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The e-commerce kaleidoscope

Before the pandemic, how many of us have ever thought of doing groceries online? Taking it up a notch, how many of us ever considered purchasing a sacrificial animal for Qurbani Eid via the Internet? Almost no one!

Then, COVID-19 hit, changing our lives drastically — from the way we socialise and work to the way we shop — forcing us to adapt.

And at the centre of it all is the Internet. It is now more useful than ever! Just imagine what the COVID-19 pandemic would have looked like if there was no Internet and smart phones! With all those Zoom meetings and social media platforms, we are being able to work from home, attend classes, stay connected with friends, and much more.

The pandemic has forced us to think of alternatives and get on board with new



habits and ways of doing things.



Just take the payment of your utility bills as an example. You can easily pay with your mobile phone. Not that it was a

service unheard of in pre-pandemic times, but due to the current circumstances, many people who were previously adamant about these are now more open to them.

Even those who were not tech-savvy before have now embraced the power of the Internet as a tool. To illustrate, many parents of school children opted for better Internet connection at home and perhaps even dedicated a tab or a computer for online classes.

Particularly zeroing down on e-commerce, one may dare say that the pandemic has been a blessing in disguise — for businesses, start-ups, and aspiring entrepreneurs, and of course at the core of them all, the customers, who can shop from the comfort and safety of their homes.

To sustain and survive, many businesses have been forced to open online platforms. Particularly during the general holiday or lockdown, when many brick-and-mortar stores were closed, revenue from online platforms lent a helping hand.



Moreover, we have seen an increased interest in F-commerce. To illustrate, many home chefs took to social media, opening Facebook pages to offer myriad delicacies. Even the concept of cloud kitchen became rather popular just in the last few months or so.

This empowerment came with smart phones and the Internet.

Now, the question of sustainability remains to be answered. Time shall tell. It may seem apparently simple to start a business online by just opening a Facebook page and not having to rent a brick-and-mortar store, but all the

challenges of running a business is still very much there — from production and management to logistics and supply chain.

But, rest assured, the pandemic has posed as an opportunity for e-commerce businesses, as more people are now open to the idea of buying things online. The acceptability of the notion of e-commerce has increased and is becoming a norm.

Hopefully, when the pandemic is over, we shall retain some of the lessons learnt and some of the habits that we formed. Oddly enough, this pandemic has given us a push towards a more digital and tech-friendly attitude!

For now, this week, Star Lifestyle looks at the world of e-commerce, exploring various brands, platforms, and services.

Happy and safe shopping!

— LS Desk

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Model: Shaker Bin Shams, Shahida Chowdhury, Aynaaz Shams, Golam Kiyaaan Wazir Chowdhury, Mrs Wali Khan

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রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য...

Evaly will make you a deal that you cannot refuse

The ambitious e-commerce platform provides a sleek online shopping experience.



It requires strenuous effort to create a website with a great user interface (UI). It takes time, investment, expertise, and dedication. Just think about the innumerable sites with unresponsive search functions or confusing layout that you come across on a regular basis.

It is certainly difficult to build a user friendly and highly functioning e-commerce site, given the multiplicity of factors that need to work together and the complexity involved in the maintenance of an ecosystem. It seems Evaly managed to achieve that, albeit shortcomings.

Emerged as one of the fastest growing online marketplaces in Bangladesh, the platform reportedly processed over 3.2 million orders in just two years since its inception. Equally impressive is the array and volume of sellers Evaly has amassed under its umbrella.

The platform currently features around 2,500 sellers and partners, covering the automobile and tech market to daily grocery shopping, and pretty much everything in between.

A fast desktop website

One of the design challenges big marketplace sites must tackle is how to present a home page that displays the site's range of products, yet keep it clutter-free. Evaly approached this by segmenting the main page into different categories, and each category showing the top choices under that category with the option to 'view all'.

It achieves good separation, but still looking somewhat busy. To be fair to them, it's not much unlike Amazon's homepage, which undoubtedly is seen as a benchmark in the industry and any e-commerce site worth its salt would take close note of Amazon's design language. Evaly does something with similar approach, but with more items shown, and it's a longer scroll down.

Under the sliding banners, which showcase the most exciting ongoing offers or campaigns, are featured campaigns and products, the user sees Evaly Express Shops, 'Shop by Brands', and 'Shop by Stores'. After these there are categories by product type arranged in alphabetic order, and so on.

The pages load quite quickly and the 'View All' option helps to browse through the different products available in each category. But the best feature is certainly a very fast and accurate search. Evaly further ensures a fast experience by clearly marking 'not available' products.

A Dedicated 'Deals' Section

No other e-commerce site in the country probably features a 'Deals' section as prominently as Evaly does. After all, the company's most unique attribute, so to speak, was its exclusive deals in addition offering certain discounts and cashback offers.

Housed under the tab 'Campaigns' the deal section is nearly as big as the home page, showcasing deals under different categories like 'Flash Hour', 'Hot Deal', 'Prime Deal', 'POD', 'Quick Deal', 'Friends Deal' also the peoples favorite 'Cyclone', 'Earthquake', 'Thunderstorm', etc. The deals sometime include both discounted pricing and cashback offers. For easier sorting the 'Campaign' section has three tabs: 'Suppliers', 'Brand', and 'Products'

A comfortable experience overall

Other than the UI experience, an e-commerce site is inevitably judged on four main criteria: how easy it is to find something, the range of products readily available on the site, clear and credible product descriptions, and verifiability through user ratings.

Evaly fulfills the first three criteria fully, and the last one is in a growing too. But the user rating issue is a problem of the Bangladeshi market, which all e-commerce sites have to endure equally. Without a larger market and a customer base experienced in buying products online, the user review feature cannot establish, unfortunately, making it one of the biggest voids in Bangladesh's budding e-commerce ecosystem.

Ultimately, what makes the Evaly experience comfortable is the wide range of choice available on the platform and relative ease of use. And if that's not quite enough, there's always the lure of a very prominent deals section. And that probably gives Evaly the biggest edge over its competitors.



The push for digitalization is becoming stronger with each passing day. Over-the-Internet services are cropping up, as brick and mortar stores are falling out of favour; consumers are becoming tech-literate and adjusting to the idea of ordering through the gadget they carry in their pockets instead of visiting a store. It is becoming the new normal, and many companies want to leverage that move.

ShareTrip, the leading online travel agency (OTA), is changing the manner in which travel bookings are made in the country. ShareTrip is set to make monumental changes in the way people vacations in the coming years.

It started as Travel Booking BD in 2014. After a round of investment and subsequent rebranding, they introduced a state-of-the-art app and website with a complete end-to-end travel solution for a more complete experience for travellers. The app is intuitive and responsive, which makes sense because of the dedicated in-house tech team developing and advancing their products and services as an ongoing practice.

Kashef Rahman, Founder and CEO said, "With the dream of a Digital Bangladesh we hope to bring more people online by showcasing meaningful services provided by ShareTrip that enrich their lives."

Pre-COVID scenario

In the pre-COVID days, ShareTrip operated with over 115 employees, including a fully-fledged tech team to innovate their app (Android and iOS) and web-based users. Within a year of its launch, the app had managed to gain the trust of more than 250,000 users. More than 600,000 had joined their Facebook page, following the updates, offers, and travel trends.

ShareTrip uses the world's largest tour providers, hotel distributors and flight distribution systems to give its users incredible flexibility in choosing their vacations by bringing over 2.7 million hotels and flights to every



THE LEADING ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCY

country available at the palm of their hands. Their deep integration into the travel industry ensures a seamless and consistent travel experience for their customers and plenty of options to choose from.

"It has become more important than ever to communicate and educate the public on the new travel paradigms that will ensure the safety of everyone involved. At ShareTrip, we have built dedicated resources and technological advancements, which are quite rare in the industry, to execute such requirements efficiently and effectively" said Sadia Haque, Co-founder and CCO, ShareTrip while highlighting their accomplishments so far.

One of the recent innovations from ShareTrip is the introduction of their B2B platform. In simple words, ShareTrip lets local travel agents use ShareTrip's inventory through this platform and sell travel services to their customer base. It truly is an exceptional example of using the Internet to empower people from various parts of the country.

The present time

The whole tourism industry has suffered incredible losses due to the pandemic. Many companies have shuttered in its wake, but ShareTrip has managed to weather the uncertain times. Despite the negative impacts on the tourism industry, ShareTrip leveraged a good hope of light from

domestic travel and tourism in Bangladesh.

With technical innovations, ShareTrip is striving to provide better services and facilities to its B2B agents, which is an alternate source of revenue for all its partners. This benefits the agents and their customers. This strategic plan has helped many businesses stay afloat during these troubling times while also raising the bar for convenience when it comes to travel within the country or abroad.

Since 1 June 2020, domestic airlines are operating over 15000 return flights per month with a very healthy above 85 percent cabin coverage. Biman Bangladesh is even introducing a new Sylhet-Cox's Bazar- Sylhet route from 12 November 2020. ShareTrip having close integration with the Airlines, worked hand in hand playing a key role in promoting domestic travel.

Now, air travel is safer than visiting a grocery store, shopping or dining out as per the International Air Transport Association (IATA), only 44 cases of COVID positive were found among 1.2 billion passengers. People are confident enough to fly again, just waiting for visa applications to open. Sohail Majid, CSO said, "The boom in domestic travel is a ray of hope as we await in the resumption of visas to all countries so the travel sector can return to normal"

Future ShareTrip plans

ShareTrip is excellent at assessing market trends and adapting accordingly. They have worked with industry leaders to bring tourism and aviation in Bangladesh back from the slump. It has set some lofty goals for themselves, but overcoming adversity

seems to be second nature to them.

ShareTrip has big plans for the industry. Their B2B platform helped local agents to serve a larger range of customers using ShareTrip's vast inventory. They aim to increase convenience for the agents by incorporating mobile financial services in the platform. They are about to bring a paradigm-shift that will aim to bring similar kinds of innovation for domestic hoteliers in the coming days, allowing them to easily manage their room inventory and publicize them for customers across the country and around the globe. ShareTrip hopes to raise the bar of hospitality across the board in the industry and across the country.



KASHEF RAHMAN
Founder and CEO

"With the dream of a Digital Bangladesh we hope to bring more people online by showcasing meaningful services provided by ShareTrip that enrich their lives"



SADIA HAQUE
Co-Founder & CCO

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SOHAIL MAJID
CSO

"The boom in domestic travel is a ray of hope as we await the resumption of visa to all countries so the travel sector can return to the normal."



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A stress free, digital lifestyle with NAGAD

Sharmin Sultana, a stay-at-home mother of three including a teenager, found herself frequently overwhelmed, having to look after the house while meeting the demands of her child. She was distressed with the constant juggling between essentials, causing her to suffer from bouts of anxiety and resentments.

This is when a friend suggested Sultana to open a Nagad account, which she claimed would make life stress-free, and Sultana never regrets a moment after that fateful rendezvous with her friend.

"It's as if I had the time to breathe again, because most of my duties were taken care of. No longer did I need to go to the bank to pay my children's tuition fees. It was all 'managed' by Nagad Wallet!

"Even our weekly groceries were directly delivered to my house thanks to Nagad's affiliation with numerous home delivery services; all I had to do was select everything online by the simple click of a button and that too, while running errands at home, the payments were also made via Nagad. My life had become so much easier. Even my children claim that I have become a better mum today after Nagad came into my life," revealed a beaming Sultana.

About Nagad

After beginning operations on 26 March 2019, Nagad, the fastest growing digital financial platform in Bangladesh, has been successful in progressing thousands of 'citizen lives' to the more efficient digital lifestyle.

Using Nagad's platform, users are able to meet their daily payment needs round the clock — for buying groceries from online and retail shops; paying bills for any e-shopping, depositing insurance premiums, to paying the internet's bills, utility bills, and much more.

To ensure these facilities, Nagad, the second largest digital financial service provider in the country, already partnered with more than 12 thousand merchants like Meena Bazar, Unimart, Pran-RFL, Walton Plaza, Transcom Electronics, Best Electronics, Bay Emporium, Wholesale Club by Jamuna Group, etc. All these corporate giants and FMCG moguls have online channels where Nagad is used as an essential disbursement partner.

Nagad has also set up affiliations with 500 online shopping platforms, all for the convenience of the avid shopper. The aforementioned mobile financial service provider is also quite popular in the F-Commerce industry of Bangladesh for its

seamless financial transaction services.

Unique Services

While all of the above may be quite routine for companies in a similar field, Nagad has kept itself distinctive with unique one-of-a-kind services that significantly benefit its clients.

The company has partnered with e-commerce delivery companies, whereby customers like Sultana can enjoy the cash-on delivery 'feel', as she uses the digital platform to settle payments. Paperfly Private Ltd., one of the leading online commerce delivery companies in the country, has partnered with Nagad to ensure online payments — only after delivery of the product. This condition had been incorporated to let Nagad customers experience the 'touch and feel' sentiment before actually making the purchase by paying the bills — so far, a unique service in

Bangladesh Post Office.

Mishuk also added, "To promote the digital business, we are also offering huge cash-back offers and other attractive facilities for both the buyer and the seller. To encourage digital purchase and uplift the overall digital culture of the nation, Nagad has recently adopted a tag line — Everything you need, will be done by Nagad."

How to avail services

Customer Onboarding is a very easy process with Nagad, as any interested person simply needs to dial *167# from their mobile phone to open an account. The rest of the process is easily explained after the initial connection is made.

Recent Achievements

Just before the Eid-ul-Azha in 2020, Nagad partnered with e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (e-CAB) to run the country's first ever online Qurbani Haat, where Nagad had been the disbursement partner. And users were able to pay their bills via Nagad, the one and only mobile financial service provider to provide this unique arrangement. During COVID-19, the concept of online Qurbani Haat, became an instant hit, because Nagad users got scope to purchase their

sacrificial animal, hire a butcher and even ensure meat delivery right from their very own safe sanctuary.

In the early days of COVID-19 when everything was shut down, the Bangladesh Post Office made arrangements to bring fruits and vegetables from different parts of the country and deliver it to online retail outlets like Chaldal and MeenaClick. Nagad was the payment partner in this very initiative — significantly contributing to the growth of the 'digital purchase' culture in Bangladesh.

With already set unique initiatives in the market, helping us every moment in our lives and more coming in the way, Nagad is certainly fixed on making lives easier for the Bangladeshi people. Maybe life in the future isn't that bad after all!

By Mehrub Mudbi Chowdhury

NAGAD FUN FACTS

— Nagad is offering the lowest rate in the market, Tk 9.99 for every Tk 1000 cash-out (transaction).

— To help businesses run smoothly and reduce the cost of doing business during the lockdown period, Nagad made an arrangement to reduce rates to only Tk 6 for every Tk 1000 cash-out, so far, the lowest-ever rate offered.

— With Nagad, users can send money to inmates in prison via the prison authority.

— Nagad has been the only mobile financial carrier in the market to offer digital payment for COVID-19 tests. Around 2.5 lakh COVID test payments were completed in 2020 via Nagad.

— During the lockdown period around 200 garments manufacturing companies paid their employees' salaries via Nagad.

— 11 social welfare organisations are collecting donations at the moment via the Nagad platform, including Bidyanketon.

— Nagad helps users to pay tuition fees for 24 registered schools, 30 colleges and 18 universities and currently in line to increase the list.

— Internet bills for certain companies can be made online via Nagad: Link3 Technologies, Amber IT, Carnival, KS Network, Triangle.

— All kinds of gas and electricity bills can be paid online via Nagad.

— Travel payments: Bangladesh Railway and few other long route travel partners are under the process of discussion. Several travel agencies already use the Nagad platform to sell their tickets.

— Nagad is en-route to incorporating small businesses and street vendors into its business model.

— All kinds of government disbursement requirements, including safety net allowances are currently performed via Nagad services.

Photo Courtesy: NAGAD



নগদ

ডাক বিভাগের ডিজিটাল লেনদেন

the country's online shopping arena.

COVID-19 and the future

Nagad witnessed a huge growth rate in the online shopping platform from April 2020 and onwards, while the country was still in a lockdown mode due to COVID-19.

In March, the transaction of Nagad in the online shopping territory was only a few crores, whereas it jumped to more than hundred crores between April and May. The growth in the number of transactions is still being maintained even as the lockdown is lifted.

"Our focus is to ensure a convenient digital life for the people of Bangladesh and hence, we are working hard on digitising the payment issues as it is one of the major components of the process," said Tanvir A Mishuk, Managing Director of Nagad, a state owned mobile financial service carrier, offering amenities in partnership with the

Aarong Dairy all the time

Aarong Dairy, a social enterprise of BRAC, not only offers a wide range of quality dairy products, but also contributes to social work and in elevating the living standard of farmers. With benevolent and humanitarian interests at heart, the primary business goal of the BRAC enterprise is to create social impact. The Aarong Dairy e-commerce platform is no different.



disappointments. Be it damage to the product's details like the product name or expiration date or batch number, these issues are handled with great importance.

Aarong Dairy holds social work and impact at its heart. Ingredients being sourced from various local sources, the organisation makes sure to give the right price for the farmers while providing veterinary service and providing training to the farmers as well. Furthermore, female farmers are always encouraged to keep moving forward and developing their skills.

Aarong Dairy presents a wide range of dairy products for fulfilling daily nutrition requirements and personal preferences while safeguarding product and service quality, time efficiency and maintaining all safety protocols through their website. With its philanthropic ambitions and goals, Aarong Dairy is the perfect e-commerce platform to care for one's own body and health and simultaneously, creating an impact on the community.

Aarong Dairy website: <https://shop.aarongdairy.net>

By Puja Sarkar
Photo Courtesy: Aarong Dairy



In March 2020, when the COVID-19 lockdown kept everyone indoors, the e-commerce platform was launched to ensure the availability of dairy products through safer measures. Keeping daily nutrition and the needs of the people in mind, the platform was created to give customers a smoother experience of shopping with Aarong Dairy.

Other than the timeless liquid milk, products starting from full cream powdered milk, ghee, butter, cheese, paneer, yoghurt, pasteurised flavoured drinks to low-fat dairy products and sweets like 'gulab jamun', the range of products offered is always expanding. The main ingredient, milk, is extracted from the direct source — dairy farmers. Not only does this ensure the purest ingredients going into their products, but also promises no impurities coming in contact with the ingredients.

One might wonder why to opt for shopping through the e-commerce platform as opposed to going to the physical stores which keep Aarong Dairy products. In physical stores, the freshness of products might be questionable, especially when it comes to packaged dairy goods. This tasteful freshness is guaranteed through the virtual platform as products are safely stored in temperature-controlled storages. Until the last moment of being delivered to one's doorstep, the products

are packed in thermal bags for delivery, making sure to retain all of its flavour. Added to that, the website makes it easier for one to scroll through the categories of products including low fat dairy items to find what is required easily and efficiently.

Aarong Dairy has adapted to today's situation with their e-commerce platform. Offers, bundles and discounts are given to incentivise customers to shop online. Furthermore, free delivery for anyone shopping for more than Tk 300!

The growing platform covers regions of Dhaka, Sylhet and Chattogram for home deliveries. Guaranteeing delivery within 48 hours, Aarong Dairy service providers

never cut down on proper hygiene, sanitisation and wearing masks to secure all safety measures. Payment is also made convenient with options of cash payment and contactless payment through debit and credit card, and mobile payment.

As a responsible and social organisation, Aarong Dairy cuts no corners in providing the best and in giving back to the community. Even then, with all measures taken, some elements remain out of their hands when it comes to regulating the products in stores. Through the e-commerce platform, Aarong Dairy is not only open to, but highly appreciates and motivates that customers report any





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Aadi: Your Fashion Rapture

The word e-commerce is thrown around way too often, but the fact remains; it is predicted that e-commerce sites will become the next big thing given how globalisation had taken the world by storm. We got a glimpse of exactly how important e-commerce has become and will continue to become during this pandemic, for obvious reasons.

Aadi is one of the recent ventures in e-commerce operating in Bangladesh. But let's be honest, you must be wondering why Aadi deserves the attention? What's so special about it?



leaves a huge gap in the economy. We aim to create a platform that can help reduce that gap," said Bijoy Lakshmi, Business Development Manager at Aadi.

Their business spread across 29 countries with the help of none other than DHL. Aadi is very strict about the quality of their products.

"After the sellers send their products to us, we put them through another quality check by our own QC team. This is to make sure that only quality products get through," added Bijoy Lakshmi, as she pointed out the data. With less than 1 percent product return, one can imagine that they have not compromised on quality.

It's difficult to find anyone who has not looked up at our national cricket team ardently; with admiration and thought of getting a jersey. Well, guess what? Aadi has partnered up with Sports & Sportz and has won the right to sell original kit of Bangladesh Cricket Team. This was immensely popular while their services were available across the border, and now, you too can acquire that red-green jersey that you desire so badly.

For the fashionistas, Aadi could be a delight. World renowned designer brands like Sarah Karim Couture is available on this website, along with the likes of Anikini, Yasmeen's and Jada by Mousumi Kabir. With more than 500 brands, including designer brands, it's cloud nine for fashion enthusiasts.

Aadi dreams of a day when Bangladesh will have its own brands like Gucci and Prada and when that day comes, they want to be there.

Last but not least, it's that time of year again when you go out to do some winter shopping. But this year, with the pandemic still with us, choose the safer option. Aadi has already started loading up their winter collection and more will follow very soon. Rather than going for foreign brands, choose Bangladeshi brands this year. You will be doing so much more than just buying a piece of clothing.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.aadi.com.bd/>



closed, it was a horror show on many levels. Aadi sought to meet this challenge within their faculty as much as possible and decided to launch its services in Bangladesh in July 2020, in hopes that it would help the local manufacturers.

Of course, there are many other e-commerce sites, but what truly separates Aadi from the rest is their objective and how they act on it. As mentioned earlier, it is a fashion-focused online marketplace

which promotes only Bangladeshi brands, artisans, and manufacturers. It is imperative to recognise the prospects it offers. For one thing, they aim to stay strictly focused on fashion. For another, and probably most important — it promotes only the local brands and artisans.

"Our products are rather common and popular abroad. We are making great and quality products, but we seldom get to sell them for the maximum retail price. This

Well, first of all, it's a cross border platform. Secondly, it's only for Bangladeshi brands.

The journey of Aadi began back in December of 2018, when they started by selling items of local brands in other countries. While this sounds like very casual information, digest it with proper gravity for there are barely any e-commerce initiatives that offer such a platform for the Bangladeshi artisans, manufacturers, and retailers.

After the pandemic hit, the shopping malls closed in a hurry and they stayed that way for quite a while. This created a vacuum in the market; both for the consumers as well as the sellers. With the garments



By Ashif Ahmed Rudro
Photo Courtesy: Aadi

PriyoShop: Organising commerce by empowering MSME with Technology & Brands

Manik Mia is a small shop owner in Panchagarh, the ones locally known as 'mudir dokan.' Lately, supplies to his shop have been very scarce. Being in the northern-most parts of the country, goods are not delivered over to Panchagarh regularly. In fact, even if regular necessities are delivered, there is little to no chance of more luxurious and fashionable lifestyle products being shipped to parts close to the border.



Upon inspecting with the people of his sub-district, Manik Mia found that while there is a distinct lack of supplies coming into the region, the amount of demand shown by the local residents has not waned. The local women have told him time and time again to 'bring some lipsticks' for them, while the men have shown desire for things like polo shirts and grooming products. However, it has not been easy for him to convince his suppliers to send higher-end items to

almost 300 kilometres away from the nearest major city.

And thus, while he wants to cater to his customers' necessities, he was unable to do so for a long time. That is, until PriyoShop came into the picture.

PriyoShop is Bangladesh's leading e-commerce platform, largest in terms of network and reach. It was founded with the aspirations of being able to send any product to any doorstep over the country's 148,000 square kilometres. Therefore, the moment Manik heard about PriyoShop, he decided to make use of it. And thankfully, he never had to look back since.

After Manik Mia downloaded the PriyoShop app, it was only a matter of a few steps before he became a PriyoShop Agent. And once he became an agent, he has been able to offer his local people any of the over 1 lakh products from over a thousand brands on PriyoShop's catalogue. He can now get lipsticks for the local women, grooming products for the local men, and so much more.

In fact, the people themselves can now order through the website, mobile app, Facebook page or even by phone call, and have any product delivered to Manik Mia's little shop, from where they can pick it up.

PriyoShop enables Manik Mia and more than 10,000 other agents like himself to thrive. They can earn a commission through every sale made on the platform, which is completely free for them to use. Moreover, through the same process, PriyoShop is also allowing each and every member of Bangladesh's 160 million population to be a part of the national e-commerce setup. Every person from every district can get their products delivered to them, as they please, thanks to PriyoShop.com.

PriyoShop was founded in 2013, with the small funds raised from tutoring students, and a big, big dream. In its eight years of operation, the company has served

more than a million customers, and have transformed into a household name.



Co-founder and CEO, Asikul Alam Khan, says, "The journey has not been easy. It was a matter of a big risk starting an e-commerce platform at a time when the majority of the country's people did not have a solid idea regarding online shopping. There was not even a method of performing deliveries when we started, as it goes without saying, not many companies were willing to work with e-commerce companies at the time. We had only begun to sell hand-crafted products made by young entrepreneurs, and as we started making progress, the influx of foreign companies into the local e-commerce market presented a big threat. However, through a lot of perseverance, and a lot of hard work, PriyoShop was able to capture the hearts of the people as a trusted online marketplace."

While the major online businesses of the country are focusing on urban growth, PriyoShop is doing the exact opposite, as stated Khan. By empowering small business owners in the country's rural areas, PriyoShop is being able to spread e-commerce services all throughout the nation. People who are not used to using the Internet, or even people who want to attain online services, but cannot find the courage for it, can now enjoy the beauty of online shopping. Besides, the various 'digital centres' spread throughout the country also offer PriyoShop services.

With the goal of increasing the number of agents all over the nation from 10,000 to 50,000 PriyoShop aims to digitalise every corner of Bangladesh. And with the promise of delivering the right product at the right time, the company believes by securing the trust of local consumers, PriyoShop can only move up and up.



DARE TO BE

realme



realme becomes a favourite choice of the youth

In recent times, the name realme is resonating among the youth. As a Tech-trendsetting brand, realme has gained huge popularity amongst the youth after launching globally in mid-2018.

The brand is constantly bringing robust performing smartphones with apt features which is attracting the youth to buy these smartphones. With trendy and vibrant designs, latest technological innovations these phones are becoming very popular among the youth and within just two years of the emergence of the brand, it has over 50 million users worldwide and has already reached in 61 markets across the globe.

The story of realme is very promising. One of the key reasons for which the youth instantly became a fan is the aim of the brand to solely focus on the necessity of the youth and launching its smartphones with powerful batteries to last all day, gaming processors, crystal clear cameras to take stunning photographs, large display for immersive viewing experience and state of the art hardware-software optimisation for smooth smartphone experience.

The smartphone also makes youth related contents and youth influencers to reach their target segment. In Bangladesh, their promotional contents are also very youth centric with young artists and the creative, who have their unique ways of expressing themselves. Renowned Bangladeshi film Actor, Arifin Shuvoo, is also the 'Face of realme' and has appeared in their youth engagement activities.

With a view to empower the youth of this country, in the first quarter of 2020, realme entered Bangladesh smartphone market and became an instant hit among the smartphone enthusiast community. Over the past months, realme has initiated a number



of sales on popular e-commerce sites and every time, allotted phones had been sold-out in just a few minutes. realme has also created numerous records on the way. Therefore, even Pickaboo has also endorsed the brand as "Most Favorite brand of the young in Pickaboo". Recently realme has become the Top 1 Brand in Mobile Category in Daraz by selling-out 10,000 units in less than a day.

According to the data of Counterpoint, realme within the first quarter of 2020 grew 1000 percent QoQ in Bangladesh. Also, at Quarter 3, 2020 according to Counterpoint Research, realme has become one of the top four mobile brands in Bangladesh. In Google Trends, it can also be seen that, there is a high search volume of realme smartphone in



Google from Bangladesh.

To facilitate the increasing needs of the ever-growing smartphone user community, realme launched numerous phones of its C series, number series and a number of Pro phones. All these phones were sold out like hotcakes in the first sales. Also, the performance of these phones was praised by the tech reviewers as well.

As a youth-centric brand, realme did not just stop at selling smartphones. Following an instinctive '1+4+N' strategy, with what realme wants to build an ecosystem with one smartphone as the core product, numerous new (N) AIoT products in 4 sections, the brand is launching various AIoT products at an affordable price range, so that the youngsters can flourish their creativity

with modern equipment. This process is also helping the nation towards the 'Digital Bangladesh' goal.

While the fan base grows, realme is also expanding its aftersales services across the country. With over 190 brand shops across Bangladesh, realme is reaching more customers every day.

On its way to become globally 7th on the smartphone market, realme has won numerous design awards for its innovative and eye-catching designs. World famous designers such as Naoto Fukasawa, José Lévy and others uplifted the designing game in smartphones and different models won prestigious awards including German Design Award, Red Dot Design Award and Award of Good Design Australia.

As a company, realme believes in the young generation will steer their own country in near future and to do such, they need to follow their dreams. Therefore, in Bangladesh, realme initiated 'Protyasha Puron' — an initiative to give the youngsters the chance to work towards their dreams. In regular intervals, realme also arranges interesting online competitions. To reach its growing customers base, recently realme has launched 'Ask realme' show where realme officials answer to the queries of its fans.

Throughout its journey, realme has created such a vibe that has been attracting the youth community towards its wings. The youth is always vibrant, live life fearlessly; and realme is facilitating them to do so. It is coming up with lots of initiatives to empower youth of the nation. With its 'Dare to Leap' spirit, realme has become the favourite choice of the youth of Bangladesh.

Photo Courtesy: realme

BANKING TIPS

TAHIA KHALIL
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Basics of e-Commerce

I want to start an e-commerce business. What are the things I should keep in mind, in terms of government regulations (if any), payment systems, and the platforms and business models out there?

In recent times, e-commerce business has gained a lot of popularity in Bangladesh. The term e-commerce refers to Internet-based buying and selling of goods and services. Since 2015 the number of e-commerce-based business are increasing. In Facebook alone there are 8000 e-commerce business pages, according to a 2017 report. Taka 10 billion worth of business takes place through e-commerce business.

Although most of them have emanated from Dhaka but recently more businesses as such are coming up from outside of Dhaka.

There are three kinds of e-commerce business, namely product oriented, digital product oriented and service oriented. The current market trend involves four kinds of e-commerce transactions in Bangladesh —

Business to business -B2B-Companies that offer office supplies, chemical, stationery, cleaning material, etc. to other companies.

Business to Consumer-B2C-This is the Business model where businesses are selling products to consumers. Consumers are increasingly buying products through online. In Bangladesh most payments are cash on delivery.

Consumer to Consumer-C2C-This refers to transactions involving consumer themselves. Company like bikroy.com

Business to Employee-B2E-There are number of companies which host as job websites in Bangladesh.

Digital Marketing recently has seen exponential growth in Bangladesh. This involves, through digital platforms, how to engage consumers and drive brand conversions.

On the onset every business in Bangladesh needs to have a Trade License and E-TIN set up. If the Business model is B2C then the it needs to set up as a proprietorship company or association. In Bangladesh typically an e-commerce business starts with a website or a social media page. The payments are made by cash on delivery system, for which Bkash, Nagad, Rocket, Nexus pay, etc. are used as vehicles. Businesses can opt for payment gateway systems like paying through credit or debit cards. In other parts of the world Paypal is quite popular. The typical documents for payment gateway system



involves having a Trade License, Bank Details, Owner's or several owners in case of company NID and photograph and website URL.

What are the challenges that are unique to online ventures and how do I overcome them?

Starting an e-commerce business sounds simple but it can produce challenges to the owner/owners.

In the inception of business, one has to definitively figure out what products to sell. Businesses like Amazon and AliExpress are selling all kinds of products. The greater the range better would be the selling point.

Getting the right customers can be daunting. Customers are nowadays smart; they go online to see review of the product and then they decide to buy. Customer loyalty therefore is hard to obtain. This is in terms of acquiring new customer and retaining an existing customer. Communication with customer through email and blog also being

transparent will help in maintaining customer loyalty.

The refund and return policies have to be robust. Businesses have to be prompt in these policies, doubting the customers intention will not help the business. The website or the social media page has to clearly and succinctly state these policies for establishing customer loyalty and them to buy the products.

Shipping of product can be difficult. For starters courier companies which offer competitive price can be taken on board. Looking into delivery method, timing and price would be prudent for

the business.

Security of Data is of utmost importance. Hackers would try to get customer information and hurt the business. In recent times Facebook has faced this. To regularly back up data will help if it's stolen.

Businesses who want to achieve growth must be built on a good technology foundation. They must choose the right shopping cart solution, inventory management software, email software, CRM systems, analytics and much more.

In the end any business online or otherwise cannot run without the right employee. While hiring, the right education, mindset, sense of responsibility should be taken into account of the staff being hired.

Acknowledgements

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#PRESS RELEASE



Shaheda Yesmin chosen as Country President for The World Association of Master Chefs — Bangladesh Chapter

Shaheda Yesmin is a culinary expert who has taken a different direction in the forward movement of Bangladeshi cuisine. However, her expertise in all things gastronomical is not limited to this.

For years, Shaheda Yesmin has penned the popular column, "Recipes from Siam." She is also managing Jewel's Kitchen, which is a privately run cooking school where many aspiring professional and non-professionals attend to enhance their knowledge of authentic Thai cuisine.

Recently, Yesmin has been chosen as the Country President for the WAMC's Bangladesh Chapter.

The World Association of Master Chefs was established and is continuously supported by fellow culinary masters and professional chefs from around the world who migrated to Australia in the early 1950s. The association strives to connect and combine the culinary art and food culture of the world.

Yesmin has spent decades travelling the world and learning different techniques and cuisines so she can deepen her understanding of food. Earlier this year, Shaheda Yesmin was named as an Official Executive Member of the World Association of Master Chefs (WAMC) and now, she leads the Bangladesh Chapter, hoping to bring forth Bangladeshi cuisine to a global platform.

“Evaly thrives to emerge akin to Amazon and Alibaba from Bangladesh”

Evaly chairman Shamima Nasrin tells the Daily Star that the company has successfully completed over 3.2 million unique order deliveries during its one-and-a-half-year of operation, and it is expected the numbers to only grow larger.

Evaly shook up the Bangladeshi e-commerce world when it emerged, seemingly out of nowhere, about two years ago. The online marketplace has come a long way since.

In this interview, the company chairman, Shamima Nasrin, talks about Evaly's journey to where it is now, its vision, and where it is headed, among a number of other related topics.



You prioritised Promotional Marketing a lot. Tell us about the thought process behind this promotion-heavy approach.

First, I would like to make a clarification that in my opinion, promotional marketing is one of the major core tasks for a business or organisation to progress. Continuous improvements in this segment has to reach optimum level of results. Gradually building it up as one of the core competency elements, we have garnered the results as expected.

The moment we (the founders) finalised the name of our new e-commerce platform back in the year 2018, we immediately started working on promotional activities. We already had OOH (Out of Home) brandings placed six months earlier to the official launch of Evaly. As OOH brandings are extremely location driven, we had an intelligent selection of advertisement spots which would bring the most significant impact to our strategic objective.

During this six months Evaly already had over 100 billboards and shop sign placements administered all over Bangladesh. Also, during this period, we explored different online and offline promotional activities to garner the attention of our future customers. The reason we stressed so much on promotion was to rapidly gain attention, market share and the trust of consumers once we started operating in the market.

The term 'Promotion' is the spark-plug in marketing mix. It refers to the activities and processes designed to change or reinforce behaviour and the ideas of the customers through communication. As you know, promotion has to be a gradual process and all the renowned companies do it through many different avenues and at all times, we are also exploring all new aspects of conventional and strategic promotional activities and so on.

Where does Evaly stand in the country's e-commerce landscape?

We should firstly be acquainted with the e-commerce industry abstracts in Bangladesh. The accumulated market share ensued from e-commerce activities can confidently be proposed as a large

one. All the credits in fostering the rapid growth of e-commerce industry is to the current Government of Bangladesh. Their major vision in the 'Charter of Change' was to reach a "Digital Bangladesh by the year 2021, revolutionising through Digital Technology Advancement. The Government in Bangladesh has focused on embracing advanced technology and cautious development to the ICT (Information & Communications Technology) sector aimed to establish a resourceful and technology dependent nation. Nationwide powerful Internet connectivity establishment, upgrading to high-speed 4G mobile bandwidth, technical advancement in telecommunications are some growth factors behind the e-commerce sector progression in Bangladesh.

Till date we have over 160 million Bangladeshis among whom near 100 million are Internet users with over 40 million are considered to own a smartphone, and all of these people can be considered as the target market of the e-commerce industry.

Even a nominal average monthly transaction by the nationwide Internet users, considering the amount of BDT 10,000, can generate a highly functioning market worth a million millions taka. A slice of 2 percent of the overall market can result into monthly 20 billion taka worth turnover nationally. As for Evaly, the monthly projected turnover is somewhere around 0.3 to 0.4 billion takas according to media reports. That bring us to owning 10 to 15 percent of the national e-commerce market share.

We currently have near 25,000 local organisations, conglomerates, multi-national companies and cottage, micro, small and medium enterprises (CMSME) who have chosen Evaly as their top preference for marketing and trading their goods and services. We are proud to serve over 4 million users registered just through the widespread Internet service and cellular GSM connectivity; who choose to place over 10,000 unique orders with thousands of product variation every day securing the item of their need.

Our continuous effort in developing the system resulted in exceeding \$240 million of gross merchandise volume in a short span of 18 months with over 3.2 million unique orders have been served to date. We are now working intensively towards achieving a unified vision of transforming Bangladesh to a progressive economy and contributing in the betterment of mankind.

Not limiting to specific boundaries, we created another segment dedicating towards the local basic commodity businesses with 2,500 registered business entities. We have 15,000 'Heroes' who as individuals are providing continuous uninterrupted delivery service besides our nationwide delivery partners.

Currently less than 2 percent of all retail trading take place online. But this is changing quickly. The upward trends indicate the drift is shifting toward e-commerce in a steady pace.

Recently, we got great response to our food delivery service venture "eFood", which we launched after the pandemic broke out. We currently hold the second place in the on-demand food delivery service industry. "eFood" is currently making delivery of 7,600 unique orders every day with an average order basket of 700 taka.

dustry.

What are the challenges in this sector?

From the day one till date, we are representing a developing industry where every moment is full of new challenges and responsibilities to take care of. We are awaiting to welcome the structured rules or laws for the e-commerce sector. Yes, e-commerce of Bangladesh is just a new born in the national context and taking care of it would lead to some miraculous results.

So, how much have you grown and how the pandemic is playing out in regards to the health of your business?

Globally, very recently, a drastic change has been observed in consumer behaviour which impacted as a fundamental shift in the business models adopted by e-commerce-based organisations worldwide; but in Bangladesh it remained the complete opposite. Yes, it definitely increased but considering the ration of conversion from conventional offline to shifting for online shopping was comparatively low.

As there were strict lockdown in countries abroad which restricted

customers to go out for shopping and e-commerce just arrived as a blessing to them, being the sole source of supply.

In our country it is a different synopsis. Highly appreciated were the immediate steps taken by the Government to mitigate the overall national crisis. Tax relief measures, reduction in ratio for banks, reduction of repo interest rates, and promotion of financial service and fast-track of economic stimulus measures were the major key decisions during the pandemic breakout which played their roles.

Keeping up with our innovative service integration, on March, we launched our one-of-a kind service of 'Evaly Express Shop'. The strong adaptability of Evaly with the shifting trends initiated such prompt planning and execution. This introduced the doorstep delivery service of essential commodities. Customers were and still are able to receive their ordered products starting from 1 to 36 hours. During the moment of crisis, Evaly wanted to utilise its resources for the greater interest of people by expanding the menu adding medicines from pharmacies, fresh vegetable, grocery, and fish and meat.

The Express segment grew rapidly and became top choice of customers due to the extended lockdown period. As mentioned earlier, we have close to 2,500 local basic commodity business entities connected to our platform. Highly reputed super-shops are also present at the Express segment of Evaly. We feel that the small and medium businesses are our backbone, as they are for the economy.

We believe in supporting local businesses. We happen to be one and we see value in treating everyone equally, as we do. We have big name brands as our partners and we have small and medium businesses as well.

Is it difficult to lead a tech company as a woman in 2020-Bangladesh?

I would say women are enjoying more freedom than any period in the past. Women are being successful in every sector. Today, Bangladesh is the second most gender equal country in Asia but the journey has not been smooth or easy for the women. From social taboos to conservative attitudes, they had to face a number of obstacles to arrive where they are today.

My heartfelt gratitude to our Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who considered women's empowerment as one of the "Special Initiatives" for the current Government; and in the year of 2011 PM Sheikh Hasina formulated and adopted the comprehensive and progressive "National Women Development Policy" too.

Personally, I've been very lucky to have my family's support. My husband, Mohammad Russell, who is the Founder Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer at Evaly, has always supported me. Honestly, I didn't face many challenges. But I understand that many women do.

What's ahead for Evaly?

First, I would like to share that I'm thankful for the group of 800 leading top talent with strong values, capability and a sense of ownership contributing tirelessly for Evaly. Strategy, organisation, system, talent and culture are key to the stable, quality growth of our business.

We already have acquired 10-15 percent of the e-commerce market share, where companies with years of experience are still far behind in the queue. The economic revolution that shaped China has Alibaba as one of the most crucial contributors of their economy.

We have managed to earn the trust of millions of customers who are generating orders worth millions of currencies. We are adopting new technologies every day and expanding the numbers of our diversified work force. Evaly thrives to emerge akin to Amazon and Alibaba from Bangladesh.

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