

# DIGITAL FRONTIERS, BREAKING BARRIERS



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## The social impact of technology

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Those of us who have been keeping up with the tech scene in major countries like USA, know the frustration associated with the snail-pace at which our country adopts technology. We were a few years late before 3G became mainstream, and we still don't have 4G yet. However, recent trends, like the popu-

larisation of various ride-sharing apps, have hinted towards positive things to come in the future. Once regarded as a hobby for nerds or geeks, mass perception of technology in Bangladesh has changed rapidly over

the course of the last few years. People are realising that it is paramount for us to keep up with technology. Few even have the foresight to develop their own breakthrough products or services. However, this perception change was because people actually experienced the positive social impacts of technology.

For starters, let's take our traffic congestion situation as an example.

still relying on outdated methods. In Japan, the Universal Traffic Management System (UTMS) helps alleviate the insane rush hour traffic jams. UTMS is a comprehensive project that includes an integrated traffic control system, advanced mobile information system, mobile operation control system, dynamic route guidance system, public transportation priority system

20,000 crores every year. That number has undoubtedly gone up and it is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed.

No doubt we've heard of Apple Pay, Google Wallet, Samsung Pay and the like. However, we do not have any of those financial services in Bangladesh. Sure, we have bKash but that is still a far cry from what the other services offer. Apple Pay involves your bank accounts and a single Apple account tied to your iPhone. You can simply tap the amount you want to pay and interact with the Apple Pay machine and it will instantly charge the money from your bank account. Apple Pay also lets you send money through iMessages. Imagine how convenient it would be to pay for so many things in the various shopping pages on Facebook. Unfortunately, we would be venturing into wishful thinking if we hope that we'll get to avail these mobile payment systems in Bangladesh soon. It is such a shame really, because our traditional payment methods have already gotten outdated as people realised that adding more steps to a transaction, thereby making purchases more difficult, actually discourages spending. The e-commerce scene is doing fairly well for itself in Bangladesh. It could do so much better with these methods.

Of course, we have to talk about the impact of social media. We are connected with all our friends and family on Facebook, Snapchat, or Instagram. However, these platforms have transcended their original purpose of connecting your loved ones with you. They have become important platforms for businesses, discourse, finding events, work, etc. People can raise awareness regarding several issues that require public attention. Through social media,

many noble causes that would otherwise go unnoticed garnered massive support from the public. Through Snapchat and Instagram, many businesses engage in content marketing that adds value to their brand image. However, it is not all rosy on the social media end.

Many people reported that they have been subject to anxiety from just browsing Facebook. But why does this happen? A lot of us portray our lives as being better than it actually is. Our posts on social media are not a true reflection of how we actually are doing. Thus a lot of the times, it boils down to a simple game of who can put up the best external cover. This triggers the comparison game that most of us can't help but do. "That friend got a high-paying job while I am still job-hunting," thoughts like these are extremely harmful for our mental health and Facebook sometimes unfortunately acts as the catalyst for those. Another thing to note is that, social media can be one of the most toxic places ever. It is surprisingly easy to create an echo chamber in the form of Groups where there will always be people who agree with one another without any hindrances. If they find something or someone they do not like, they will collectively bombard said thing or person with hate messages.

Technology has immense potential to be one of biggest blessings for our country. However, we must look into more responsible ways of using it otherwise we will not reap the benefits and add more to our growing list of problems.

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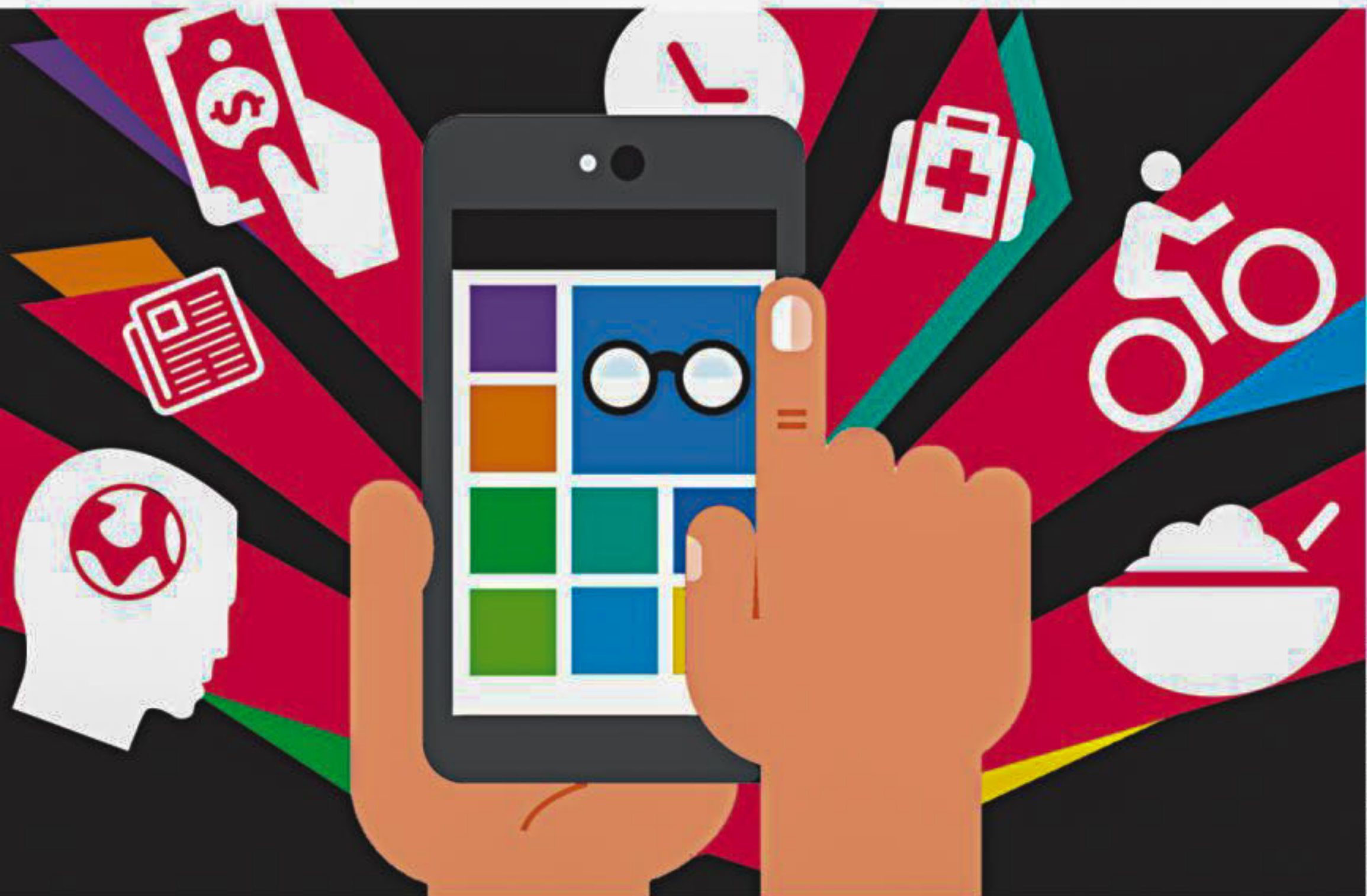


ILLUSTRATION: SHAER REAZ

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Manual control of intersections has proved itself time and again to be an ineffective strategy for traffic management. Where other countries are investing in smart traffic management systems based around automation, we are

and environment protection management system. Imagine what a boon such a system would be for the streets of Dhaka. On September 25, 2016, The Daily Star reported that the traffic in Dhaka amounts to losses of BDT



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