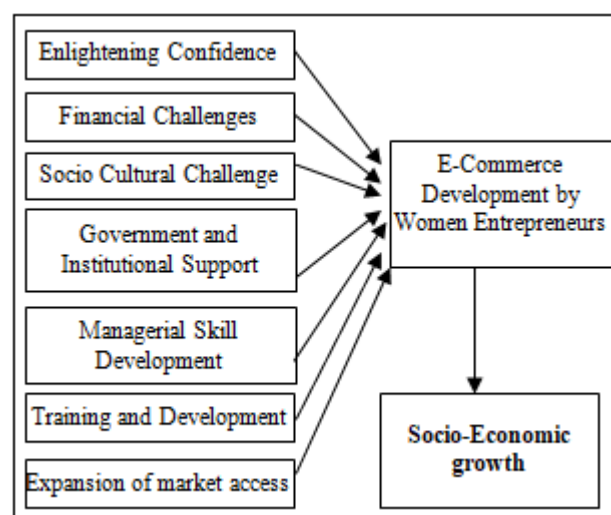


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

5. Significance of the Research

E-commerce is expected to be one of the largest markets in Bangladesh. According to E-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (ECAB) there are more than 7,000 e-commerce sites are selling their product online through their website or Facebook page. Due to many restrictions, traffic jam, pollution and hot weather in Dhaka city (The capital of Bangladesh), citizens are gradually moving towards online shopping as people found it as more convenient and easy to make transaction from the house. Large service providers such as Amazon, Alibaba, Flipchart, and Snap organizes many events, workshop and seminars to guide them in various marketing processes, delivery processes, packaging methods and other management aspects. Government and non-government organizations should support and encourage women. So that a lot of entrepreneurial women will come out and building their image and self-esteem. There is a lot of potential in e-commerce, as it is still very young in Bangladesh.

6. Conclusion

E-commerce can play an imperative role in empowering women as it creates opportunities to work and earn for

themselves and others. The most important of these benefits is improving women's self-esteem and social status at home, beside any financial gain. There are many women from developed nations, who faced technical barriers previously, and therefore prevented from entering e-commerce are now less important. Today, low-cost e-commerce platforms and low access risk are encouraging women to engage in e-commerce. Nevertheless, women are required to build confidence, government and institutional support, managerial skill development, training, expansion of market access and face challenges such as financial, socio cultural in order to establish e-commerce business to enhance socio-economic growth. This study presented a model so that women entrepreneurs will be able to establish e-commerce business in Bangladesh. However, in order to achieve validation of this research model and to achieve generalized findings, further investigation and analysis is required.

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