

Aarong COO talks on e-Commerce

SUPPLEMENT DESK

IN response to our query, Abdur Rouf, COO of Aarong, talks about the advent of e-Commerce in Bangladesh and in Aarong. He also gave some of his comments on the prospects of e-Commerce in general. Below is given excerpts of the discussion.

The beginning
The advent of e-Commerce: Starting in the year 2001 e-Commerce operated in a small span with the major players being the NRBs using the international payment gateway system and keeping the delivery limited within Bangladesh. The purchase took place abroad and it was delivered in Bangladesh. In the year 2011 Bangladesh Bank gave the initiated the facility of the payment gateway system and from then onward e-Commerce started in full swing with many local and NRB participants.

Prospects: The prospect of e-Commerce in Bangladesh is high as worldwide the growth in e-Commerce is approximately 25% and growth in retail is approximately 5%. e-Commerce has a high growth potential for the following factors

- Internet accessibility
- Increase in the number of smart phone users
- NRBs
- Traffic congestions
- Time constraint

Progress: The progress is so far is satisfactory, though there is scope and opportunities still unfulfilled. There is a gap between expectation from the customers end and traders end.

Customer satisfaction: It's good since the ones who purchase online have enough flexibility in terms of payment method and return and exchange policy. To some extent customers can be dissatisfied when they find the product differing from the communication. Since it is a new experience, customers can get over this if they change their mindset. The traders should try to minimize this gap through better and authentic communication.

Suggestions: This is the right time to focus on e-Commerce platform addressing the next generation.

- Advantages:**
- 75% of the total population is under 40 of which majority is young who are technologically savvy and ready to avail facilities e-Commerce provides.
 - Flexible payment gateway.
 - Shopping convenience for working people.
 - Large scale of options within clicks



- People are conscious about their life style
- People are conscious about time and money.
- NRBs' are provided with a chance to shop for their loved once back home.

Obstacles:

- Expensive internet
- Skeptic customers
- Lack of knowledge regarding internet usage and computer
- Lack of option for international payment gateway
- Delivery system hassles

Aarong experience: Our start up experience was great and we made the site as per international standard. The product range is large almost like that offered at our outlets. In terms of trade though it is behind our expectation but we are very much hoping that in the near future response would meet our expectation. Our customers are very much satisfied which amounts to 99% of customer satisfaction.

Currently our delivery is confined within Bangladesh but people living abroad can make a purchase but the product is delivered with the country. Within the 1st quarter of 2015 we expect to reach the global platform with our delivery services.

- Comments**
- Traders should be honest about their communication so that trust does not get dissolved away and the traders should deliver as per commitment.
 - The website of companies involved in e-Commerce business should be of international standard so that the customers are not disappointed finding significant differences with international websites. If the website meet international standard the customer conversion or switching would be easier.

Lamudi's innovative 'Dial For Home' campaign

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UNLIKE other marketplaces, Lamudi.com.bd provides house seekers a unique service which makes house hunting a fun. It has come one step forward from the e-commerce concept by introducing its out-of-the-box 'Dial For Home' service. Since inception of the service, house-seekers are no longer considering house hunting a stressful work.

Starting its operations in Bangladesh back in 2013, Lamudi has already established itself as the top real estate marketplace of the country for its quality and service.

Lamudi has come up with the Dial For Home concept as property-seekers are always pressed for time when looking for their ideal home. To simplify the process and take the stress out of house-hunting, the Lamudi business development team came up with the idea for Dial For Home. The service is an easy way to put house seekers directly in contact

with the agents, landlords and developers listing homes through Lamudi.

House-seekers are now calling the hotline number and explaining their requirements to a customer service representative of Lamudi, who cross references their needs with Lamudi's extensive property database.

A text message then be automatically gets distributed to landlords or developers who have properties matching the caller's requirements. This text message includes the house seeker's contact details so that the broker can get directly in touch with potential clients.

Advertisers then contact the house-seeker directly to explain their offers, allowing property hunters to easily select from a range of tailored listings on the go.

The key point on what Lamudi always emphasizes is quality. The top real estate marketplace takes pride that all entries in the list are genuine and no duplicate of properties can be found here. Each property goes through a three-layer quality screening before it gets posted on the site.

Alibaba frenzy hits New York Stock Exchange

SUPPLEMENT DESK

ALIBABA, the Chinese e-Commerce giant, has officially set the record for the biggest initial public offering ever, after its bankers on Friday increased the size of the deal by 15 percent to \$25 billion, two people with knowledge of the matter said on Monday. After Alibaba's shares leaped 38 percent on their first day of trading on Friday, the company's underwriters decided an option that allowed them to increase the deal size from its original \$21.8 billion.

Already, the New York I.P.O. ranked as the biggest on a stock market in the United States, having overtaken Visa's 2008 offering, which raised \$19.7 billion. the Alibaba deal broke the global I.P.O. record of \$22.1 billion. The total deal size rose to 368.1 million shares, up from 320.1

million shares previously. The additional shares were issued at the same price as the main offering: \$68 apiece. Alibaba itself sold 26.1 million additional new shares. Jack Ma, Alibaba's founder and executive chairman, sold 2.7 million additional shares; and Joe Tsai, the company's vice chairman, sold a further 902,782 shares.

The long-awaited public market debut of the Alibaba Group, the Chinese Internet titan, did not disappoint on Friday, eclipsing every other company that has started to sell stock so far this year.

After pricing at \$68 a share on Thursday night, Alibaba's shares opened sharply higher on Friday and finished the day up 38 percent, at \$93.89. Alibaba, which raised \$21.8 billion in its stock sale, instantly became one of the biggest publicly traded technology companies in the world.

Source: Alibaba Website.

SOHEL RANA

THE number of business houses in Bangladesh providing options to buy goods and services through using mobile phone set and computer is increasing to the delight of the customers. e-Commerce as it is being popularly called, is making life easier. Now a days, one can browse internet and place orders and get the goods delivered at your door steps. And one can sell things like car, motorcycle, cell phone, furniture etc., through using the same system. Just place a picture of the product, send it to one of the companies, and soon an eager customer will call. What can be more advantageous than this! e-Commerce sites in Bangladesh are trying their best to win trust of customers. Because of low overhead costs many e-Commerce websites offer wide variety of products which often are not found in regular markets. Let us take a look at some of the sites and see what their websites say:

Bikroy.com
"Bikroy.com is a website where you can buy and sell almost everything. The best deals are often done with people who live in your own city or on your own street, so on Bikroy.com it's easy to buy and sell locally. All you have to do is select your region. It's completely free to publish a classified ad on Bikroy.com, and it takes you less than 2 minutes. You can sign up for a free account and post ads easily every time. Or, if you don't want to register, just go to Post Your Ad, fill in the form, and you're done.

Bikroy.com has the widest selection of popular second hand items all over Bangladesh, which makes it easy to find exactly what you are looking for. So if you're looking for a car, mobile phone, house, computer or maybe a pet, you will find the best deal on Bikroy.com. Bikroy.com does not specialize in any specific category – here you can buy and sell items in more than 30 different categories. We also carefully review all ads that are being published, to make sure the quality is up to our standards."

Ekhanei.com
"The trusted choice for safe buying and selling in Bangladesh. We originally launched our service in 2006 as Cellbazaar as an innovative SMS service. Our website has been in operation since 2007. Our service allows anyone in Bangladesh to buy and sell in their region conveniently in a very simple manner without registration and complicated procedures. Ekhanei.com and Grameenphone Zero Rating It is completely free to post an ad on Ekhanei.com. Now browsing Ekhanei.com with Grameenphone mobile Internet is completely free. These are the conditions of the free browsing promotion:

- Customer needs to have an active Grameenphone data plan to avail free Ekhanei.com browsing
- Ekhanei.com internet browsing with an active

Our market players

Grameenphone data plan is free through all browsers

- Standard data charge will be applicable if customer attempts to visit other sites from Ekhanei.com
- Standard data charge will be applicable if customers login to their Ekhanei.com account with user name and password
- While browsing Ekhanei.com through Smartphone, data charge is completely FREE but Smartphone back end data consumption & charges will be applicable."

CellBazaar
"Cellbazaar is probably the safest and most convenient choice for selling and buying all across Bangladesh. Cellbazaar was launched in 2006 as an innovative SMS service and its ecommerce website has been in operation since 2007. The service allows anyone in Bangladesh to buy and sell in his or her region conveniently in a very simple manner without registration and complicated procedures. It is completely free to post an ad on Cellbazaar."

Rokomari
"Rokomari.com is a Bangladeshi Online Shopping Portal. Rokomari.com was launched in January 19, 2012 as an online bookstore and it will soon start selling eBook, Mobile Phones, computers and accessories, cameras, consumer electronics, CDs/DVDs, paintings, tickets, handicrafts, home appliances, apparels, gift items, food, toys and directly imported goods. Rokomari.com is an ecommerce venture of Onnorokom Web Services Ltd, a sister concern of Onnorokom Group. Rokomari has introduced some path-breaking services like Cash on Delivery all around Bangladesh, Order by Phone, Minimal shipping charge (Only 30 Taka shipping cost on any amount of purchases), Discount (up to 20% off on every purchase of books), 30 Day Replacement Policy. They want to deliver WOW through our Customer Service."

ClickBD
"ClickBD.com started its operations in April 14, 2005 as the first e-Commerce portal in Bangladesh. ClickBD is an online marketplace where anyone can sell or buy almost anything. The site has a strong and growing community of users who trade in a wide range of item categories including Electronics, Cameras, Phones, Computers, CDs, Mobiles, Fashion Accessories, Music, and Travel. Through a world-class technology infrastructure ClickBD enables & simplifies e-Commerce for Bangladesh's ever expanding online community."

Boi Mela
"Boi Mela is an online Book store of Bangla Books. For the past 3 years, Boi Mela has closely worked with nation's leading publications to build the web's largest catalog of Bangla books. The website is designed with convenient search and browsing features so you can locate a book using the publisher, author, category or part of its title. Boi Mela has partnered with the major publications to provide Bangladeshi's living abroad with a single place to shop. Boi Mela holds exclusive authority of selling books online from most major publications."

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