

Chapter 10

Enabling Women Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh: Analysis of the Impact of Technology Adoption

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter primarily focuses on the significant contributions of female entrepreneurs to Bangladesh's economy in the light of technology/IT as a medium. Its primary objective is to present a comprehensive overview of the experiences of female entrepreneurs, including the support they have received, the obstacles they have had to overcome, and other related aspects and the involvement of technology to carry out their day-to-day activity. The central aim of this study is to explore the role of the digital marketplace in empowering women in Bangladesh's entrepreneurial endeavors. The findings of the study reveal that most women in Bangladesh initiate their businesses to attain self-sufficiency and financial independence. They face significant challenges such as social barriers, family constraints, limited resources, and labor shortages. Many of these female entrepreneurs were students, homemakers, or teachers before venturing into business.

Entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in driving a nation's economic progress by generating wealth, reducing unemployment, and alleviating poverty. This chapter primarily focuses on the significant contributions of female entrepreneurs to Bangladesh's economy in the light of technology/IT as a medium. Its primary objective is to present a comprehensive overview of the experiences of female entrepreneurs, including the support they have received, the obstacles they have had to overcome, and other related aspects and the involvement of technology to carry out their day-to-day activity. The central aim of this study is to explore the role of the digital marketplace in empowering women in Bangladesh's entrepreneurial endeavors.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-1781-5.ch010

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Most female entrepreneurs aspire to expand both their online and offline businesses while also providing employment opportunities for unemployed women. The study indicates that a substantial proportion of online entrepreneurs are young women, and a significant number of startups emerged in 2020, suggesting a correlation with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Facebook serves as the primary platform for selling products among these women entrepreneurs. Most of them source their products from wholesalers to secure better deals and benefits, while some opt to produce their goods to ensure authenticity.

The involvement of women in entrepreneurship significantly enhances the economic development and social well-being of their communities, as well as their families' income. The findings underscore the profound impact of female entrepreneurship on both Bangladesh's economic landscape and the lives of these entrepreneurial women.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the advancement of women's entrepreneurship within Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bangladesh has become a focal point in policymaking aimed at the overall development of the SME sector as a strategy for inclusive growth. The reasons for this focus are evident. On a global scale, despite comprising half of the human population, women are conspicuously absent in terms of owning and managing their own businesses, particularly in developing countries. While acknowledging the significant strides made by women globally and in Bangladesh in various economic activities and professional pursuits, especially since the establishment of the *Beijing Platform of Action* for women, challenges persist on the ground. These challenges are exacerbated by women's trifecta of hardships in Bangladesh—entailing extreme poverty, pervasive discrimination, and inequality, and, significantly, limited participation in the workforce.

Despite constituting half of the population in Bangladesh, women continue to face significant underrepresentation in the business sector. While the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry sees a substantial female presence, comprising nearly 90% of its 5 million workers, their involvement in non-RMG industrial sectors is minimal. This underscores the untapped potential of a substantial female workforce as a valuable source for economic growth and social advancement. To foster a sustainable democratic society marked by inclusive participation, poverty reduction, and overall prosperity, it is imperative to promote the development of women entrepreneurship.

The intersection of social networking and media entrepreneurship with a focus on the role of mobile phone usage in online shopping. Conducted through a systematic literature review without primary data collection, the research examines literature from the last five years (2013-2018). The findings highlight the widespread popularity of social networking, online shopping, and digital media entrepreneurship, facilitated by the accessible and affordable use of mobile phones. Despite the increased popularity of media entrepreneurship, the study suggests that its implementation has been lacking. The research points towards opportunities for improving online shopping experiences, building trust, simplifying decision-

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