

SHAJGOJ

the story of a unique startup

INTERVIEWED BY ZAKIA SAMEEN NOOR

Shajgoj, a local brand that is bringing international brand cosmetics to Bangladesh, recently became one of the only two Bangladeshi startups to have backing from Sequoia Capital India, raising 21 crores. One of the few of its kind in Bangladesh, the online-based beauty and wellness platform also won The Daily Star ICT Startup of the Year in 2021.

Toggle recently reached out to Nazmul Sheikh, CEO and co-founder, to learn more about the brand, its origins and its aspirations. Here are the key excerpts:

How did Shajgoj start?

Initially, Shajgoj was a blog site. We used to write articles on skincare like how to take care of the skin and product reviews - everything related to beauty. We launched our business through content,



and take product suggestions.

How did you differentiate Shajgoj from other beauty platforms?

We have an emotional connection with our audience. Our physical stores are not just outlets, as we also offer free advice from beauty consultants. 86% of people come to Shajgoj because they know we sell authentic products. Content in terms of both quality and quantity has helped us a lot.

How did you overcome challenges? What was the most difficult one?

There was no platform before Shajgoj that dedicated itself purely to beauty products. A lot of research is required to create original content that is useful to customers. This sort of knowledge, e.g.

what niacinamide does, was not there before. It also took us a long time to find talents who could write these articles consistently without plagiarism.

Also, when we started our physical outlet, we didn't have much experience in retailing. We had a lack of knowledge about government rules and regulations like VAT, tax, partners, etc. The supply chain was also a persistent issue. Once we began our e-commerce business, we had sufficient experience and knew how the business worked, which of course took time.

What challenges remain in this industry?

A bigger scale comes with its own set of challenges. The government rules change

very frequently. As we aspire to run a compliant company, frequent regulation changes become challenging for us. For example, we would charge Tk. 120 for a product where a Facebook page, which doesn't deal with such rule bindings, charges Tk. 100. Customers who look at the price feel that we are overcharging whereas ultimately, we are underpriced.

What makes Shajgoj a unique business?

We are trying to create a category that's not present in Bangladesh. The beauty space is very fragmented. We don't try to sell our product for the sake of selling. We want to believe in long-term relationships. We are a very empathetic brand and we love working for our customers.

Tell us a little bit about the work culture at Shajgoj.

65% of our workforce is female. The company is run by females for females. Our work culture is transparent and open. Anybody can say no to anybody. A junior executive can come to my room and say, "No, I don't like what you are doing." As for our paternal policies, they are standard as per government rules.

Tell us a little bit about the recent investment raised. How do you plan to utilise it?

70% of our customers are returning customers. Because we want to expand, our main focus with the funds is retaining customer acquisition. We have a lot of offers going towards the first purchase made by new customers.



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giving people brand awareness, and steadily being viewed as beauty experts. We opened our first physical store at Jamuna Future Park in 2015, where we saw our readers coming to the store. We established a trust factor through our brand identity of being beauty experts to whom the customers could directly talk to

us on /Sandalina

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