

THE DEFINITIVE
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

SHOUT

DHAKA THURSDAY MARCH 10, 2022, FALGUN 25, 1428 BS

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THE VULTURES AMONG US
PG 3

KNOW THIS BEFORE
GETTING A PIERCING

PG 6



WHAT WOMEN WEAR

THE IMPACTS OF CLOTHING RESTRICTIONS ON YOUNG WOMEN



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

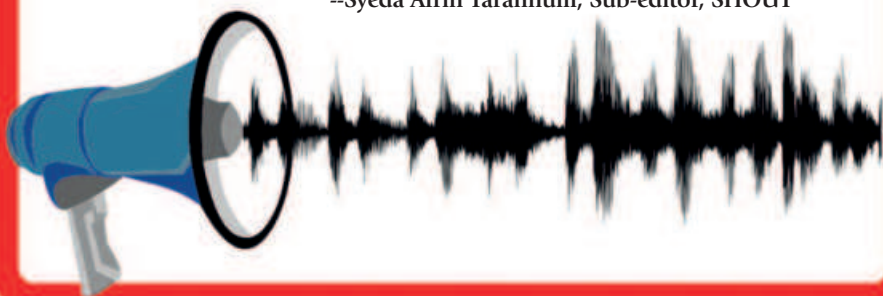
EDITORIAL

People who know me and have been around me, have called me belligerent. I take immense pride in that. I like speaking out about things that don't sit well with me. I find peace in knowing that I've done something about whatever issue is on my mind. However, sometimes this voice I rely so heavily on, decides to betray me.

The past week has not been nice to me, I found myself completely spent and exhausted every night when I went to bed. One of these days as I walked out of the grocery store, and into a crowded footpath with at least a dozen bags, desperately trying to spot my car, I suddenly felt a warm hand sliding its way down my lower back. This is the moment my voice decided to betray me once again, and I was left dumbfounded, with my hands blocked and no space to take a step in any direction.

This has happened before, and not just with me unfortunately. I hope my voice, some other day perhaps, decides to show me a little more loyalty.

--Syeda Afrin Tarannum, Sub-editor, SHOUT



PLAYWATCH

YOUTUBE



Channels that analyse less talked about cinema

MATILDA

The internet is saturated with content offering varied commentary on the same Western filmmakers like Kubrick, Andersen, Tarantino, etc. The common exception has been Bong Joon-Ho and his movie *Parasite*, which spawned a boatload of videos analysing the most minute scenes in the movie. However, this interest did not spread beyond the South Korean director or the particular film.

While content based on the works of the aforementioned directors are highly enjoyable, I often find myself wanting to hear about films and filmmakers less spoken of.

So, here are a few suggestions for those who would prefer some variety.

ACCENTED CINEMA

This channel has the stated aim of looking at foreign movies, one of the few channels on YouTube to do so. While there are videos here on well-known big-budget movies like *Mulan* and *Kung Fu Panda*, most of the videos focus on cinema from places that don't usually dominate the world market for films, in particular Chinese cinema.

From looking at the special ways a particular actor acts to social issues and relationships between human beings as shown in films, this channel provides much more than unique recommendations for new movies to watch. A great place to start might be the videos "When Hollywood Speaks Chinese, I Cringe" and "S. Korea Used To Make Awful Movies".

CINEMA BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT
Did you ever think that even the songs and dances in Hindi movies you grew up watching could be critically analysed,

but there was no place or person doing that? This channel fills that gap, discussing not just Hindi movies but also ones produced in the West, resulting in a channel where comparisons can be made while the viewer learns about concepts such as *mise en scene* through Ranbir Kapoor's *Rockstar*.

Run by a professional cinematographer, the channel also contains conversations with Indian film critics and even an art historian who discusses storytelling.

While the channel is no longer active owing to other work commitments of the creator, viewers are sure to find incisive commentary on Hindi films they may have consumed without much thought.

SPIKIMA MOVIES

Spikima Movies is different in that it chooses movies that might be more well-known such as *Vivarium* and *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* while also not being limited to films of a specific region, thus spanning cinema from Europe, East Asia, and even Latin America.

A look at a video about just the colours in *Squid Game* shows the unique perspectives and detailed information this creator brings. Often speaking of several films together, he speaks of the most minuscule aspects of movies like the visual cues used, the speed at which the story unfolds, camera movements, motifs, symbols, names, and much more.

Additionally, alongside discourses on specific films and shows, there are also videos analysing the works of various directors, ranging from Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-wai to Austrian director Michael Haneke.



TITLE OF YOUR MIXTAPE

A

Maya Cycle
Meghdol

Get Lucky
Daft Punk

Chaka
Anupam Roy

A Pearl
Mitski

B

All Of Me Wants All Of You
Sufjan Stevens

Khoj
Prayer Hall

Swan Song
Lana Del Rey

Like You Do
Joji

Email us at shoutds@gmail.com
with feedback, comments, and reader
submissions within 500 words.



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

How many streaming services are too many?

MYNUL KARIM

Online content consumption is at an all-time high, a large portion of which can be attributed to the widespread popularity of paid online streaming platforms. These services have developed a very lucrative form of monetisation through tiered and bundled subscriptions at specific price points. Such a model has allowed the pioneers of content streaming like Netflix and Hulu to expand at quite a large scale.

However, with an increasing number of streaming services entering the market, the question arises if the abundance of options for these streaming platforms is really beneficial for consumers.

Methods of media consumption were limited before the advent of online streaming services. Cable TV would stream according to their own schedule. Such inflexibility, plus the bombardment of commercials despite already charging consumers a subscription fee, highlights some of TV's major shortcomings.

Services like Netflix have completely changed the landscape by letting viewers watch their desired content whenever they want to while only charging a much cheaper timed subscription fee – in essence implementing the best of both worlds.

In almost all sectors of the industry, the availability to choose from multiple options gives more power to the consumers, and creates more pressure on the service providers to retain their customers through competitiveness and innovation. A similar trend can be seen in the field of content streaming where the platforms are always adding more and

more content to their libraries, streamlining the viewing experience, providing subtitles in multiple languages and supporting more sophisticated codec and certifications like lossless audio, HDR 10, or Dolby Atmos.

On the contrary, due to stiff competition, these services are also executing other try hard means of distinguishing themselves. For example, Netflix and HBO Max are always overcrowding their media library with their exclusive shows and movies. Meanwhile, Disney+ is removing their older content from other platforms to maintain exclusivity.

In other cases, it can be seen that some seasons of a show can be found on one platform, whereas other seasons of the same show are only available on a different platform. Not every title is available on every region of the same streaming service either.

As these measures end up hindering the overall user experience, consumers are forced to subscribe to multiple streaming services at a time to minimise their compromises. Therefore, the value proposition is thrown out of the window, and many consumers end up either abandoning their desire of consumption or resorting to piracy.

A lack of competition can lead to platforms ceasing their efforts in elevating the consumer experience and introducing unjustified price hikes, while having too many competitors to choose from leaves the consumer in an odd position when they cannot find the specific content they want from a particular platform.

There is no straightforward solution to this dilemma, but if things keep going this way, it may not be economically viable for many consumers to keep enjoying media like they used to.

Mynul thinks that if you expect disappointment, then you can never really be disappointed. Remind him that he copied the quote from NWH at smmynulkarim@gmail.com



DESIGN: ORCHID CHAKMA

The vultures among us

Capitalising on our obsession with public universities

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

If you are in college and are fairly active on Facebook, you've probably come across videos of online tutors motivating students to work harder by telling them exaggerated tales of their own. Boasting about not sleeping for 20 hours at a stretch or fainting on the table — instances that should be condemned, to begin with, are misused as tools of inspiration. And unfortunately, such toxicity sells.

Our educational approach infamously focuses on institutions rather than personal interests or aspirations. We are obsessed with getting into the most reputed engineering universities or medical schools rather than pursuing engineering or medicine as a field of interest. This obnoxious fixation gives a particular fraction of tutors the perfect opportunity to feast on our students' insecurities and vulnerabilities.

The culture of entrance exams in our country is based on fear and paranoia. Most college students are under the misconception that getting into the most reputed university is naturally going to sort out their future. While it does push an aspirant to work harder, it also puts colossal pressure on them. Panic is created fearing a plausible future where he doesn't get into his desired university. The revolting outlook that our society holds for anything less than engineering or medicine only adds to the horror.

A section of educators capitalises on this insecurity by instigating fear and hysteria into their students' mindsets. Getting sick while studying, not having enough time to eat or sleep properly, studying for unimaginable hours at a stretch — they use these instances of

unhealthy obsession to give the students a false idea about the intensity required for their definition of success. They are made to believe that anything less than this unattainable parameter will only result in failure.

Another recurring pattern in their toxic method is the repetitive mention of a dystopian future that includes getting into a private university. The constant derogatory comments about the consequences of not getting into their desired university make students paranoid enough to put their obsession before their physical and mental well-being. They're manipulated into pushing themselves to any extent, chasing goals that are beyond their capabilities or desire.

With unreal expectations set, after a student works hard day after day, only to fall behind his schedule, get poor marks in mocks, and see his classmates excel with ease, he gets chronically depressed. In a generation that already struggles in dealing with failure, these tutors feast on this very fear and bully them beforehand for something they haven't failed at yet.

What's important is to identify the differences in our goals, efficiencies and capabilities. There can never be a universal guide to your preparation routine. As certain coaching centres, teaching platforms and educators continue to capitalise on your vulnerability, it's crucial that you be the one in control.

The university entrance exams in Bangladesh are unnerving, inefficient and tiring. The last thing you need is an egomaniac bullying you into depression and making some money out of it in the process.

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com

A case for open communication about dating

NUZHAT HASSAN CHOWDHURY

Bangladesh still has a conservative view on dating. Most parents have a very straightforward stance on this topic. "Don't do it," they say. This anti-dating mindset means young people usually cannot turn to their parents for relationship advice and are left to figure it out on their own.

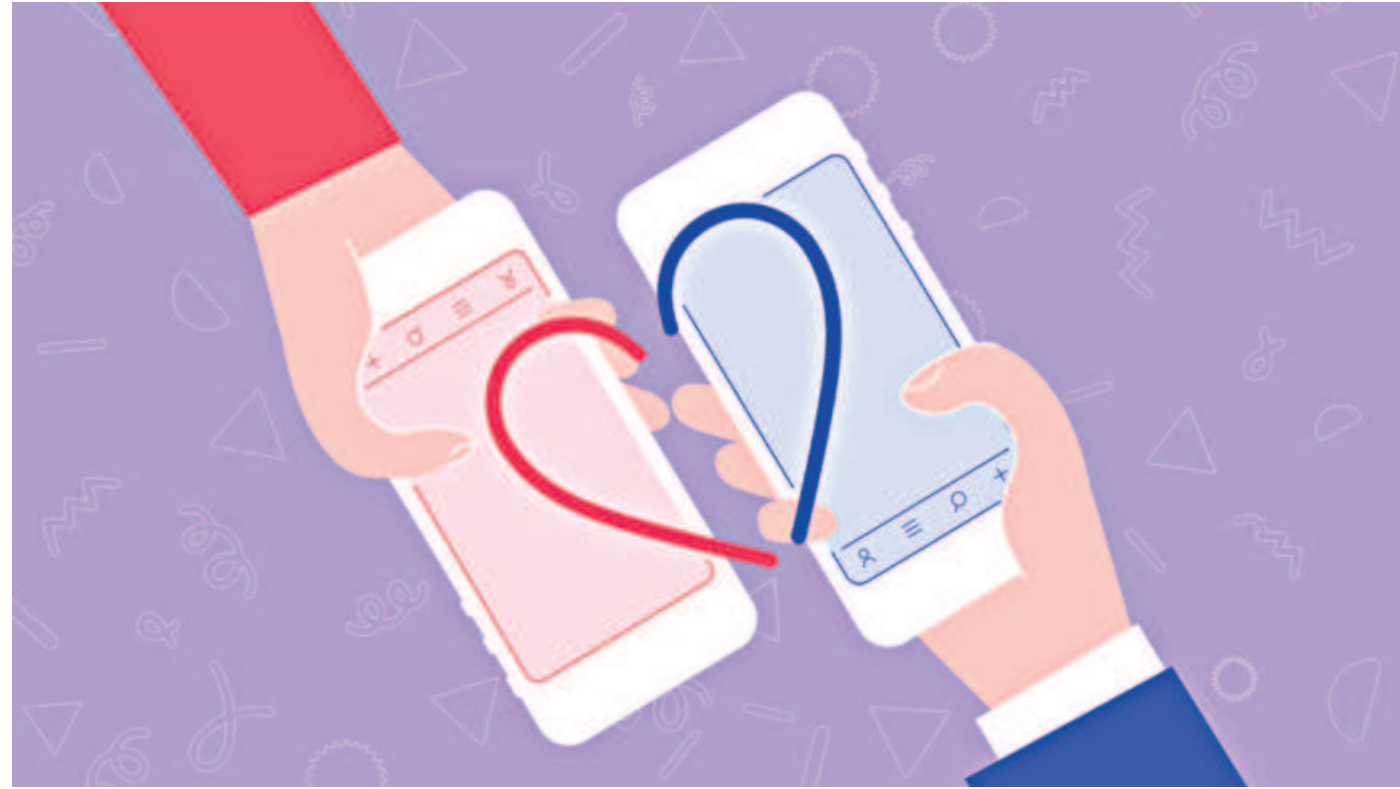
I have come across many posts on social media where people share their bad dating experiences. Although everyone has a fair share of those, some of them made me feel genuinely curious as to how the person posting it failed to see the red flags, and how someone could treat their partner so poorly.

However, most adolescents get confused about what to expect out of romantic relationships since they do not receive proper guidance. This may lead to them struggling to figure out how they should be treated, or how they should treat their partner.

The problem with trying to figure this out all on one's own is the possibility of relying on the wrong sources. Young people may consciously or subconsciously rely on movies and TV shows to form their expectations. The issue with this approach is that movies and TV shows are usually unrealistic and primarily made to entertain, not to impart wisdom.

Additionally, many movies and TV shows glorify unhealthy approaches to dating. With the right background music and set up, it is fairly easy to convince young audiences that the portrayal of a relationship in the movie is romantic rather than toxic.

The truth is, although most people tend to make dating mistakes, a part of why it is so common in Bangladesh is probably because of the taboo surrounding it. Adolescents dating their peers is not uncommon these days, however, most of them are forced to step into it cluelessly, as parents seldom agree to



guide their kids through it due to their disapproval of it.

Although learning from experience can teach valuable lessons, many parts of our personalities come to play when pursuing a romantic interest. Dating advice is just not advice on what to do in a certain scenario, it is also about analysing it. Many things contribute to the way we handle these situations, including, prior experi-

ence, our level of self-esteem, maturity etc. Open communication on healthy approaches to relationships can allow young people to learn about these factors with ease. This can also build trust between parents and their children, as well as teach the latter that they can turn to their parents for help, instead of feeling the need to keep it a secret.

Many parents are still hesitant about

accepting the new norm, but those who have accepted it, can stay involved in their children's personal lives and make sure they can avoid sour experiences or avoid becoming the cause of somebody else's sour experience.

Nuzhat zones out every ten minutes. Tell her to snap out of it at nuzhatchowdhury07@gmail.com

Who's playing marbles at night?

FARNAZ FAWAD HASAN

It was the dead of the night. The sun had already melted down into inky blackness. As I went to sleep armouring myself from the buzz of the blood-sucking mosquitoes, something very sinister registered into my ears.

No, it wasn't the ominous ticking of the hands of the wall clock that sounded like a warning that an explosive is about to go off, rather some strange noises from my neighbours upstairs. Every other day, I hear my neighbour's children playing marbles on the floor right above mine. On top of that, they never seem to be satisfied with their furniture arrangement. The furniture-dragging noises surround me every time I close my eyes. What have they been up to? Unless...

If you have ever lived in an apartment in Bangladesh, you have most certainly heard these noises. The sounds of doors slamming, chairs shifting, and marbles dropping are so ubiquitous in the commotion around us that we don't stop to think



where they are coming from.

Yes, it might have crossed your mind whether your house is haunted by the spirits of playful evil kids trying to get your attention. Though it may be a bit of a stretch, what else could it be?

The answer to this question is pretty simple. It is not all in your head, rather in your pipes! Hydraulic shock, also known as "water

hammer", is a common occurrence in piping systems.

When the water flow inside the pipes is quickly changed or interrupted, a surge of pressure ensues, which hits the pipe walls. This produces noises by causing the walls of the pipes to vibrate. When you flush the toilet or turn off your tap abruptly, the water pressure changes and may

result in hydraulic shock. The hammering and pounding noises from the pipes filtered through the cold, hard concrete may be mistaken for marbles rolling or furniture dragging.

Another apparent reason behind these clanks and bangs could be the air trapped inside the pipes. When these soapy air bubbles pop, they produce an echo that can imitate falling marbles. It takes a while for the water pressure inside the pipes to stabilise. So, the noise may be prolonged.

Furthermore, it might also be that the concrete and pipes in our buildings expand and shrink in summer and winter, which can give rise to such sounds. At night, the white noise around us dims down to some extent. As a result, these additional noises become more pronounced and eerie.

Sound travels, and just like ghosts, they deceive you into thinking that your upstairs' neighbours have gone into a frenzy. That's why, even if you live on the topmost floor, these "supernatural" sounds won't give you a break.

But then again, we can't fully rule out the possibility of it being paranormal, can we?

Farnaz Fawad Hasan is a disintegrating pool noodle wanting to stay afloat. Reach her at farnazfawadhasan@gmail.com

WHAT WOMEN WEAR

The impacts of clothing restrictions on young women

AMRIN TASNIM RAFA

One would think that a threat to our existence, for example, climate change, would bring us together. Needless to say, it didn't. That doesn't mean there's nothing that people care deeply and passionately about.

The trick to finding them is to think of things that should actually be nobody's business but your own. Such as what clothing one wears as a woman.

Fellow females will resonate with me on how buying and wearing clothes is rarely as simple as buying and wearing what you like. It's actually quite a burden, since one has to appease the subjective tastes and views of every single person who'll see you wearing them. They'll have an opinion, and many won't keep it to themselves. We could choose to not care and do as we please, but it's not that simple. It's a deep-rooted problem.

Not to sound like a broken record but, it starts at home. In Bangladesh, the first and most prominent restriction to the range of women's clothing is the idea of modesty. What's problematic about this is when and how this idea is introduced to young, impressionable girls. It's usually when they start experiencing puberty – an inherently sensitive time. When struggling to adjust to the sudden changes in their body, they often feel a sense of urgency coming from older family members that say they have something shameful to hide.

Aside from all the confusion, frustration, sudden pain and gore, young girls also find the time to start exploring who they are and how they'd like to express themselves. For many, this includes a newfound interest in their appearance and fashion.

Today, fashion trends are global. We are exposed to international pop culture, and presently, local media follows global fashion trends as well. But families and societies restrict us from being able to participate ourselves. Being able to wear what we feel confident in brings forth the satisfaction of being able to express ourselves and changes how we approach life and work.

Grade 11 student of European Standard School Fairooj Rushmila Suhita's experience tells us how important it is to today's youth to have control over their choice of attire.

"Having the liberty to choose my clothes makes me feel assured about my identity and self-concept. When I am forced to wear clothes that don't align with my own fashion sense, not only do I feel violated but also that my body isn't worthy of being seen and appreciated. It affects how I carry myself back home to feel horrible when I don't feel pretty enough in the pictures or can't recognise myself because the clothes don't resonate with me," Fairooj shares.

It is true that we are a long way away from an accepting society where we can all be ourselves. But this is very rarely, if ever, constructively explained to young girls. The usual approach is to shame them for their choices. This may include implications of how wanting to dress a certain way is "inappropriate" or attention seeking.

When young girls and women do make the choice to dress modestly or based on their personal and/or religious values, that too comes with barriers, as illustrated by Jarin Tasnim Raka's experience, who is a Master's student at North South University.

"A few months into university, I made the choice to wear the hijab. Immediately, I started receiving unexpected comments. A 'friend' asked if this was a trick to make my face look thinner, another asked if I was wearing 'fashion hijabs' to participate in a trend. Some people asked questions like if I was wearing the hijab, why I was at a concert, or why I wore makeup. At times, my family asked me to take my hijab off on our way to

a dawat because it didn't align with the values of the people we were visiting and I apparently had to adhere to theirs," recalls Jarin.

Strangers' concern over clothing is a source of inconvenience in the daily lives of Bangladeshi women. Jarin shared an instance where, during the act of crossing a road, someone called for her attention and asked her to fix her orna. Women on a daily basis are informed of slip-ups in their clothing such as visible straps in very accusatory tones, which I believe is unnecessary and done just for the sake of doing so.

When left to feel ashamed of their choices, young girls often start believing there's something wrong with their bodies, which is why they must always be carefully concealed. My mother's urgency to hide my development made me ashamed of my body when I was going through puberty.

"There were times I was slut-shamed by teachers for not wearing an orna at school even though I was wearing extremely loose kameez. The idea of covering up my chest made me feel like my growth was something to hide, so I would slouch in order for my clothes to seem looser. This practice led to posture issues that made me look and feel underconfident in public spaces," shares Rasmisa Haque*, a grade 12 student of Vigarunnisa Noon School and College.

The sheer emphasis on how women dress contributes to their safety, or more frankly the idea that they need to dress a certain way not to be sexually harassed is a problematic narrative in and of itself. Exposure to such narrative, coming especially from her close ones, demoralises the woman herself.

It's natural to internalise the values of the people around you when you're exposed to them from a young age. In this context, women start to feel as if it is somehow their responsibility to make sure they aren't harassed. In the all too common scenario that she is, she may blame herself for it, because she had failed to dress or act a certain way.

Restrictions fall even heavier on women who do not have the much glorified, conventionally "beautiful", thin body type. When they exercise their right to

dress how they feel confident, often they are asked not to wear certain clothes because they would look "provocative" or "it wouldn't suit them as it does thinner girls."

It's hard enough to be confident and feel beautiful when all around you, beauty is described to be something you're not.

Nayara Noor, a student of Brac University, believes that parental regard is crucial for young girls to build a strong base that upholds lifelong self-confidence. She says, "Parents are the ones you seek the most validation from as a young child. Constantly being told that nothing you wear makes you look good takes a huge toll on you where you constantly tear down your own appearance and hence struggle with low self-esteem."

"The problem with telling people it's 'for their safety' is that we're having conversations with the wrong group of people. If you're not safe wearing certain clothes then you shouldn't be policed, the person who is the threat should be policed. Instead of shaming their daughters, parents should teach their sons. This is a problem that's beyond bad parenting or sexism, it feeds into more serious issues like rape culture and victim-blaming," Nayara adds.

Moreover, little things about how young girls are brought up can have lifelong negative impacts on their mental health and sense of self-worth.

The idea that it is women who "provoke" or "seduce" to warrant inappropriate behaviour from men, makes allowances for society to objectify and view a woman differently according to how she dresses, implying once again that a woman's worth is determined by her appearance, and not that she too, is human.

People are often adamant that women must always dress in cultural attire. "Western clothing" and "immodest/inappropriate clothing" are terms used interchangeably. The same is not expected from men, in fact, the norm for men's casual wear is Western clothing. A bride donning a gown at her wedding is sure to face controversy from her relatives and/or on social media, while a suit is perfectly acceptable for the groom. Why are women expected to carry culture on their backs with their clothing?

Presently, it's a common practice for women to defy and rebel against said restrictions and norms and prioritise their own choices. As much as we want to fight on, it is quite tiring to keep up, as apparent from Ramisa's experience, "As I got older, I started standing up for my own clothing choices. This resulted in multiple feuds with my family. It was extremely draining to constantly fight with the people who decide everything about my life, but it's something I have to keep on doing for myself."

In reality, trying to defy these restrictions is seldom a pleasant experience. It is hard to feel confident when relatives, teachers, elders in general jab at your attire and shame you for it.

It is a big step for most girls to try to heal from the damage done to their self-esteem from years of being told by media and society that she cannot dress in certain ways or deserve to be fashionable. When her

attempts to overcome this is squashed with pointless restrictions, displays of negative judgment, and narrow-minded accusatory comments, we have all failed women as a society.

Amrin Tasnim Rafa is always confused, it's literally her dominant personality trait. This is maybe her email, she can't be sure: amrinrafa@gmail.com

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Know this before getting a piercing

BUSHRA ZAMAN

If you're going through a rough patch and decide to make a fresh change to your look by getting a piercing, here are a few things you should think through before you make that appointment.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Piercings can be done incorrectly very easily. When I decided to get a piercing on a whim, I ended up fidgeting as I was startled when my upper ear was being pierced. Because of this, the piercing was done too high up on my ear and did not match my other ear. Not the punk look I was going for, exactly.

A lot can go wrong from a lack of expertise or cleanliness on the part of the person doing the piercing. Although chances of this occurring to piercings made on the outer ear are slim to none since there are no major nerves or blood vessels there, if you're going for a nose piercing, you could hit a nerve accidentally and potentially lose all sensation in the area if nerve damage occurs.

In fact, different pierced areas may heal at different rates. Because of a lack of blood supply to the ear cartilage area, piercings made to the cartilage take a very long time to heal. Meaning you should probably plan your piercings based on your schedule or workload, because some can hurt a lot or be prone to infection and will require your attention. Imagine if you got a piercing during your midterms and your ears hurt so bad the pain spread and gave you an awful headache.

Indeed, getting a piercing for the first time can

sound scary, which makes me marvel at how I used to constantly hear my grandmothers or their relatives speak of how they would just get ear piercings done at home. We are blessed to have professional services as an option, so we should do our research before selecting a reliable place.

Other than safety, another area of concern is the financing necessary for a piercing, because payments do not stop with just the piercing itself. It is best to have a pair of earrings or jewellery ready prior to getting the piercing done so no last-minute running about is necessary. This is also a good time to figure out if you're allergic to certain metal alloys by testing some non-invasive jewellery on you. One of the last things you want is to have an allergic reaction right after getting a piercing you put time and money into.

You'll probably end up getting the piercing you want anyway. I just said all of the above to ensure that you know a piercing is permanent and not a whim you want to regret. Am I saying all this to prepare myself for another piercing? Maybe.

Bushra Zaman likes books, art, and only being contacted by email. Contact her at bushrazaman31@yahoo.com

Sales methods to suit your online clothing business

ZIBA MAHDI

An increasing number of people have started online clothes selling businesses since the pandemic hit. There's a lot of flexibility in this industry with different ways to sell products, so here are a few routes you can take if you're considering starting your own venture.

SPOT PURCHASE

This model is almost identical to the way clothes are sold in traditional clothing stores. The seller imports or purchases a certain amount of clothing from another seller and displays it online, usually through pictures or live videos. Like regular stores, this runs the risk of excess stockpiles, which usually end up in clearance sales or disposal.

Despite the risk, Ainun Anwar Abonee and Anika Anwar Srabonee, sisters who run AyKa Way Official, started their business with this model.

Anika says, "Some customers do not like to wait for their products. Spot purchase is more efficient and less time consuming for the entrepreneur compared to pre-orders."

PRE-ORDER

In this method, sellers bring in apparel after clients have placed their orders. The financial risk is minimum, as is the likelihood of unsold clothing lying around.

Rafia Ferdous Mim, owner of Deal of the Day, says, "A pre-order based model helped me study what my customers really prefer. For small businesses like mine, the biggest fear revolves around having excessive stock. The products are usually too pricey to have them lying around in surplus quantities. Being a pre-order based page has enabled us to offer a large variety of products which otherwise would have been too risky to introduce to the market. It also makes our business more sustainable by reducing waste."

WHOLESALE

This process relies on selling clothes in bulk to entrepreneurs for a low price who will then resell them. It's

a win-win situation for both parties – the sellers make higher profits and the customers get lower prices. Some wholesalers sell to the customer directly instead of going through another party.

Manufacturers usually impose a minimum order policy on sellers to ensure maximum efficiency and profit on each product they produce.

Samia Azmery, owner of Playdate Closet, says she converted her business to a wholesale model after getting only a handful of orders for her clothing store. She noticed that there were many small business owners who wanted to buy clothes in bulk with a low minimum order quantity, but couldn't order them directly from a factory.

"So I opened a wholesale group for other small business owners and my sales increased significantly," Samia explains.

THRIFTING

The most eco-friendly model of all, second-hand clothing, saw a resurgence in the industry due to increasingly environmentally conscious consumers. Acquiring pre-loved pieces, refurbishing them and displaying them online for sale will be your main tasks here. While some thrift stores rely on donations, many businesses who sell thrift clothing choose to pay for their stock.

Sunayra Subha Pushpita and Shenin Serjin Promi, co-founders of Bangladesh Thrift, liked the concept of wearing unique outfits rather than fast fashion garments. Sticking to this particular model always felt rewarding as we could contribute to bettering our environment in our own way, they say.

Of course, selecting your method of selling is just the first step. Then comes the market research, search for suppliers, your store's social media or website, and finally, marketing. In other words, a business plan is your stairway to success.

Ziba Mahdi is your resident pessimist. Cheer her up at mahdi.ziba@yahoo.com

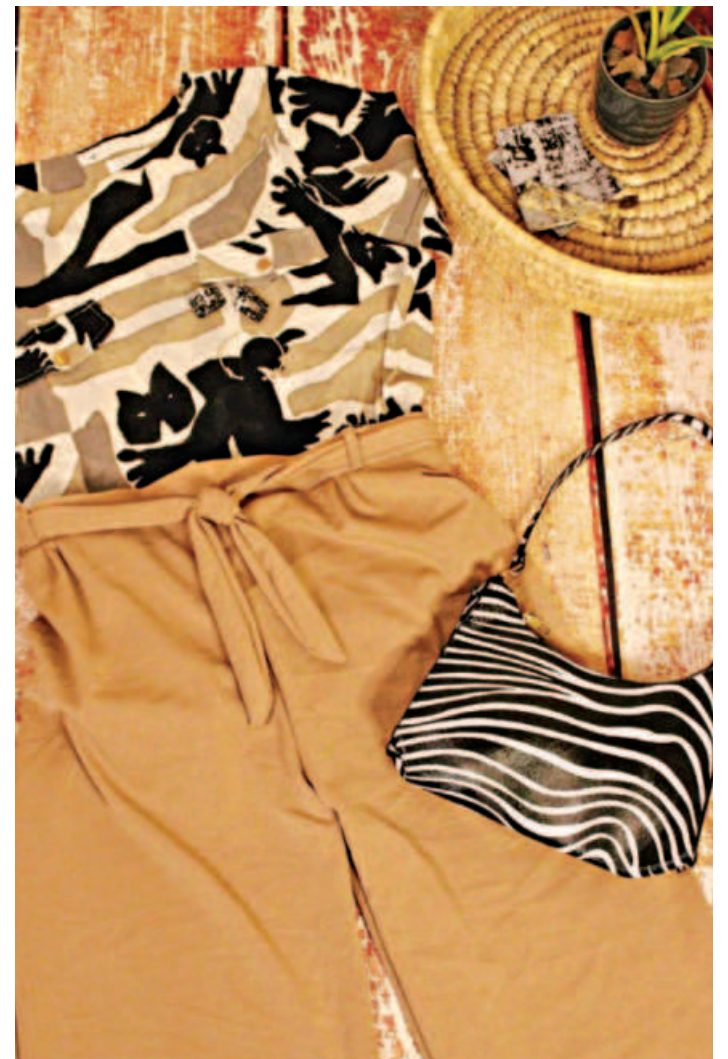


PHOTO: BANGLADESH THRIFT

RESPONSE NO. 39

ADHORA AHMED

It has been a difficult year for all of us. Yet, we have managed to adapt to these unprecedented circumstances and found innovative ways to cater to your needs. Since we are always trying to improve our services, your feedback means a lot to us. Hence, we request you to fill up this short anonymous survey, which should take no more than ten minutes. Would you like to proceed?

Yes.

Thank you for choosing to take our survey and helping us improve our services. Your responses will remain completely anonymous.

[Beep]

On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you feel about this past year? (1=extremely bad, 5=extremely good)

Why does everything have to be quantifiable? Do you think after the year we've had, we're still capable of attaching numerical values to feelings? And speaking of how I felt about last year, I started out feeling too much, but then all those feelings got jumbled up and now I don't feel anything at all. There is a void, an emptiness in me. I don't know if this answer will help you.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how satisfied were you with our services? (1=extremely dissatisfied, 5=extremely satisfied)

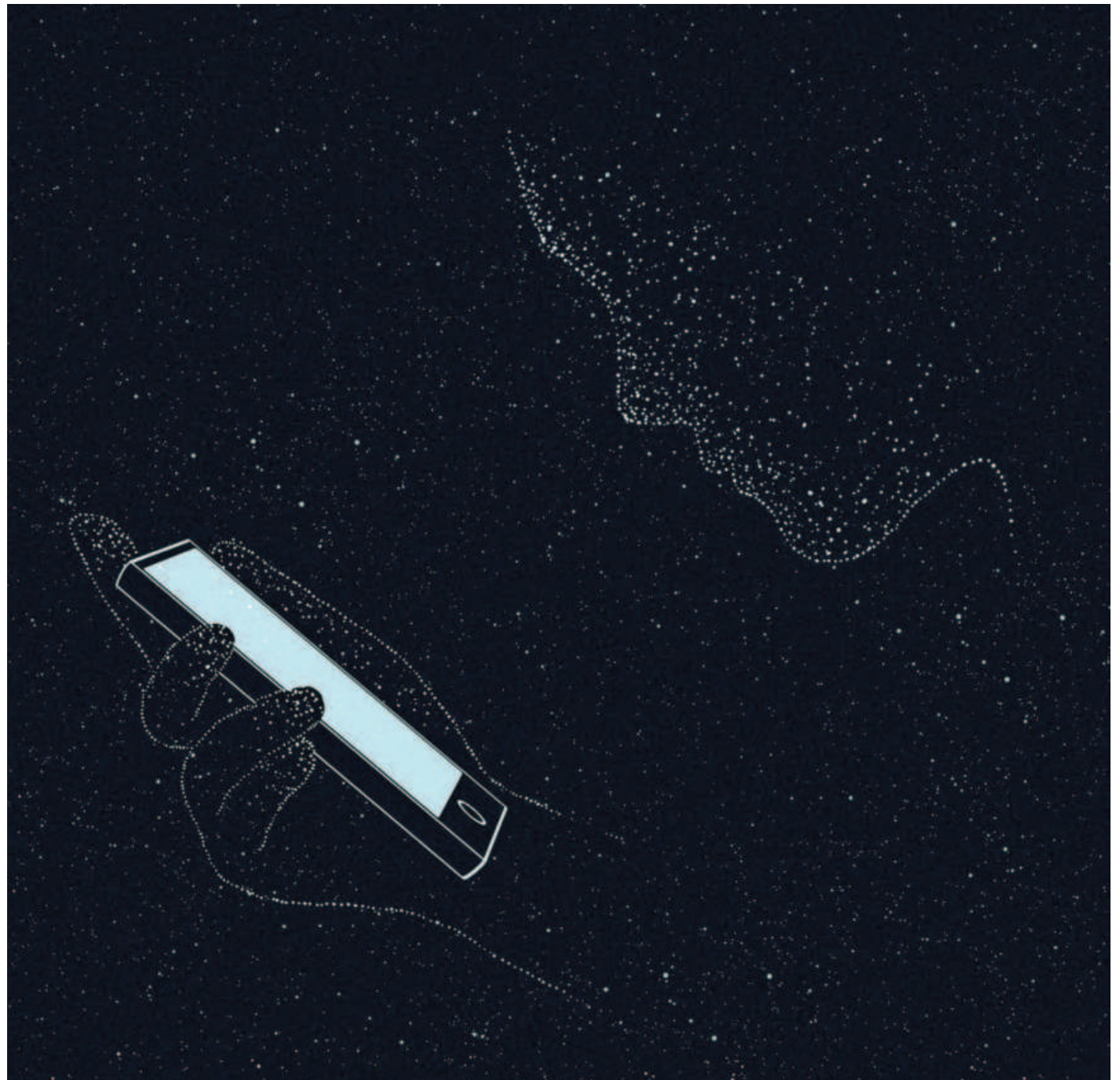
I don't know what satisfaction is anymore. I don't even use all of your services. The closest thing I felt using your services – especially the holographic reality things or whatever you call them – was perhaps a sense of escapism. I saw my childhood best friend again. Weirdly enough, we were frolicking in some green field even though we didn't grow up around green fields. It felt like a scene straight from some kids' TV show. Is the holographic thing supposed to do that, creating brand new scenarios? Anyway, I lost touch with her after fifth grade because she migrated with her entire family. I wonder if she's still around, if she has one of these things.

If your answer to the previous question was below 4 (very satisfied), please inform us of any issues you faced, describing in detail.

You see, I used to cry a lot in the early days. Remember what I told you about feeling too many things all at once? The tears were merely a sort of release. It's not that I was mostly sad or depressed; I was just overwhelmed by the whole spectrum of emotions. No wonder I got all burned out. I won't be able to shed a tear now if you commanded me to, like an actor does. The sleep induction device helped in that regard, I guess, but only sometimes. Now I don't need it to go into dreamless, deep sleeping binges, because there is nothing to dream of anymore. Come to think of it, there aren't many things to stay awake for, either.

If you have ever contacted customer care, how would you rate the service on a scale of 1 to 5? (1=extremely unsatisfactory, 5=extremely satisfactory)

It was pretty out of character for me,



I have to admit, but I actually called customer care once. Things have come to a point where now I only have different customer care service numbers and helplines saved on my phone. All are numbers which will be answered by complete strangers. Isn't it kind of pathetic that I have nobody real to talk to anymore? Is it the same for you, the person who will compile and categorise and analyse my response? It's okay, you don't need to answer me. Just food for thought.

Anyway, I called customer care and there was a man's voice. I had to get through to him after the automated robotic voice directed me through different buttons. He asked how he could help me. I don't even know why I made that call, because I didn't need help with anything. Or perhaps, I did need help with way too many things, and I

was sure he did too, but that was the kind of help none of us were capable of giving. I realised I couldn't answer his question, but I still wanted to keep the conversation going, so I started describing how my day went as if we were close companions and we would be interested in such banal matters.

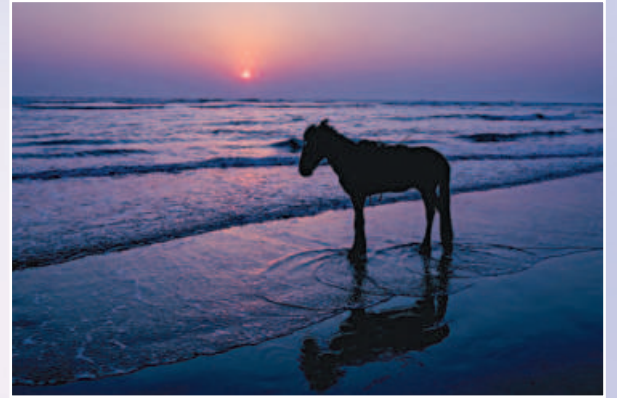
The man was very polite. He didn't interrupt me once, but once I was finished, once I asked him in return how his day was, he said, "It was fine, dear customer, thank you for asking. But is there anything regarding our services I could help you with?" Then I felt embarrassed, because I was wasting this poor guy's time. I ended the call shortly after, thanking him for listening to my nonsense. Later, I realised that that was the most interesting thing I'd done in weeks.

Any final comments/suggestions?

Am I wasting your time too, the person who's reading all this? I'm sorry, this is one of my bad habits, this inability to be concise. And the inability to quantify things, obviously. You said this wouldn't take more than ten minutes, but I'm definitely taking more than that.

I didn't have much of a choice, really, to subscribe to your services. Every chamber comes with a subscription, so I just went with the flow. It has some perks, like the escapism, but other than that, it's just like any other furniture, meant to hold or carry things. Like how a bed cradles a sleeping body. Like how a cupboard stores utensils. The things that you offer carry some part of me, I know that for sure, but I haven't figured it out.

Thank you for submitting your response. We hope you will continue to use our services.



MOON SONG

What do the waves say?
As the sun sets on the horizon
or perhaps, they sing love songs
for the new moon rising on its edge

PHOTOS BY **NAYEM SHAAN**
CURATED BY **ORCHID CHAKMA**
WORDS BY **AAQIB HASIB**

