

The Pink tax: Why women pay more for everything

HIYA ISLAM

Pink tax lurks in the corners of every supermarket and affects half of the global consumers, with the vast majority being grossly unaware. It is not charged by the government as per any other tax such as sales or income. Rather, it is a phrase used to describe the inflated prices on products or services targeted at women compared with the equivalent sold to men. It is real and regrettably, unavoidable.

A recent study carried out by the Department of Consumer Affairs in New York city revealed a great deal of shocking statistics focusing on 800 products with male and female versions. The study found a children's vehicle in two different colours, red and pink at a popular supermarket. The red scooter aimed for boys came with a tag of \$24.99 while the pink one costed \$49.99.

In the local scenario, 250 ml shower gels by a well-known brand are being sold at Tk. 375 and Tk. 420, the latter

for women. Heading over to the toys section, Barbie and Ken are tagged with a price of Tk. 2680 and Tk. 2480. Between an Avengers-themed backpack and one with unicorn horn and glitter ears, a Tk. 100 difference was seen. The pricier being, you guessed it right, the pink bag, "for girls". It is to note that both bags were of similar quality and size. It goes on. Two infant dolls. The girl with brown hair having a price of Tk. 25 more than the boy wearing a cap. Discrepancies exist, in low and high a number.

This is the cost of being a female. Women on average, live longer than

men. However, they do pay more for everything and get paid less in the current world. Although the gender wage gap is closing in to zero in some countries like, Luxembourg at a disparity of 3 %, more work needs to be done in developed countries such as, the United States and Canada which roughly have an 18 % gap. With that in mind, women are actually paying more than men 42 % of the time. This amounts to \$1,300 annually, a figure which could have been saved for better purposes. Nonetheless, the fact that pink

tax is rampant across stores has to do with consumers giving in to deceptive campaigns. Believing that ordinary,

gender-neutral products like, razors, deodorant are specially concocted to suit the feminine body is one example. It is typical for companies to opt for "pink" packaging and use terms like, soft, delicate, for women to promote the idea. Often, services and brands try to justify a higher price tag on female products. The reasoning is misleading most of the times yet very well-received by buyers. These reasons must be carefully investigated upon and reported if necessary. However, it is important for females to be conscious while shopping and decide if a costlier item is worth the money and what ramifications are there with an increasing purchase of the said brand. That is, support companies which take a stand against the issue. Choose women-owned products, buy in bulk. Make sure the expense is sensible as per personal need and budget.

Hiya is currently struggling to reach her book-reading goals. Find her at hiya-lam.11@gmail.com



FOUR STRINGS ATTACHED

The tragic tale of a washed up ukulele

MOHUA MOULI

I woke up with dust in my mouth. The streets hadn't been kind since last Christmas.

It's been almost two years since my career went down the drain, and my long-time collaborator and lover, Michelle Osama, dumped me for my cousin Giverson. She said she wasn't feeling it anymore, told me I lacked depth and didn't have enough stamina. Those words still echo in the hollow of my chest.

She was starstruck every time she saw Giverson with his sturdy strap, his baritone voice and his perfectly chiselled physique. Some days she would come back home late at night, gushing over how he showed her some cool new chord that I could never replicate.

Last I heard, they were cruising around the town doing shows at our old joints. The other night while I was playing our once fan-favourite cover of *Can't Help Falling in Love*, down at the corner of Lounge Com-mo-de, I could hear teenagers screaming "Michelle and Giverson! Michelle and Giverson!" as they started playing the same song. All I could do was sigh and lament over what once was.

I am now spending my days scavenging for money, playing outside the same places where I used to be welcomed as a star. I live

in a shabby old music store down at Commerce Lab. My landlord often berates me with unkind remarks like, "You aren't even good looking enough to get any gigs." Sigh.

Sometimes he would throw me out for a few days after he realised I was using all the varnish he sells in the store. Those nights I would wander around the streets, playing a few songs, making a few bucks, just to get a little bit of shoe polish from the local shoe-shiner. Then I would keep varnishing until I passed out.

I awoke that morning to a rancid taste of dust flying around this unforgiving city. Before I could gather my belongings and get up, the sky turned dark, as a bony figure emerged from the periphery. He picked me up and I struggled to breathe as he smelled like a heavy dose of AXEL body spray. He then said in a squeaky voice, "You're coming with me."

The rest of that day is a haze. I am now a forced associate of a man named Jamshed, who spends his afternoons loitering around Eve College, trying to pick up a date by playing the first half of *Ore Nil Doriya*.

He provides me with an ample supply of varnish, as payment for my services. He told me I often cry out "Michelle, my belle!" in my sleep and suggested I stop doing that or he'll throw me out too. I take another heavy dose of varnish and try to comply.

