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Contents

Understanding the Needs of the Youths and their Coping Strategies

Md. Anwar Hossain*

Abstract
Youths are the most energetic and productive segment of the total population of any country. Generally, transitional period from childhood to adulthood is considered as youth. But the age limit of youth varies from country to country. People in Bangladesh within the age group of 18-35 years are considered as youth as per its National Youth Policy. Among the total population of Bangladesh about one-thirds are of youth group. As individuals move into youth from adolescence their needs and demands are changed. But what is the nature of needs of the youths of Bangladesh? Do they face any barrier to meet their needs? What kind of strategies do they follow to meet their needs? These questions should be addressed with empirical evidence for the betterment of the youths. Therefore, an exploratory study has been carried out by following qualitative approach to address the above-mentioned research questions and the findings have been presented in this paper with policy implications and concluding remarks at the end. The findings show that quality education, pure and fresh food, healthcare and reproductive health services, employment opportunity, housing with utility services, training for skill development and recreational facilities are their prime needs. They could fulfill their needs to some extent but still there are a lot of barriers to fulfill their needs. Accordingly, they adopt a variety of indigenous mechanisms to cope with this situation. However, the findings would be useful for the policy makers, social workers and development practitioners, and create a new avenue for further study in this field.
Keywords: Youths, Needs, Barriers, Coping strategies.

1. Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the over populated countries in the world where more than 71 million people live in a landmass of 1,47,570 square kilometers. The density of population is 1171 persons per square kilometer and the growth rate is 1.3% per annum. Literacy rate is only 77.9 % (07 years and over). But net enrolment in primary education is almost 100% and the retention rate is 80%. The life expectancy at birth is 72.3 years (70.8 years for male and 73.8 years for female, Ministry of Finance, 2024). Only 31.51% people live in urban areas and rest of them (68.49%) live in rural parts. Out of total

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population 18.7% live under poverty line (urban poverty is 14.7% and rural poverty is 20.7%) and the per capita income is 27.84 US$ (Ministry of Finance, 2024; BBS, 2023).

Population of Bangladesh is equivalent to 2.18% of the total population of the world. Among the total population in Bangladesh one-thirds are youths. A person, in general, is considered as youth who has attained puberty. It is concerned with timeframe and physical as well as psychological development. It is such a time of total life span that is neither childhood nor adulthood, rather somewhere in-between (Webster's Dictionary, 2004). The United Nations defined a person as youth who belongs to the age limit of 15-24 years (United Nations, 1981). But the government of Bangladesh has an official definition of youth. It defined the population as youth in the age group of 18-35 years in its National Youth Policy (DYD, 2007).

Youths are very potential for any country as they are very energetic, creative and a productive segment of population. They are also the most strong, self-confident and productive guiding force. Hence, advancement of a nation mostly depends upon the development and contribution of its youth force (DYD, 2007). But their needs have to be fulfilled for their proper development; then they could be able to contribute to the development of the country. Therefore, they should be provided with required services to meet their basic needs such as nutritious food, quality education, healthcare and reproductive healthcare, adequate shelter with necessary facilities, recreation and training for skill development.

It is found that the government of Bangladesh has already undertaken some affirmative measures to fulfill their above-mentioned requirements. The government has adopted education policy, taken confirmatory measures to increase enrolment into educational institutions and reduce dropouts. The government has also established technical education board and training center, providing training through the Department of Youth Development and private organizations for their skill development (Ali et al., 2006; DYD, 2009; Hossain, 2010; Roy & Bhattacharjee, 2013). These programs are mostly top-down initiatives. Opinions of the youths are not sought in most of the cases. Usually their opinions are unheard and their problems and needs are ignored (Lo & Au, 2004). Therefore, it is most necessary to understand the needs of the youth, to what extent their needs are fulfilled, what are the constraining factors to fulfill their needs, and how do they cope with this situation? The indentified issues should be investigated scientifically in order to address youths' problems and to prepare effective plans and programs. Therefore, an exploratory study entitled Understanding the Needs of the

Youths and Their Coping Strategy has been carried out to fill up the indentified research gaps and the findings of the study have been presented in this paper.

2. Methodology

The general objective of the present study was to understand the needs of the young people in Bangladesh and to analyze their coping strategies. The present study used qualitative approach to attain the general objective of the study as it is involved with the process of analyzing social phenomena rather than outcome and examining cause-effect relationship of dependent and independent variables. A qualitative approach is also taken to understand how people make sense of their life experiences (Atieno, 2009). It provides deeper understanding of social phenomena that is less likely in quantitative approach. Quantitative approach is concerned with examining correlation between dependent and independent variables that could not go to the inner aspects of social phenomenon (Silverman, 2001). Considering the advantages of qualitative approach and disadvantages of quantitative approach to analyze the social phenomena, this study employed the qualitative approach for analyzing the identified research issues. However, the study followed purposive sampling procedure as it gives the researcher ample opportunity to select appropriate sample. The researcher purposively selected ten youths (five males and five females) from Charkadah village of Gurudaspur upazila under Natore district and ten (five males and five females) from Sutrapur area of Dhaka South City Corporation considering the merits of purposive sampling procedure, that is, availability of youths and easy access to them. In addition, the selected areas were found to bear the general characteristics of both rural (Charkadah village) and urban (Sutrapur) areas. The reason for selecting samples from both rural and urban areas was so as to understand the nature of their problems and coping strategies from diverse socioeconomic and geographical point of view, as human behavior is not context free rather significantly influenced by the settings in which it occurs (Atieno, 2009; Scot, 2001).

The study used face to face interview with semi-structured interview schedule as principal method of data collection where open-ended questions were included. Data were also collected through focus group discussion (FGD) with the youths and non-participant observation to supplement interview data. Non-participant observation method was followed to understand the dynamics of responses such as non-verbal behavior, body language etc. that would not have been possible to map only through interviewing. Data were also collected from key informants (parents, teachers of school, college and university and government officials) to understand the nature of problems of youths and their coping strategies. In addition, relevant literatures such as books, journal articles, and published and unpublished research reports were reviewed as secondary sources of information.

It should be noted that the ethical issues are important in carrying out social research. Inspired by Miles and Humberman (1994) the researcher followed some ethical guidelines in collecting data. For example, guaranty of confidentiality was given to the respondents, verbal consent was taken from the respondents prior to interview and such questions were not asked that might be sensitive and harmful to the respondents. However, narrative analysis method has been used for analyzing data as a systematic work and some verbatim quotations have been presented for better understanding the research issue.

3. Results

3.1 Socioeconomic and demographic conditions of the respondents

The respondents were from different socioeconomic groups. In respect of age limit, they were from the age group of 18-35 years. None of them were illiterate, rather some of them were highly educated (obtained Masters Degree). Majority of the respondents were students of different levels (Secondary, Higher secondary and Tertiary levels). Some of them were involved in agricultural work and a few of them were employed in formal and informal sectors. Most of the students had no personal income while some of them were found to earn some money through doing private tuition. But income level was not satisfactory for those who were employed in lower position. Household income of the respondents ranged from BDT 5,000/- to BDT 25,000/- in rural area, while in urban area it ranged from BDT 10000/- to BDT 70,000/-. On the other hand, household size ranged from 4-6 that was higher than that of national level (4.53) and majority of them used to live on the edge of subsistence and were considered as poor since their per capita income was less than US$ 2 per day.

3.2 Understanding the needs of the youths

In general, need refers to the things that somebody requires in order to live in a comfortable way or to achieve what they want (Hornby, 2000, p. 851). The respondents also defined need almost in the same way. They opined that the essential goods and services that are fundamental to survive for human beings are considered as needs. They also explained that the circumstances in which something is necessary and motivate someone to achieve those things are also considered as need. They identified some needs that are badly needed for them to lead livelihood. For example, food and nutrition, quality education, healthcare, reproductive healthcare, shelter, recreation, employment (satisfying job), as well as vocational and technical education were identified by them as their urgent needs. In addition, population control, creating social awareness, especially among the women, training on small and cottage industry, and attaining self-independence were identified as needs by the selected samples. The findings show that the opinions differ on the basis of the location, economic condition and occupation of the respondents. For example, respondents from poor group emphasized food and nutrition and healthcare, students who live in mess houses or student hostels mentioned the need for increasing residential facilities as their current needs. On the other hand, the respondents employed in lower positions called for self-independence and empowerment, while the youths who were about to complete their formal education identified the employment opportunity as their crying needs. The participants of FGDs also cited the same things as their needs.

3.3 Extent of and barriers to fulfillment of needs of the youths

Bangladesh has made outstanding progress in achieving MDGs, especially in reducing headcount poverty and prevalence of underweight children, attaining gender parity in primary and secondary education as well as in lowering infant and maternal mortality rate. While other areas in need of greater attention are hunger and poverty reduction, employment generation, increase in completion of primary education and adult literacy rate, ensuring quality education at all levels, creation of job opportunity and increase the presence of skilled health workers and trained birth attendance (Planning Commission, 2015, p. 9). It is no different in the case of the respondents of the present study. The findings show that the respondents could fulfill these needs to some extent but there are a lot of barriers to realize their required needs that are discussed below:

3.3.1 Barriers to attain education

It is evident that Bangladesh has made significant progress to achieve MDG-2. Net enrollment rate (97.7%) and gender parity have been achieved at the primary level (Planning Commission, 2015). But gender gap still exists at higher secondary and tertiary levels. The respondents were asked about fulfillment of their expectation of education. In response to this question, some of them expressed their negative reaction about fulfillment of their expectations. The findings show that some youths were compelled to stop further study due to financial constraint. On the other hand, female students were compelled to give up schooling due to early marriage and eve-teasing. One of the respondents reported:

> *"I could not continue my study due to teasing and early* marriage. Some unruly youths used to tease me on the way to

> school and to return home. As a result, my parents have stopped *my schooling and giving me marriage," (Mousumi).*

However, guardians of urban area are worried about quality education of their children. The respondents underscored that it was very difficult to get admission of children in to a good school. One of the respondents reported this issue in the following way:

> *"I am worried about admission of my son and daughter as there* is lack of schools that provide quality education. Actually, the number of candidates is very high compared to the number of seats in school or college. It creates tension among the *guardians,"* (Amin).

Low income is another constraining factor to have quality education. One of the respondents, Kawsar, mentioned:

> *"I could not admit my baby in to a good school due to financial* crisis as my monthly income is very poor. I am not in a position to pay tuition and session fee. It is beyond my capacity. So, my *child has been admitted in to a lower quality of school."*

Furthermore, the respondents studying at tertiary level reported that lack of educational materials and opportunities (library equipped with appropriate books and journal, computer lab, internet facilities) are constraining factors to get quality education. On the other hand, sometimes the guardians create pressure on female students for marriage before completion of their study. It is one kind of barrier to higher education for female students. In addition, distance of academic institution and lack of transportation facilities are among other barriers to attaining education.

3.3.2 Barriers to fulfillment of food requirement

Growth and development of human beings mostly depend upon proper consumption of food and nutrition. But many people of Bangladesh are still deprived of nutritious food and improved diet because of economic hardship and price hike although rate of poverty has dropped from 56.7% in 1991-92 to 18.7% in 2022 (BBS, 2023). In addition, due to natural disaster they face food crisis and they are to reduce food intake and change food habit (Hossain, 2014). Almost all the respondents, except a few, reported that they are not in food crisis. But problem is that they do not get fresh and pure food because of using excessive chemicals in food items and adulteration of food by dishonest businessmen. Contaminated food is one kind of barrier to the fulfillment of food requirement. However, existing gender norms is another barrier to fulfillment of food requirement for female youths that reflects the following statement:

> *"As I am a girl, my mother did not use to take care of me. My mother preferred my brother to me in distributing food,"* (Rahima).

3.3.3 Barriers to fulfillment of healthcare

Literature shows that Bangladesh has made considerable progress in child survival rate and reducing maternal mortality rate. But inequality in terms of access to and utilization of health services among the population still require to be addressed (Planning Commission, 2015). However, the government of Bangladesh has upgraded hospitals at district and upazila (sub-district) levels and established community clinic at union levels. But some people could not avail health services provided by these organizations due to financial hardship, lack of cordiality of doctors and other service staff, and high rate of private service. On the other hand, number of physicians is still poor compared to service recipients (1:2129), lack of machines and tools at hospitals and lack of qualified and efficient physicians are barriers to get health services. The participants of FGDs also cited the same barriers to the fulfillment of healthcare needs. Moreover, ignorance and negligence of the people to receive health service are also existed in Bangladesh. Sometimes people do not care about the illness and do not think about receiving treatment. On the other hand, the qualified and efficient doctors are reluctant to stay in rural areas. Therefore, rural people are deprived of health services that are reflected in the following statements:

> *"Important machinery and medicines are not available at* upazila health complex and community clinic. So, we do not get required services in need. Besides, qualified doctors are *reluctant to stay in rural areas,"* (Joly).

> *"Hospitals and community clinics located in rural areas have* lack of qualified doctors. Sometimes they could not diagnose the disease properly. Therefore, the people do not get proper *treatment,"* (Mousumi).

> *"There is a lack of qualified doctors in hospitals. Sometimes they* ignore the patients. On the other hand, health services at private hospitals and clinics in urban areas are very expensive. The poor *people could not afford them,"* (Risan).

Mahbuba expressed her opinion in the same way: She explained:

> *"Healthcare services are very expensive at private hospitals that* are beyond the capacity of the young people like me. On the

> other hand, quality of healthcare services at the government *hospitals is very poor and it is very time consuming."*

3.3.4 Barriers to fulfillment of reproductive healthcare

Reproductive health is a major aspect of global health issue. It is a fundamental and inalienable part of women's health. It incorporates maternal and child health program, family planning, infertility, sexually transmitted disease, pre-natal and post-natal services, safe pregnancy, safe delivery, and post-natal infections (Tarafder, 2013). But the respondents have little knowledge regarding reproductive health. Unlike the general health problems, the youth would not like to express their problems related to reproductive health. Even they were reluctant to talk about this issue. They showed their shyness during interview. In spite of their reluctance some of the respondents, especially female respondents studying at tertiary level provided valuable information. The respondents claimed that parents are not aware about this issue. Again the masses and youths do not have adequate information in this regard. Furthermore, distance of healthcare centers, lack of transportation facilities, high cost of services, lack of technical qualifications of the practitioners are major barriers to fulfillment of reproductive health services that comply with the findings of Tarafder (2013). Rahima reported that:

> *"There is lack of efficient health workers in our country. On the* other hand, it is expensive and health center is located far from the residence. It very often discourages the pregnant women from going to health center for check-*up."*

Another respondent, Mahmbuba, asserted that:

> *"Young women living in a rural area feel shy to show their body* during pregnancy. Purdah norms restrict their movement and refrain them from having health care services. Sometimes they abstain from disclosing their problems related to sexual disease due to *shame."*

The above-mentioned findings conform to the finding of Tarafder (2013) who found that rural women in Bangladesh feel shy to show their pregnant body. They are less likely to seek care from a doctor or practitioner compared to an urban area.

3.3.5 Barriers to fulfillment of housing facilities

Likewise, food and clothing shelter is one of the basic needs for survival of the human beings. Shelter or housing is not merely a roof over head. It is such a facility that protects its residents from natural calamities. It should have some utility services that are indispensible for the survival of the civilized man such as safe drinking water, sanitation, electricity and other essential services. It is essential for security, growth, development and dignity of human beings (Nawaz, 2004). The respondents also identified housing as one of their needs. They all enjoy housing facility to some extent although there are some limitations to fulfill required housing facilities. The respondents from rural area, whose household income is poor, reported that their houses are kutcha, built on small piece of land, vulnerable to natural disasters (floods, storm etc.) and not equipped with modern facilities (furniture, safe sanitation). In contrast, the respondents with high household income living in urban areas enjoy housing facility with essential utility services. But power disruption and discontinuity of gas supply in some areas hamper the livelihood of the youths. But the respondents from poor group, living in slums and dilapidated houses built on khas land, are deprived of utility services. One of the respondents reported that:

> *"I live in an abandoned building of my appointing authority. Its* condition is very deplorable. There is no electricity and gas supply in our building. We also suffer from lack of water supply. *It is very difficult to live here,"(Helal).*

However, the young students and unmarried persons face different types of problems in enjoying housing facility. There is a scarcity of seats in college hostels and residential halls of the university. On the other hand, the owners of houses are less likely to rent their houses to young unmarried persons and students. In addition, high house rent, unhealthy environment and lack of security are among other problems faced by youths in urban areas.

3.3.6 Barriers to employment sector

One of the urgent needs of the young people is to get a decent job to lead a livelihood. But unemployment rate among the youths in Bangladesh is higher than that of the overall unemployment rate. Unemployment rate of youth was recorded 10.3% in 2013 (Goldin et al. 2015 cited in Guha & Mamun, 2016) while the World Bank considered 41% Bangladeshi youths as NEET (not in employment, education and training). On the other hand, 75% business leaders claimed that a scarcity of skilled youth was a major challenge to hire workers in industrial and business sectors (cited in Sohel & Khan, 2015). But what is the perception of the youths in this regard? The respondents were asked about what are the causes of unemployment or the barriers to get a decent job. The study finds a variety of reasons for unemployment. Population explosion is a vital cause of unemployment as the number of job is quite poor compared to number of job seekers (candidates). Besides, it is very difficult to be an entrepreneur because of administrative complexity. It is difficult to get a loan and approval of various authorities. On the other hand, a few of the respondents mentioned purdah norms as a barrier to get a job. Practice of purdah restricts movement of young ladies. Rahima, one of the female respondents reported that:

> *"It is difficult for me to get a job as I maintain purdah. It restricts* my movement in public places. I think it is one kind of barrier to *get a job."*

However, some respondents think that present education system is not suitable to get a job as it does not enhance adequate skills and knowledge. On the other hand, because of financial crisis some of the respondents are deprived of attaining quality education that is reflected in the following statement:

> *"It is very difficult to get a job due to lack of quality education.* Traditional education system is not enough to enhance skills and expertise. Additional training is badly needed to achieve skills in different trades. But I could not receive training due to financial crisis. Finally, money is a deciding factor in attaining quality *education and getting a good job," (Helal).*

The above-mentioned statements indicate that economic hardship is a barrier to receiving quality education and ultimately to getting a satisfying job. Even the youth could not run small enterprise for self-employment because of financial crisis.

3.3.7 Barriers to vocational education and training sector

The respondents identified vocational education and training as one of their needs. The government of Bangladesh has established a good number of vocational education and training institutes along with private initiatives in order to fulfill this need. But it could not fulfill the needs of the youth and provide skilled manpower to job market. Lack of efficient and skilled instructor is one of the causes to get quality training as opined by the respondents that conforms to the findings of a study carried out by Newaz et al., (2013). On the other hand, many youths could not receive training due to financial crisis. But the female respondents face problems in receiving training that are different in nature from male. One of the respondents reported that:

> *"I have a bitter experience of computer training center. I got* admitted to a computer training program. But I was a victim of teasing of the instructor. Therefore, I had to leave the training *center" (Rahima).*

The above-mentioned statement is the reflection of Bangladesh society that indicates eve-teasing is still a barrier to female education and visibility in public places.

3.4 Understanding the coping strategy of the youths

In general, coping strategy is conscious efforts to solve problem that help in overcoming or minimizing stress. It includes the combination of activities and choices that an individual, group or any household opt for in order to survive (Blaikie et al., (1994) cited in Palmino-Raganit, 2005). The respondents adopt a variety of strategies to fulfill their needs in spite of various types of barriers and limitations. The strategies are as follows:

3.4.1 Strategies to overcome barriers to attain education

It has been found that financial crisis is one of the limitations to achieve quality education in Bangladesh. The findings show that some respondents (students) earn money by doing private tuition to overcome financial crisis. On the other hand, some of them put additional effort to overcome their weakness in some subjects especially in English. The parents also put extra effort to overcome the weakness of their children. A few of the respondents obtained higher degree as irregular examinee along with doing job as they had to stop their schooling due to financial crisis. One of the respondents stated that:

> *"I had to stop my study due to financial crisis. Now I am doing* a job along with studying as an irregular student under Open *University,"* (Helal).

3.4.2 Strategies to fulfill requirements of food

The respondents consume cheap but fresh and nutritious food to fulfill their food requirements. They try to avoid contaminated food and keep the food item under water for a long time to reduce contamination, especially for reducing contamination of formalin. In rural areas, the respondents produce various types of vegetable for household consumption, rear poultry and catch fish from open water to fulfill their food requirements. Despite these initiatives they compel to consume adulterated/poisoned food. Hridoy, one of the respondents from a rural area, reported that:

> *"Usually we produce various types of vegetables surrounding* our house for household consumption. We eat fish catching from the water body and canal. Sometimes we are compelled to buy vegetables, fish and fruits that are contaminated with *chemicals."*

3.4.3 Strategies to fulfill requirements of healthcare

In respect of coping with limitation of healthcare the respondents mostly buy medicine from pharmacy in place of going to specialist physician for expert opinion. Sometimes it creates further health hazards. But the respondents very often pay no attention due to their ignorance. However, they also receive services from the government hospital and clinic with patience though it is time consuming and cannot meet their demands adequately. One of the female respondents reported that:

> *"Sometimes I go to the government hospitals for receiving health* services. It takes more time than private chamber of practitioners. But I get it at the minimal cost, that is, only by *service fee,"* (Rahima).

However, some of them try to receive improved health services from private hospital and private chamber of the physicians in the case of critical situations. It creates financial burden on them. The respondents also prefer preventive measures to curative ones so that they could lead a healthy life. For example, they maintain neat and cleanliness and follow health rules to be safe from infectious and transmittable diseases. Almost the same responses were found in FGD sessions.

3.4.4 Strategies to fulfill requirements of reproductive healthcare

It has been found that the respondents have very little ideas about reproductive health. Therefore, they try to understand reproductive health issue by consulting literature and through mass media (by listening to FM band radio in cell phone and by watching television) so that difficulties related to reproductive health may be avoided. Mahbuba, a student of Master's degree, mentioned that:

> *"I have gained knowledge related to reproductive health. But it* is very little compared to requirements. We should try to know *more to be protected from reproductive health hazards."*

In case of child birth, most deliveries are taken place at own residence in rural areas by the assistance of traditional birth attendants who have minimum orientation to midwifery. But in urban areas the respondents prefer hospital and maternity center for delivery. Mousumi, one of the respondents from a rural area, reported that:

> *"Most of the childbirths in our village take place at house with* the assistance of traditional birth attendants. Only in critical cases the people take the help of a professional midwife or go to *hospitals."*

The findings, mentioned above, are the general situation of Bangladesh in respect of reproductive healthcare that comply with the findings of Tarafder (2013).

3.4.5 Strategies to cope with lack of housing facilities

The findings show that all the respondents enjoy housing facilities with some limitations. They adopt various measures to minimize the limitations. They try to keep their houses neat and clean to avoid unhealthy environment. They cook for two times when gas supply is available to overcome gas crisis. Sometimes they use kerosene stove during disruption of gas supply. However, some of the respondents (students) share their rooms with their partners to reduce housing cost as they are not in a position to bear too much housing cost alone. The statement of Risan is mentionable in this respect. He stated:

> *"I live in a rented mess house. I share my room with my* roommate to reduce expenditure. Lack of gas supply is one of the problems in our area. So, we use kerosene stove to cook *during disruption of gas supply."*

However, it has been found that the youths have limited access to recreational facilities as the play grounds are limited and parks are occupied by unauthorized vendors and floating people. As a result they pass their leisure time by gossiping with their friends and listening to songs in a cell phone.

3.4.6 Strategies to overcome limitations of vocational education and training sector

The findings show that there are some barriers to attain vocational education and to receive training such as financial crisis, lack of skilled instructors, eve-teasing and lack of training centers in rural areas. Because of financial crisis some of the respondents were compelled to learn how to operate a computer and a photocopy machine with the assistance of friends and relatives. One of the respondents reported that:

> *"I have learned how to operate a digital photocopy machine* from my maternal uncle. Now I can make copies and take prints by using a photocopy machine. It (my efficiency) has helped me *to get a job in a photocopy shop,"* (Sumon).

In rural areas, some youths also learned poultry and livestock rearing by observing activities of other persons on a trial and error basis. Likewise, female youths learned embroidery and poultry rearing from their ancestors, friends and neighbors. On the other hand, a few of the respondents reported that they learned how to operate a computer on a trial and error basis as the competency and quality of the instructors of vocational education institutes are not up to the desired level.

4. Discussion

The present study is inclined to understand the needs of the youths, barriers to fulfill their needs and to analyze the strategies adopted by them to cope with the situation. The study unveils some needs of the youths that should be fulfilled for their better development. It finds that the crying needs of the youths are quality education, healthcare, reproductive healthcare, satisfying job, vocational and technical education and training on small and cottage industry so that they could attain self-reliance while previous studies focused on employment, education, healthcare and so on (Biswas, 2017; Guha, 2016; British Council, Action Aid & University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, 2015). But the nature of needs varies from person to person and place to place that conforms to the findings of Graner et al., (2012). For example, respondents from lower income group emphasized on food and nutrition and healthcare. Students who live in mess houses or student hostels mentioned the need for increasing residential facilities as their current needs.

The youths under the present study were found to face a lot of challenges to fulfill their needs. The study finds that in spite of increasing enrolment at primary level many of the youths could not continue their study due to financial constraints. On the other hand, female youths were compelled to give up their study because of early marriage and eve-teasing that comply with the findings of Islam (2012). Furthermore, insufficient educational materials and opportunities are constraining factors to get quality education that conform to Sarkar et al., (2013) study. However, data show that in spite of economic hardship most of the respondents could arrange for their necessary food in general. But the problem is that they do not get fresh and pure food because of use of excessive chemicals in food items and adulteration of food by dishonest businessmen. Contaminated food is one kind of barrier to fulfillment of food requirements (Hossain, 2014).

With regard to healthcare, rural youths are deprived of healthcare facilities as the qualified and efficient physicians are reluctant to stay in rural areas. On other hand, healthcare facilities at the government hospitals are not up to the desired level and expenses of healthcare at private hospitals are very high that are beyond the capacity of most of the youths. Therefore, the youths, especially the rural poor, suffer from lack of health services. Like, the healthcare facilities, the youths are deprived of reproductive health services. The findings show that high cost of services, lack of technical qualifications of the practitioners and lack of transportation facilities are major constraints to avail reproductive health services that comply with the findings of Banik (2016).

In respect of housing facilities, the findings show that the poor households of slum area are deprived of utility services (Shams et al., 2014). But all the respondents of urban areas mentioned that disruption of power (although the condition has been better than earlier) and gas supply hampers their livelihoods. On the other hand, houses in rural areas are mostly dilapidated and vulnerable to natural disasters. However, unemployment is one of the problems faced by the youths. The study finds that to get a decent job is challenging for the youths. Absence of quality education is one of the barriers to get a job (The Independent, 2018). On the other hand, some of the youths could not attain quality education due to financial crisis. In addition, population growth and complexity of getting financial support for self-employment are responsible for unemployment. Purdah norm is also responsible for women unemployment in Bangladesh that *restricts women's mobility.*

The youths under the present study adopt a variety of strategies to fulfill their needs. For the purpose of combating financial crisis the youths earn money through doing private tuition, and part-time job along with their schooling. With regard to fulfillment of health services, the youths mostly depend upon the government hospitals for healthcare but it is time consuming as the number of service recipients is greater than that of service providers. Sometimes they are compelled to receive services at private hospitals that further creates financial burden on them. Very often it creates pauperization among the people. The findings show that the youths are compelled to live in unhealthy environment because of financial crisis and lack of housing facilities. But they try to maintain neat and cleanliness. The poor youths share their rooms with their partners to ease financial crisis. However, they depend upon modern technology (cell phone, computer, and television) for fulfillment of their recreational needs as play grounds are occupied by vested interest groups, vendors and floating people. And it is not favorable for their proper development.

5. Policy implications

The findings of the study lead the researcher to the following policy recommendations. These recommendations are designed to strengthen youth development programs to address needs of the youths of the changing society of Bangladesh.

The study finds that early marriage is still a constraining factor for higher education of female students. Therefore, awareness should be raised against early marriage and about importance of higher education for women. It is also found that because of economic hardship many youths are compelled to discontinue their schooling. The government may arrange for interest free education loan for poor household so that their children can continue their study. The findings further show that lack of standard books, technological facilities, and skilled instructors are still constraining factors for receiving quality education in our country. Therefore, appropriate measures should be taken to overcome these limitations. There should be arrangement for available books, modern technology and equipment, and appointment of skilled and qualified instructors.

The findings show that contamination of food is a serious barrier to the fulfillment of food requirements. The government has to strictly apply related law to protect food adulteration so that the people can consume fresh and pure food. It would be helpful to the development of public health situation. However, the data indicate that the youths are being deprived of health services due to financial crisis, negligence of health practitioners and lack of necessary medicine and machineries. Therefore, availability of medicine and necessary medical instruments as well as physicians and nurses should be ensured in hospitals, medical centers and community clinics so that the youths can get best services. The findings further show that the youths have little knowledge about reproductive health. Hence, awareness has to be created among the youths about reproductive health through mass media and traditional cultural programs. Reproductive health and sexual education should be included at least in the curriculum of tertiary levels so as to strengthen the knowledge base of the youths regarding this issue.

It has been found in this study that many youths, especially in urban areas live in dilapidated houses and in unhealthy condition, and some of them (especially students) face problem in hiring houses as they are unmarried. Therefore, housing facilities should be increased for low income-group with utility services. On the other hand, residential facilities should be increased for the students of tertiary level.

In addition, the government has to facilitate employment opportunity for the youths as a large number of them is still unemployed. Connection between educational institutes and job market has to be strengthened so that the youths can enter into the job market after completion of their education.

6. Conclusion

The main objective of the present study was to explore the understanding of the youths about their needs, limitations to fulfill the needs and to understand how they cope with the situation. The respondents identified a variety of needs, barriers to fulfill their needs adequately and delineated a number of coping mechanisms. The findings of the study are intended to be useful to the government and youth welfare organizations in developing new plans and programs for youth development. But generalization of the findings should be made with caution since the study has been carried out on a small number of samples selected purposively by using qualitative approach. It did not examine cause-effect relationship between education and employment, education and income, unemployment and its consequences and so on. Therefore, further research may be carried out on the identified issues. But this study is a little contribution to the growing body of literature and knowledge on youth problems and their development.

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Fostering Influencer Driven Purchase Intention through Facebook Live: The Persuasive Role of Brand Trust

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Abstract
Companies nowadays find it effective to collaborate with Facebook influencers who host informative live sessions on brands and gradually create an emotion laden relationship with their followers using the platform. However, for a brand to sell in the market, it must be trusted by the consumers. This study examines the role of brand trust in inducing consumers' purchase intention when the endorsement information is publicized by prominent Facebook influencers who also happen to have a strong emotional bond with the followers. Using the PLS-SEM method, this study drew empirical results from 320 online users who follow at least one Facebook influencer's live endorsements. Selectively chosen respondents stated that emotional attachment with Facebook influencers built over live streaming platforms and the perceived informative value of their live sessions reaffirm their brand trust which in turn stimulates their willingness to purchase the recommended brands. Building on the notion of trusting belief, this research confirmed that even over a highly engaging and interactive platform like Facebook Live, influencers' informative endorsements and their emotional connection with the followers cannot activate purchase willingness if brands do not evoke trust in the viewers' minds. This study suggests that, marketers who are willing to leverage influencers for endorsing their brands through Facebook live sessions should carefully collaborate with those individuals who have expert knowledge in specific product categories and emotional involvement with their viewers as these are the drivers for establishing brand trust.
Keywords: Live-streaming, Facebook, Informativeness, Emotional attachment, Brand trust.

1. Introduction

Social media is now an inseparable element of our lives. Therefore, social media influencers have become vital ambassadors in companies' communication strategies. The global volume of influencer marketing may exceed 373 million in 2027 which used to worth only 148 million US$ in

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2019 (Statista, 2020). The recent influx in influencer marketing has been brought by the fact that these individuals command a pervasive impact on a huge follower base spread across the world and it only keeps growing exponentially by the years. Followers are interested in influencers as they provide expert information in specialized areas of interests (Lee et al., 2022). Not just information, but their relationship with their followers is also strengthened by utmost trust and because of these reasons marketers find them instrumental when it comes to endorsing brands on online platforms. (Mediakix, 2019).

As companies vastly pay famous influencers to collaborate with them, they want to know what influencer qualities lead consumers to want to buy the brands they promote. Extant literature on influencer marketing has highlighted influencers' ability to drive not just their followers' purchase intention (PI effect) but also a whole set of other behavioral responses; e.g., sharing influencer's contents (Ki & Kim, 2019), identifying with them (Wahab et al., 2022), forming positive brand attitude etc. (Torres et al., 2019). Prior studies frequently underscored how certain source attributes; like attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise boost followers' behavioral intentions (Koay et al., 2021; Lou and Yuan, 2019). Perceived credibility (Pick, 2020), perceived influence (Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021), para social interaction (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), high number of followers (Jin & Phua, 2014) etc. were cited by scholars as other dominant influencer traits that drove consumers' PI effect. However, savvy social media users today choose to pay closer attention to those contents which are informative, engaging and reflect the influencer's expert knowledge in a particular domain. Earlier Lou and Yuan (2019) showed that informativeness an infleuncer's content along with its originality and quality (Woodroof et al., 2020) positively influenced followers' purchase intention. Another reason for which companies are leaning towards influencer marketing is that social media followers, upon identifying themselves with the influencers' virtual avatar gradually form an emotional connection with them. Perceived emotional attachment is formed when influencers consistently expose themselves to the followers and regularly post authentic contents and photos (Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016).

The mechanism by which social media influencers' informative contents or their attachment to the followers induces consumers' purchase willingness is quite intricate with the existence of the effect of mediators. Prior studies have shown how the information quality of blogger influencers' posts impact consumers' PI through the mediation of positive consumer attitude (Ing & Ming, 2018). Sánchez-Fernández and Jiménez-Castillo (2021) claimed that informativeness and emotional attachment can induce the PI effect only when perceived influence acts as a mediator in the causal pathway. Other studies have confirmed the mediation of credibility (Saima & Khan, 2020) and trust toward the influencer (Lou & Yuan, 2019) in linking informativeness with purchase intention. The use of mediators in the above-mentioned studies bolstered their validity because a mediator shows how a third variable transmits the effect an independent variable has on a dependent variable (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007). No matter how informative an influencer's content is or how strong an attachment he shares with his followers, if followers do not trust the manufacturer's brand, the influencer's communication efforts will never come through. Current body of literature has time and again showed that high trust in the influencer's brand can drive higher level of constancy in purchase (Matzler et al., 2008; Tsiotsou, 2016) Leite and Baptista (2022) showed that imaginary intimacy with the influencer transfers a feeling a trust in the manufacturer's brand which increases purchase intention. Brand trust can be defined as consumers' perception of the extent to which they feel the influencer endorsed brand can deliver on its selling proposition. Given how this construct can reassure consumers' faith in the company and in the influencer, we decided to incorporate brand trust as a mediator in explaining the impact that informativeness and emotional attachment might have on purchase intention.

Extant literature on influencer marketing mostly assessed Instagram influencers' endorsement effects on followers' PI. Despite all the popularity that Instagram enjoys, Facebook still remains to be the most used global platform in 2023, with the number of active users hitting 2.93 billion monthly (Kolsquare, 2023). Facebook influencers often stream on lives to demonstrate the brands they endorse in real time instead of just telling consumers about the product. When popular influencers endorse brands on Facebook Lives, followers find it exciting as they find influencers responding to their queries and requests in real time (Olenski, 2017). The same source reiterated that, live streaming in itself boosts brand trust as it gives each Facebook content a face and a voice. Given the impact of Facebook Lives on online consumers, we intended to examine if Facebook influencers' informative contents and emotional engagement built over live sessions can translate into shaping followers' purchase intention as mediated by brand trust. In short, our research objectives are:

1. To examine whether Facebook influencers' informative endorsements and emotional attachment to the followers on live streaming boost the latter's trust in the brand.
2. To explore how brand trust influences followers' intention to purchase the brands the influencers endorse on their Facebook Lives.

The study of extant literature found no evidence of brand trust being used as a mediator when scholars wanted to determine how perceived informativeness of a Facebook influencer's live streaming and his/her emotional attachment to the followers influenced the latter' intention to buy. To fill this void, this research extended the notion of Trusting belief with a view to incorporating brand trust as a mediating construct in the proposed conceptual model.

The empirical findings obtained from 306 social media users who follow at least one Facebook influencer's live sessions confirmed that the two pivotal factors, namely- perceived informativeness and emotional attachment play salient roles in reinforcing consumers' sense of brand trust. Brand trust was also found to influence followers' PI effects.

This article can be divided into four sections. Discussion regarding Facebook Live, its impact on followers' purchase intention and the theoretical underpinning of the study lay the foundation for the background of the research in Section 1. Section 2 formulates the research hypotheses followed by Section 3 which describes the methodology, results and discussion of the study. The implications, limitations and conclusion of the article are explained in Section 4.

2. Research backgrounds

2.1. Emergence of influencers' live streaming practice to motivate customers' purchase willingness

A new phenomenon in the e-commerce sector today is live streaming videos which stimulate online product buying (Cai & Wohn 2019). John et al. (2016) cited that as people are spending a large portion of their time over social media, companies are largely using such media for spreading their brand news to the customers. Pham and Gammoh (2015) and Algharabat et al (2020) also agreed that organizations are willingly applying different social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. simultaneously to form a powerful brand awareness among the people and to capture a positive place in their minds. Moreover, these social media platforms enable both the sellers and customers to come up with any of their experiences or information to be shared with others through text-based posts or via pictures and videos (Henning-Thurau, 2004). Customers seek answers from those on social media platforms who have prior knowledge on specific issues rather than depending on one-sided company promoted information (Cox et al.,2009). They have more trust in influencer provided reviews, suggestions, opinions as they perceive these individuals as experts in their fields (Jalilvand et al., 2011).

Companies become the endorsed parties and they send rewards either as free sample of the product, gifts, social exposure or financial remuneration to their sponsored social media influencers (Freberg, et al.,2011). Sogo (2021) explained that these influencers are being considered as the source of information which potential customers are using as recommendation while generating their purchase intention. Young generations accept this practice and enjoy interacting with their favorite influencers. When these influencers join live sessions on behalf of a company, real time engagement is created between them and their followers where products are presented with in-depth details and followers get more transparent information (Chen, et.al., 2018). Influencers' live streaming videos reduce prospects' stress by giving comfort through instantaneous interaction (Hajli, 2015). In a study, Hasanov and Khalid (2015) revealed that an influencer's positive reviews might generate his customers' needs and purchase intentions subsequently. During live streaming sessions, when influencers showcase their endorsed brands, other participants' reactions and opinions may also contribute to inducing followers' purchase willingness.

2.2. Facebook Live and its impact on customers' purchase intentions

Pliancharoen (2019), confirmed that when influencers provide detailed information on Facebook Live videos, it significantly enhances customers' purchasing intention. As Facebook is used by almost everyone and it is also user-friendly, customers like to depend on Facebook to facilitate their purchase decision making process. While using this tool- Facebook, live streaming becomes a popular way among the people to know about the product and ask questions at the same time. According to Chen et.al (2018), live streaming shopping gets familiarity in Facebook as companies find this digital platform to be powerful in ensuring maximum customer reach. Facebook Live streaming is all about video recording and broadcasting at a particular time through which one party can show anything and the viewers can provide immediate responses (Kang et al., 2021). Different social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube are providing free access to start live streaming for establishing real time connection with the audience (Liu et al., 2020).

Leeraphong and Shukrat (2018) in their study mentioned that merchants are using their Facebook pages more actively today which gives a vibe to the customers that they are shopping from online stores. Facebook Live sessions are creating real time purchase impressions for their viewers which motivate them to make impulsive buying decisions. Through the videos, marketers are demonstrating their products in detail and responding to their customers' queries which simulates a store-like environment to the shoppers (Sentance, 2019). As a result, buying intention is easy to rouse. The more people an influencer can connect on his live on Facebook, the stronger the influence he can exert in intensifying buying intentions (Xu &Y, 2007). One of the findings from the study of Leeraphong and Shukra (2018) is that, customers who made purchase after watching Facebook Live videos, were initially attracted by the influencer's presentation and later on pressed the 'Like' button on that specific page to get regular updates for continuing their buying practices. Organizations are now bringing influencers to perform lives on social media as such endorsements create relationship between brands and influencers which in return drive sales as influencers deliver product recommendations to their followers (Brown & Hayes, 2008 and McNutt, 2021).

2.3. Driving brand trust: Extending the widely known trust transfer and human brands theory and building on the notion of trusting beliefs

Followers' reaction to an endorsed brand hinges on how informative they perceive the social media influencer's endorsement content to be (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Lou and Yuan added, when Instagram followers find an influencer's content to be informative, they start believing that the influencer is an expert in that domain. When followers trust an online influencer, they also find the information provided by him to be trustworthy (Martínez-López et. al., 2020). On a Facebook platform, when consumers are given more information about a brand, their trust perception in the brand is reaffirmed (Pongpaew et. al., 2017). So, we can safely state what was earlier reassured by Stewart (2003) in his theory that trust is often transferred from one entity to the other. Stewart, in his trust transfer theory (widely recognized for ecommerce transactions) represented trust transfer to be a cognitive process whereby consumers' trust in a known entity is shifted to shape his trust perceptions toward an unknown entity. Social media influencers who promote informative contents are highly trusted by online consumers (Ki et al., 2022; Balaban,2020). Stewart proclaims that when an individual finds proximity or similarity between the source and target object, the trust transfer materializes. Earlier Hu et al. (2019) applied trust transfer theory in influencer marketing study to prove that when consumers trust an SMI (the source object), their trust is transferred to the app (target object) endorsed by the SMI. In this context, we can consider Facebook influencer's informative content to be the source entity that stimulates trust and the brand trust construct to be the target entity. When followers of a Facebook influencer find his/ her content to be informative, their trust perceptions of the influencer will increase and through the link of live endorsement, will be transferred to the brand.

This study attempted to explain the influence of emotional attachment on brand trust through the lens of human brand theory (Thomson, 2006). A human brand is a well-known or emerging celebrity who because of his unique traits becomes so likable to the followers that he can easily trigger emotions in them. Thomson, in his seminal theory on human brands stated that, when a human brand increases his followers feeling of autonomy and relatedness (perception of closeness), his followers become highly attached to him which enables him to drive effective marketing outcomes. Thomson (2006) reiterated that; it is because of this attachment that followers often transfer the positive emotions they have towards the human brand celebrity to the products endorsed by him. On live streaming platforms, influencers acting as human brands actively interact with their followers in real time (Jun & Yi,2020). Jun & Yi further posited that live interactivity makes followers believe that they are emotionally attached to their favorite influencers. When consumers get more and more attached to the Facebook influencers they are exposed to through interactive lives, they gradually start trusting the brands endorsed by these influencers (AIContentfy,2023). Udo, and Stella (2015) reaffirmed that influencers can never convince their followers to trust a brand they endorse if followers do not feel emotionally connected to them. So, we can rhetorically justify the fact that emotional attachment towards a human aka influencer brand can propel trust in the product endorsed by that influencer.

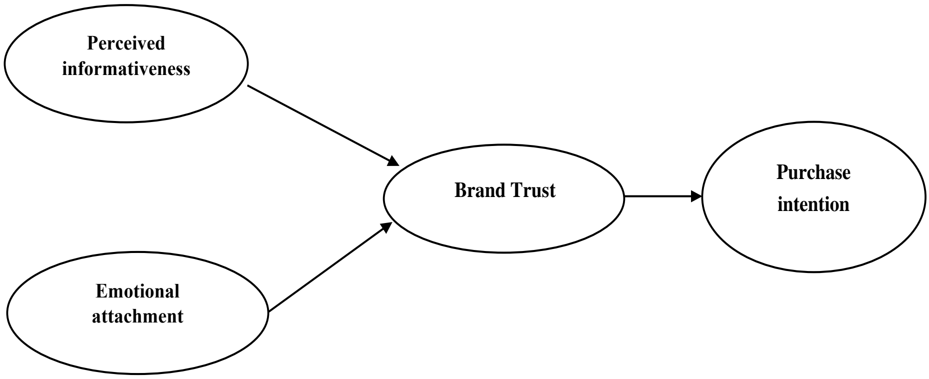
Moreover, when consumers become attached to a brand, they feel secured in their relationship with the brand and tend to believe that the brand will never lie. Similarly, when consumers feel attached to a human brand, they also feel positively about the product endorsed by the human brand and initiates a trusting relationship with him (Thomson, 2006). This study seeks to extend the human brand theory on the ground that like attachment to a non-living brand can reinforce brand trust (Belaid & Temessek Behi, 2011), strong emotional connection with a living human brand can also be predictive of brand trust.

Depending on the notion of Trusting belief, this study tried to explicate how brand trust accounts for variation in consumers' purchase intention. The concept of Trusting belief was first promoted by McKnight et al. (1998), who denoted trusting belief as a conviction of one party to feel that the other party is benevolent and honest. One of McKnight et al.'s most cited trusting beliefs is honesty/integrity whereby the one who places trust in the trustee believes that the latter will keep up to his commitments and will never lie. It is because of the integrity component of the Trusting belief construct that online consumers perceive that a brand will deliver on its promise when they experience uncertainty and risk in forming purchase intentions. Schlosser et al. (2006) investigated the impact of trusting beliefs in reducing the risks involved in online purchases. When online vendors are deemed to be honest, reliable and expert, consumers tend to trust them more and their intentions to purchase from these vendors increase (Sahi et al., 2016).

Likewise, in the context of influencer marketing, when consumers place their integrity oriented trusting belief on the brands endorsed to conceive that it will deliver on its selling proposition, they are more likely to form positive behavioral intentions to buy them. Previous studies have also empirically proved that when consumers trust a brand, they are more likely to form favorable intentions to purchase it (Luk & Yip, 2008; Leite & Baptista,2022). However, this study exclusively relied on the integrity component of the trusting belief to explain that brand trust could be highly predictive of consumers' purchase intentions over live streaming platforms.

With these backgrounds, the study assumes that informativeness of Facebook influencers' live contents and their emotional attachment to the followers developed on the same platform can induce followers' intent to purchase the recommended brand only when the latter party perceives the brand to be trusted. Earlier in this paper we mentioned that, Sánchez-Fernández and Jiménez-Castillo (2021) confirmed the mediating existence of perceived influence in linking social media influencers' informative content and emotional attachment with followers' purchase intention. Given the varied application of brand trust as a mediator in online purchase intention related studies (Benhardy,2020; Salhab et al.,2023) as well as in influencer marketing research (Mammadli, 2021; Leite & Baptista, 2022), we claim that Facebook followers' trust in brands recommended on live videos is influenced by, 1. Whether they find the live endorsement to be informative, 2. How emotionally attached they are to the live influencers. Furthermore, we proclaim that followers are going to manifest their brand trust in the form of purchase intention (PI). Formerly, this assertion was empirically validated in other influencer marketing studies (Reinikainen et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2008; Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021). Hence, what makes our conceptual model first of its kind, is that we etched out a platform specific live streaming laden influence mechanism which will try to empirically prove that no matter how informative the influencer's live is or how strongly attached he is to his followers, the PI effect may not effectuate without the mediation of brand trust. The model is outlined in the Figure below.

Figure 1: The conceptual model



3. Research hypotheses

3.1. Influencer's informativeness and emotional attachment stimulating brand trust through Facebook Live

An informative content from the Facebook influencer explains, instructs and enlightens consumers with valuable and important information and demonstrates on the use of the endorsed brand to some extent. An online content is perceived to be high in informativeness when it is complete, precise and reliable (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). In this study we assessed an Facebook influencer's live content being informative based on whether followers perceived the information to be rich in content, personalized to meet their needs, contained enough details to suffice their demand and allowed them to compare among alternative product options. To be more specific, this study assessed informativeness from the perspective of its utilitarian value. When information provided on online video platforms meets consumers' functional demand with regard to product assortment, quality, price, benefits and comparison, it is known to be utilitarian or useful in nature (Lin et al., 2018). Lin et al. found video blogs to be very effective in disseminating utilitarian information as it allowed greater vividness in terms of demonstration of the endorsed brand. While video contents from influencers provide better informativeness, live streaming technology takes it to a new standard by establishing it as quality content (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). On live streaming platforms, simultaneous interaction takes place where consumers get information on what they are interested in from the influencer streamer who also responds to their product inquiries in real time (Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2018). Using live promotional streaming, influencers on Facebook are helping consumers with detailed, reliable, accurate and complete information on hotel accommodation (Lua et al.,2020). Real time interaction with influencers reduces followers' perceived uncertainty regarding the use of the product, which enhances their trust in the endorsed brand (Kwon et al., 2021). Wang et al. (2009) further reaffirmed that, if high quality information can be provided through online interactivity, it can reinforce consumers' trust in the brand. Earlier, Lou and Yuan (2019) showed how Instagram expert influencer's informative posts, information about brand alternatives and reviews on the endorsed brand enhanced followers' trust in the brands promoted. Facebook Live, being the platform of this study, we hereby hypothesize:

H1: Followers who perceive higher informativeness in a Facebook influencer's live will trust the endorsed brand more.

Emotional attachment can be characterized by the fondness, liking and passion that online consumers feel towards an influencer. Attachment is rooted in the trust that grows from being exposed to the influencer over an extended length of time. When online influencers step out of their celebrity fame and aura and present themselves as real persons, consumers feel more emotionally attached to them (Kowalczyk & Pounders, 2016). Such attachment is further strengthened over Facebook Live streaming where influencers get the chance to form a meaningful and interactive tie with their followers (Liu et al., 2020). Initially consumers feel no closeness and may not even know the influencer very well, but by the virtue of two-way interaction on live platforms, followers' perceived sense of bonding with the influencer intensifies (Jun & Yi, 2020). Emotional attachment developed on live streaming platforms do not just strengthen the relationship between the streamer influencer and his viewers but also improves the viewer's relationship with the brand (Wan et al., 2017). Interactivity on Facebook is largely enhanced when influencers go live promoting their products and such interactivity, as posited by Jun & Yi., is very important in forming intimacy and attachment with the followers.

Close emotional bond between a celebrity and his followers acts as a cogent factor in explaining how celebrity endorsement impacts consumers' perceived brand trust (Koththagoda & Dissanayake, 2017). When followers feel passionately about an influencer, they start believing that the influencer will never lie about the brand he is endorsing. Like Jun and Yi (2020) confirmed that, 60 percent of the variance in brand trust is caused by consumers' attachment to the brand. Similarly, if we consider influencers as human brands (Ki et al., 2020), we can assume that Facebook influencers' attachment to their followers might reinforce the latter's trust in the endorsed brand. Based on this reasoning, we propose the following:

H2: Followers who have a stronger emotional attachment to Facebook influencers developed over live streaming will trust the endorsed brand more.

3.2. Brand trust influencing purchase intention through Facebook Live

Brand trust can be characterized by consumers' reliability on the brand to be able to perform its required functions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Formerly, it was proved that when consumers hold a favorable perception towards a recommended brand; that is, when they trust the brand to deliver on its promise, their intention to purchase that brand increases (Leite & Baptista, 2022; Reinikainen et al., 2020). Live streaming platforms, because of its own unique characteristics like, interactivity and real time demonstration allow the streamer influencer to be more persuasive than other forms of social media contents (Chen & Wang, 2022).

The authors further proved that, when consumers trust a streamer influencer on a social media platform, they also start trusting the brand he promotes which further induce their purchase intention. Extending this reasoning from the perspectives of Facebook influencers' lives, we predict:

H3: Followers who trust the brand recommended by a live influencer, will have a stronger intention to purchase it.

4. Methodology

For testing the research model and the subsequent hypotheses, this study etched out a structured questionnaire and rolled it through an online survey technique in order to collect data.

4.1. Measurement

The questionnaire was developed using Google Form and was disseminated to 320 respondents via email, WhatsApp and Facebook messenger. For a quantitative study where the proposed model entails less than five constructs (the current study model consisted of four constructs), the ruling is to opt for a sample size between 200 to 400(Hair et al., 2014). The final sample size of 306 valid responses adhered to this law. The questionnaire consisted of five sections. The first section briefed the respondents by declaring that the survey was designed to assess the impact Facebook influencers' live endorsements have on followers' purchase intention. The next section commenced by asking if the respondents followed any Facebook influencer whose live sessions recommended brands to them. This section also incorporated demographic questions and ended by asking the respondents to choose the types of endorsements they frequently join over Facebook Lives. From the third section onwards, fourteen questions were asked to the respondents which were measured on a five-point Likert scale where 1 denoted Strongly Disagree and 5 denoted Strongly Agree. All the items of each construct (perceived informativeness and emotional attachment being the independent variables, brand trust being the mediating and purchase intention being the dependent variable) were adapted from previously available social media influencer studies to ensure validity. Four items were employed to measure the perceived informativeness construct. Among them, one was adapted from Ki et al. (2020) and the other three were adapted from Onofrei et al. (2022). Off the four items of the emotional attachment construct, two came from Aw et al. (2022) and the other two from Kowalczyk and Pounders (2016). All the three items measuring the brand trust construct came from Reinikainen et al. (2020). One of the three items on the purchase intention scale came from Xie and Feng (2023) while the other two were adapted from Farivar and Wang (2022).

4.2. Data collection and analysis

The study collected data from a sample of respondents who were chosen using non-probabilistic purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling ensures the selection of those individuals into the sample who yield the most relevant and useful information (Campbell et al.,2020). The surveyor collected data from students, employed, self-employed and even unemployed Dhaka city residents who were following one or more Facebook influencers' lives that endorsed gaming/fitness equipment, beauty and cosmetic products, lifestyle and fashion brands, food/restaurants, tours and leisure destinations etc. With 44.7 million active users, Bangladesh is among the top three Facebook-using countries in the world ("Bangladesh among top 3 countries,"2023). Among them, about 39.7% of the country's residents live in Dhaka who progressively access social networking sites and age between 18 to 38 years (Kemp,2022). Dhaka also stands second in the world in terms of Facebook usage with its 2.2 crore active Facebook users ("Dhaka stands 2nd among,"2023). On these grounds, choosing Dhaka city residents to represent our sample was well justified. 18- to 24-year-old respondents were reached out by the surveyor with prime focus as they are mostly university students who are deemed to be the most active social media users (Smith & Anderson, 2018)

To test the entire model fit and to appraise all the hypothesized interrelationships among the constructs, SMART PLS-4 software was used which is an updated tool to assess very complex structural equation models with enough measurement flexibility (Ringle et al., 2022). Along with using the basic PLS-SEM analysis, this study extensively used advanced algorithms like Bootstrapping and PLSPredict.

5. Results

A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed to collect data using both online and offline channels and 312 questionnaires were returned. All the returned questionnaires were assessed to check quality and completeness and a total 306 questionnaires (98.08% of the sample) were found to be usable. Of the 306 respondents, around 40% were female and 60% were male. Their ages ranged from 18 to above 45 and 68.7% were aged between 18 to 24. A majority of the respondents were university graduates (95.4%) who provided valuable insights. People from different occupations made up the sample including students, employed individuals, self-employed and unemployed individuals.

5.1. Measurement model analysis

Measurement model assesses the relationship among all the latent constructs (Perceived Informativeness, Emotional Attachment, Brand Trust and Purchase Intention) and their respective indicators. Reliability and validity of the measurement model must be confirmed before assessing the structural model (Bajpai & Bajpai, 2014; Zhang, 2022).

5.2. Reliability

To confirm internal consistency of the model in repeated measures under similar conditions, model reliability was assessed using Cronbach alpha and Composite reliability (CR). These are two widely adopted measures of model reliability in SEM (Hair et al., 2020). Both Cronbach alpha and Composite reliability (CR) have an acceptable threshold value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Composite reliability values of all the constructs were well above the recommended threshold ranging from 0.835 (purchase intention) to 0.767 (emotional attachment). Cronbach alpha values reconfirmed sufficient internal consistency of the model as all the constructs had respective Cronbach alpha values above the minimal acceptable threshold (Table-1).

Table 1: Indicator values for reliability and convergent validity evaluation

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Factor loadings
Brand trust	0.810	0.813	0.724	0.838-0.871
Emotional attachment	0.761	0.767	0.581	0.725-0.791
Perceived informative-ness	0.816	0.833	0.642	0.761-0.840
Purchase intention	0.827	0.835	0.744	0.810-0.914

5.3. Validity

Measurement model validity verifies the accuracy of the model by ensuring that what was originally intended to be tested in the study were actually measured. To confirm complete validity of a particular model both convergent and discriminant validity must be evaluated (Hair et al., 2018; Kock, 2020).

Convergent validity requires indicators measuring the same constructs to be converged. According to Hair et al., (2021), factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are well accepted measures of convergent validity where factor loading beyond 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50 are indicators of excellent convergent validity. Factor loadings of all the items were found to be fairly acceptable **(**Table 1**).** AVE of all the constructs ranged from 0.581 to 0.744 which were well above the threshold value of 0.50.

Discriminant validity ensures that each construct has its separate identity measures that are actually unrelated with the indicators of other constructs (Rasoolimanesh, 2022). Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio are the most popular measures of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2011). Fornell-Larcker assessment requires that the squared root of the AVE of every construct is higher than its corresponding correlation coefficients (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The HTMT ratio must be below 0.90 to confirm the model fit (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 2 and 3 show the results of Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio as evidences of enough discriminant validity.

Table 2: HTMT ratio

	Brand trust	Emotional attachment	Perceived in-formativeness	Purchase intention
Brand trust				
Emotional attachment	0.692			
Perceived informativeness	0.724	0.832		
Purchase intention	0.821	0.797	0.798	

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Brand trust	Emotional attachment	Perceived in-formativeness	Purchase intention
Brand trust	**0.851**			
Emotional attachment	0.551	**0.762**		
Perceived informativeness	0.602	0.667	**0.801**	
Purchase intention	0.674	0.631	0.665	**0.862**

Note: Diagonals (**in bold**) represent the squared root of the average variance extracted (AVE) while the other entries represent the correlations.

5.4. Structural model analysis

As the measurement model confirmed excellent reliability and validity fit, the structural model was assessed next to verify the relationship among all the endogenous (brand trust and purchase intention) and the exogenous constructs (perceived informativeness and emotional attachment). Before testing all the hypothesized interrelationships, structural model fit was tested applying several measures.

Firstly, to determine the determination power of all the exogenous constructs, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was assessed which must be greater than 0.10 to be accepted. The results suggested that over 40% of the variance in brand trust and about 45% of the variance in purchase intention were explained by the exogenous constructs (Table 4).

f^2 value indicates size of effect where 0.35 or higher f^2 values imply substantial impact. f^2 values ranging between 0.15 to 0.35 and 0.02 to 0.15 indicate medium and small effect size respectively (Chin, 1998; Monecke & Leisch, 2012). The study reported that brand trust (f^2 =0.835) had a substantial impact on purchase intention of endorsed brands while perceived informativeness (f^2 =0.166) had moderate and emotional attachment (f^2 =0.068) had a small impact on brand trust.

Table 4: R-square and f-square indices

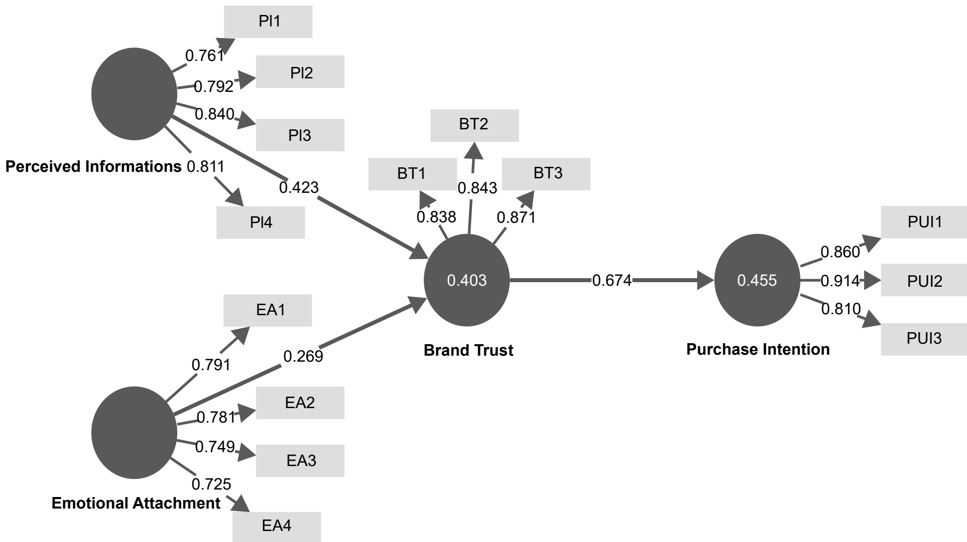
Exogenous constructs	f-square	Endogenous constructs	R-square
Brand trust	0.835	Brand trust	0.403
Emotional attachment	0.068	Purchase intention	0.455
Perceived informativeness	0.166		

Additionally, Q^2 values were derived running the PLSPredict algorithm in Smart PLS-4. All the Q^2 values ranged between 0.245 to 0.342 which are well above the recommended threshold of 0 (Hair et al., 2018).

Lastly, the model fit was reconfirmed with the Standardized Root Means Square Residual (SRMR) value which was 0.071. The SRMR value was below 0.08 as per recommendation indicating good predictive accuracy (Hu & Bentler, 1998).

5.5. Hypotheses testing

Figure 2: The structural model



Note. Relationships between all the latent constructs were assessed with 5% significance level or 95% confidence level taking into account the path coefficients, T statistics and P values.

Table 5: Results of hypothesis testing

Hypotheses	Path coefficients	T statistics	P values	Support
Brand trust -> Purchase intention	0.674	18.255	0.000	Supported
Emotional attachment -> Brand trust	0.269	3.978	0.000	Supported
Perceived informativeness -> Brand trust	0.423	6.643	0.000	Supported

The results suggest that both perceived informativeness (t-value=6.643 and p-value= 0.000) and emotional attachment (t-value=3.978 and p-value= 0.000) have positive and significant effect on brand trust supporting H1 and H2. Therefore, it can be concluded that followers who perceive higher informativeness in an Facebook influencer's live session and have strong emotional attachment to the influencer formed over the streaming platform will trust the endorsed brand more. H3 states that brand trust has a direct impact on the intention to purchase the brand endorsed by the live influencer. Results presented in Table 5 support the relationship indicating strong positive significance (t-value=18.255 and p-value= 0.000). All these findings are also supported by previous studies.

6. Discussion

In the context of Facebook influencer marketing on live streaming platforms, this study adopted a trust-based model to portray that brand trust can act as a significant mediator in predicting consumers' purchase intention. The study wanted to explore whether perceived informativeness of Facebook influencers' lives and their emotional attachment to the followers induced followers' willingness to purchase endorsed brands when brand trust acted as a mediator. From that perspective, this study brought to light three major inferences:

Informative live streaming from a trusted Facebook influencer can be highly engaging. When influencers provide expert brand information and answer their followers' questions in real time during live sessions, consumers' trust in the influencers increase which further enhance their trust in the brands endorsed (Chen et al., 2020). In our study, we empirically proved that informative lives of Facebook influencers have a positive and direct influence on consumers' brand trust without having them to trust the influencer as a prior condition. However, trust in the influencer is often formed organically as consumers continuously interact with them through their lives (Kim & Kim,2021). The study further showed that Facebook influencers' informative lives have a medium effect on followers' brand trust (f^2= 0.166). This may be because a number of other factors have proved to show their fair share of effect in boosting brand trust on social media platforms, like, brand reputation, word of mouth (Alam & Yasin,2010), PSR with the online influencer (Leite & Baptista,2022) etc.

When a social media influencer fosters personal dialogues with participants over a live streaming session, his emotional attachment to them increases (Hsu,2023). This study supported the aforementioned finding and extended it by proving that, emotional bond between Facebook influencers and their followers formed over live streaming has a positive and significant impact on followers' brand trust. The present research surveyed respondents who declared that the live sessions of the Facebook influencers they follow are known to and liked by them. Hence the study is in line with the previous discovery that followers are willing to enhance emotional bonding with live influencers they know and like (Li et al., 2021). And when their favorite influencers with whom they are emotionally connected make the endorsed brands visible over Facebook Live and familiarize them with the brand's features, it stimulates their brand trust (Fause Malm & Pedersen, 2015). The f^2 index value corresponding to emotional attachment further verified our finding by confirming a relatively smaller yet positive effect (f^2=0.068) on brand trust.

Finally, the results confirm that brand trust has a strong, positive and direct impact on followers' purchase intentions. Social media influencer studies have previously established brand trust as mediators in connecting influencer's endorsement (Mammadli,2021) and PSR (Leite & Baptista,2022) to consumers' purchase intention. The exclusivity of this study lies in the fact that, for the very first time, it has empirically proved that an Facebook influencer's informativeness and his emotional attachment to the follower base formed over Facebook Live sessions can indirectly impact consumers' purchase willingness via the mediation of brand trust. The f^2 index value (f^2=0.835) shown in the current study further rooted a substantial effect of brand trust on purchase intention.

6.1. Theoretical implications

This study sheds light on existing literature based on social media marketing and influencer marketing, especially from the perspective of how Facebook influencers can utilize live streaming domain to induce customers' purchase willingness. Two of the three consecutive findings of the study collaborate with prior study findings and reaffirm that, both informative live videos delivered by Facebook influencers and their emotion laden bond with the followers can initiate purchase intentions. Rigorous analysis on the notion of Trusting Belief (McKnight et al.,1998), and other supported studies like Sánchez-Fernández and Jiménez-Castillo (2021); Reinikainen et al (2020); Wu et al (2008) in the literature trigger the specific domain- 'brand trust' to be applied as a mediator for examining its effect on followers' online purchasing intentions. Therefore, the present study provides beneficial insights into the existing domain of influencer marketing research by stressing that, followers' trust over the brand endorsed by an Facebook influencer over live streaming, when backed by their perceived informativeness and emotional attachment, will significantly help them decide which alternatives to buy. This study also contributes to the extant literature on Human brand theory (Thomson, 2006) by notifying the importance of hiring influencers who can showcase products through Facebook Live videos with enough details to persuade customers' buying intention. Effective live pitch from the influencer will enhance customers' knowledge about the brand and will also form an emotional connection with them. Findings of the study reveal that, the exogenous factors, i.e., perceived informativeness and emotional attachment, identified in other related studies (Benhardy,2020; Salhab et al., 2023) as well as in influencer marketing research (Mammadli, 2021; Leite & Baptista, 2022), can generate followers' brand trust which work as antecedents in stimulating live followers' buying intentions.

6.2. Practical implications

Considering live influencers' huge fan base, brand owners need to collaborate with them in order to intensify their sales. All the findings of the study provide enough evidence to the marketers for selecting live influencers on the basis of their expertise in delivering relevant product details and on their capacity to become emotionally involved with their viewers as these are the prerequisites for establishing brand trust which in turn increases the followers' willingness to purchase. This study suggests that investing in Facebook Live influencers is a smart move for brands because they can foster strong emotional connection with their audience through sharing of personal and intimate information. As per choosing the right influencers is concerned, companies should investigate the influencers' fan following and check if they provide valuable, detailed, novel and authentic product reviews upon which consumers can contemplate in evaluating alternative purchasing options.

Furthermore, companies performing business either exclusively on social media or both online and through physical stores, should observe the emotional bond their collaborative influencer partners share with their participants to measure how persuasive they are. The level of enthusiasm and compassion the live influencers exert while interacting with their followers should be observed and trained on if needed. It must be remembered that, followers' trust over the brand endorsed by the streamer influencer is positively linked to the influencer's two other skills- being informative and engaging followers with emotion. In today's digital world, brand trust, brand sales, and company reputation largely depend on the performance of the Facebook Live influencer who acts as the brand's online ambassador. Thus, before these influencers go on Facebook Live, companies should provide them with expert training on how they should disseminate information in a functional yet entertaining way and create bond with their followers.

7. Limitations and future research directions

Because our study was cross-sectional in nature, the results will remain relevant for a specific time frame. In future studies, researchers can use a longitudinal approach to look at how Facebook influencers and their followers interact over time. Basically, this research shows that the domain 'brand trust' has a mediating effect. So, future research can explore other mediators, like social image of the live influencer, manufacturer's integrity, and brand attitude by keeping the exogenous factors constant in the model to see how they influence buyers' purchase intent. Further research can be conducted on samples of specific age groups, like only Millennials or Generation Z to analyze their trust perceptions towards the brands recommended by Facebook influencers on their live sessions. Last but not least, this research will provide an opportunity for future scholars to carefully select influencers of specific brands and explore their perceived performance effects on customers' purchase intentions through detailed interviews, and focus group discussions in the field of international business.

8. Conclusion

Through the application of trust-based model, this study proves that when Facebook influencers use go live to provide useful and honest information regarding brands and form an emotion laden attachment to their followers, trust in the brand grows significantly which results in intensified purchase intentions. Careful selection of Facebook Live influencers and arrangement of expert-training sessions for them before they go live are highly suggested for the marketers. Depending on the nature of the endorsement, marketers must also look for compassionate influencers who give viewers the feeling that they care for their followers and understand what they have to say. Future scholars may replicate the same model on other social media platforms with live streaming options to see if the given latent variables stimulate similar or more intensified PI effects. Experimenting with specific product categories using the same model can infuse additional insights into influencer effectiveness.

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The Determinants and the Magnitude of their Effectiveness on Online Learning during Covid 19 Pandemic in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors and the extent of their effects on the effectiveness of online learning in Bangladesh during the COVID 19 pandemic. Moreover, this study intends to examine the mediating role of students' online learning motivation by observing and comparing information and communication technology infrastructure, competencies in information and communication technology, and students-teachers interaction as predictors of students' online learning motivation and effectiveness of online learning. Following the positivism research paradigm and cross-sectional design, the researchers adopt a quantitative approach using the survey method through a structured questionnaire covering 408 responses of undergraduate and graduate students from more than 23 public and private universities in Bangladesh. The 6-point Likert scale was used to measure the extent of effects of competencies in information and communication technology, competencies in information and communication technology, students-teachers interaction, and online learning motivation on the effectiveness of online learning using partial least squares based structural equation modeling. This study investigates three exogenous, one endogenous, and a mediating factor. This study finds significant effects of independent variables on effectiveness of online learning and a significant mediating role of online learning motivation between the independent variables and effectiveness of online learning apart from the direct effects of information and communication technology infrastructure on online learning motivation and competencies in information and communication technology on effectiveness of online learning. In addition, this study finds non-significant direct effects of competencies in information and

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communication technology on effectiveness of online learning but the mediating role of online learning motivation makes this effect significant. This study contributes to the knowledge of literature. From the managerial perspective, this study helps the responsible bodies to develop and design online learning-based curriculums and course content, which will allow sufficient interaction and collaboration among the students and the teachers. Moreover, this study recommends that the concerned authorities address issues and take initiatives to enhance teachers and students' online learning motivation and make online learning effective. This study will not be free from limitations that lead to pay attention to address for future research initiatives such as, this study is designed to conduct as cross-sectional in nature but further longitudinal study needs to conduct after the COVID-19 context to spot the changes in the level of impressions of teachers regarding online classes. Moreover, the results of this study might not explain the same problem from a different perspective even in the same context in a different country. Therefore, in the future, cross-country studies may be conducted.

Keywords: ICT infrastructure, Competencies in ICT, Students-teachers interaction, Internet of things, Smart devices, Online learning effectiveness.

1. Introduction

The Corona Virus Disease (COVID)-19 was rapidly spreading all through the globe and within seven days after its first identification in Wuhan, South China in December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed COVID-19 as a pandemic (Agunget al.2020). According to the guidelines of WHO, from March 15, 2020, the government of Bangladesh (GOB)emphasized social distancing and advised people of the country to work, study, and conduct religious practices from home (Shammi et al.2021). In such a situation, the GOB declared to close all educational institutes from 18th March 2020 to prevent the spread of this virus (Haqueet al.2020).Therefore, due to the closure of schools, colleges, and universities in the lockdown situation, face-to-face learning was interrupted and educational institutes across the country moved towards online learning to manage the adverse consequences on the education sector and students (Abbasiet al.2020). In managing such an adverse situation, GOB emphasized on online education like other countries (Hoq, 2020). The public and private universities of Bangladesh also attempted in adopting such online education (Haque et al.2020).Before 18th March in 2020, about 90% of students received their education in face-to-face classes. Since the COVID-19 situation created the reality of conducting online classes. Now it is important to know the effectiveness of online learning (Rahman et al.2021).

Now, smart devices become essential in our lives, a number of applications for Windows and iOS operating systems can be used for interfacing sensors measuring various parameters, which implies that the use of IoT has become smooth in our daily life (Gubbiet al.2013). These new means help the students and the teachers to manage educational tasks using smart devices via Information and Communication Technology (ICT), particularly at any adverse time (Benahmed & Douli, 2014).Bao et al.(2020) argues that there are some important factors that educational institutions must address which are highly integrated into the effectiveness of IoT-based learning or online learning. A study by Muthuprasad et al.(2021) showed that in operating virtual classes and learning, some basic requirements must be arrangement arranged for the participants. They also mentioned three primary requirements in online learning i.e. digital devices (desktop computer, laptop, or at least a smartphone), internet (uninterrupted high-speed internet), and a platform (Google Classroom, Zoom, Moodle, etc.). Moreover, Auma and Achieng (2020) and Rahman et al. (2021) have pointed out studies that to make effective online learning (EOL) in educational institutions particularly public and private universities the students and the teachers must have proper Information Communication Technological Infrastructure (ICTI), they need to have Competencies in Information and Communication Technology and also to have Instructor-Learner Interaction. Chenet al.(2020) found in their studies that the availability of Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure and its competencies on it are the most important factors that influence the Effectiveness of Online Learning of students. Since the accomplishment of online education depends on students' ability, readiness, and acceptance to use this system (Almaiah & Alismaiel, 2019), a shortage of online education system usage hinders the apprehension of well-being (Almaiah et al. 2019; Almaiah & Al-Khasawneh, 2020). In addition, Rahman et al. (2021) showed that the merit of communication between teachers and students; ICT-based infrastructure, and competencies in the use of Information and Communication Technology affect online learning. They further stated that the motivation of the students in joining online learning stems from its simple access, convenience, and agility. Mishra et al.(2020) argued that to keep hold of participants in online classes, their online learning platform usage, needs to be retained.

There are many facets of online learning that could be considered but the researchers are interested in examining the relationships between the antecedents of online learning andeffective online learning. Moreover, the extent of mediating effect of students', Online Learning Motivation (OLM) also needs to be studied because Wei and Chou (2020) stated that effective learning tends to inspire for arranging effective online learning. ICT provides opportunities and assistance in arranging online learning and therefore the use of ICT Infrastructure is increasing day by day. Moreover, ICT Infrastructure provides real-time communication among the participants

(Kuoet al.2014).Martin and Bolliger (2018) found that the interaction between the students and the instructors eventually results ineffective learning. Wei and Chou (2020) found that participant' competencies in ICT (CICT) and motivation for learning bring an effective online learning atmosphere. To the best of the knowledge of the researchers, there is limited documentation in the context of Bangladesh that relates to examining the relationships among the antecedents of online learning with its effectiveness. Moreover, Rahman et al (2021) investigated the mediating role of online learning motivation in their research. In that research, they observed and compared the components of internet self-efficacy (ISE), learner-learner interaction, direct lectures, and instructor-learner interaction as predictors of OLM and effective online learning but there is no consensus on the relative importance of the mediation of OLM by observing and comparing ICT Infrastructure, competencies in ICT, and Students-Teachers Interaction (STI)in making online learning effectiveness. Therefore, in this study, the researchers intend to penetrate the gap in knowledge by examining the relative significance of ICT Infrastructure, competencies in ICT, and STI on the Effectiveness of Online Learning. Moreover, this study aims to scrutinize the OLM as the mediator in online learning effectiveness, which in turn has prompted the researchers to frame a new model of effective online learning. To achieve these purposes of this study, the researchers employed a positivist research paradigm using a quantitative approach.

2. Research model and hypotheses development

2.1. ICT infrastructure and online learning

The rapid propagation of ICT already changed everyday life from the perspective of social, cultural, and economic. ICT Infrastructure flourishes globalization and urbanization virtually and accelerate digital life (Auma & Achieng, 2020). The ICT Infrastructure provides participants with scopes in the study using technological innovation, particularly during COVID 19 pandemic when distance learning becomes mandatory (Ratheeswari, 2018). ICTs are by now intensifying the right to use high-quality learning objects, including books, remote instruction, and video material, and at a large amount minimum cost than earlier (Keeley & Little, 2017). Online education is an instance of the application by whichI CT Infrastructure assist educational methods whose exercise in educational institutions is ahead impetus with the way of time, particularly during pandemic situations (Maity et al.2021). A study by Kahn et al.(2012) have shown that ICT Infrastructure provides an effective educational atmosphere and it makes the teaching and learning practice in which participants acquire knowledge in a lively, self-directed, and practical manner. Goh et. al. (2017) mentioned that the eventual delivery of an online learning elucidationdepends on the ease of use of suitable and sufficient ICT Infrastructure. Previous studies on virtual learning in tertiary-level education have recurrently paid attention to the ICT Infrastructure by centering persons to employ the technology and information to resolve troubles and attain anticipated goals.The participants of online learning have confidence in the simplicity of exercising the ICT Infrastructure which has a noteworthy effect on online learning satisfaction and effectiveness (Wei & Chou, 2020).

2.2. CICT and online learning

It is widely recognized that during today's digital globalization virtual learning platform is bridging the gap between the face-to-face classroom and distance learning using communication technologies (Muthuprasadet al. 2021).Virtual learning is influenced by the ICT capacities and competencies of the teachers and students. Lim, Yan, and Xiong (2015) McFarlane (2000) and Zhao and Frank (2003) have highlighted the significance of ICT competencies in preparing teachers and students with the necessary skills to integrate ICT for effective online education program. Mims et al. (2006) assessed ICT competencies that could have a significant impact on the effectiveness of online learning. Mishra and Koehler (2006) identified CICT as one of the strongest constructs of participants' satisfaction and effectiveness in online learning. Moreover, competency in ICTis the main predictor of effective distance learning environments (Hew & Kadir 2016).

2.3. Students-teachers interaction and online learning

Students-Teachers Interaction is an essential component of learning in general and online learning as well. Interaction in learning is a mutual event between the participants that brings the learning participants closer to attaining an educational goal (Wagner, 1994).The goals of Students-Teachers Interaction are to deliver and share knowledge and information and also inspire learners by providing suitable responses and arranging appropriate associations. For making communication between the teachers and students during online learning, the reactions and feedback of the participants are vital (Kuo et al. 2014). Therefore, Students-Teachers Interaction as the essential element of online learning brings a satisfactory and effective experience for the learners (Burnettet al.2007). Ali and Ahmad (2011) stated thatStudents-Teachers Interactionisanimportant variable that has a noteworthyeffecton effective online learning. Proper, quality, and frequent interactions between the participants bring immense learning satisfaction and perceived learning rates.

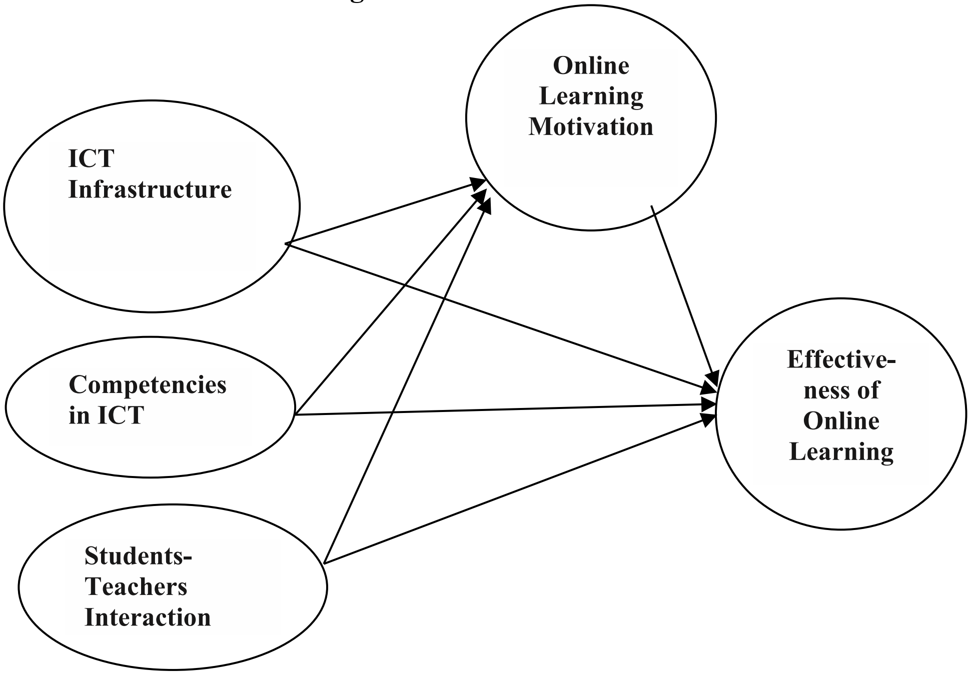
2.4. Students' motivation and online learning

The motivation relating to online learning is significantly connected to the desired outcomes. Lumsden (1994) describes the motivation for taking part in online learning that isthe willingness to take part in the learning process.Generally, motivation means the enticement that tends to do somethingof one's own volition. Earlier studies provide evidence that motivation plays a vital role in the learning process in both face-to-face and virtual (Hsu et al. 2020)Dörnyei (2020) stated motivation as the act that is closely associated with engagement and the assurance of motivation tends to the achievement of participants' engagement.Brooker et al. (2018) have pointed study that motivation is a prominent issue affecting learning outcomes. Moreover, Keskin and Yurdugül (2020) found that there is a strong significant relationship between the motivation to learn online and the success and attachment with the online learning settings. Thai, De Wever and Valcke (2017) studied and found that ICT Infrastructure impacts students' Online Learning Motivation. The competencies of ICT influence participants' motivation in the online learning process from both intrinsic and extrinsicaspects (Gohet al.2017) and a study by Kuo et al. (2014) reported that Students-Teachers Interactionboost participants' Online Learning Motivation. Simultaneously, online learning motivation directly influences online learning effectiveness.

2.5. Effectiveness of online learning

The means of online learning are the technological devices, which support conducting a distance mode of education and learning (Hartnett, 2016).By using the settings and systems of ICT Infrastructure, the participants get facilities of distance learning where learners are separated by time. In online learning, the communication between the teachers and students becomes a vital component to be effective. Before the introduction ofICT, distance learning had been common for a long time. Wan et al.(2008) in their study tested the effect of experience with ICT and online learning and found a positive impact between the ICT and the effectiveness of online learning. Moreover, they found theICTInfrastructure andcompetencies in it influenced online learning effectiveness. The study by Soffer and Nachmias (2018) indicated that online learning is effective and participants who log on to online classesbecome more contented. Such a situation motivated learners in creatinga cooperative learning atmosphere. They also argued that when there is proper ICTInfrastructure, when the participants are competent in Information and Communication Technology usage, when there is proper communication among the participants, and when the participants give significant feedback then it brings effective online learning. Accordingly, the following research model and hypotheses have been developed.

Figure 1: Research model



(Source: Auma & Achieng, 2020, p. 22; Rahman et al. 2021, p. 5)

H1a: ICT Infrastructure has a positive relationship with the Effectiveness of Online Learning.
H1b: ICT Infrastructure has a positive relationship with Online Learning Motivation.
H2a:Competencies in ICT have a positive relationship with the Effectiveness of Online Learning.
H2b: Competencies in ICT have a positive relationship with Online Learning Motivation.
H3a: Students-Teachers Interaction has a positive relationship with the Effectiveness of Online Learning.
H3b: Students-Teachers Interaction has a positive relationship with Online Learning Motivation.
H4:Online Learning Motivation has a positive relationship with the Effectiveness of Online Learning.
H5:Online Learning Motivation will mediate the relationship between ICT Infrastructure and the Effectiveness of Online Learning.
H6:Online Learning Motivation will mediate the relationship between Competencies in ICT and the Effectiveness of Online Learning.
H7: Online Learning Motivation will mediate the relationship between Students-Teachers Interaction and the Effectiveness of Online Learning.

3. Research method

3.1. Study design and sample selection

This is a cross-sectional study following positivist paradigm employing quantitative approach. Data are collected from tertiary level (undergraduate and postgraduate) students. The sample of this study is the students of public and private universities in Bangladesh.Since it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews due to the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers used Google Forms. Moreover, data were collected following snowball sampling during April 2021 to December 2021.A structured questionnaire was developed based on the literature, then generated by Google Forms link, and sent to the teachers of different universities who shared the link with their students using Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Messenger. According to BABIES, 2020, there are about 853267 students at the university level in Bangladesh. To have a representative sample size to conduct this study, a sample size calculator (RAOSOFT, 2020)was used to determine the minimum sample size by considering a 95% confidence level, ±5% margin of error, and 50% response distributionof the sample size calculator reached 384 respondents (Kumaret al. 2021). 416responses were collected from the students of 23 both public and private universities throughout the country from 15 July 2021 to 15 September 2021. From the collected 416 responses, 1.92% (N =8) responses were rejected because of missing values. Therefore, finally, 408 fully and correctly completed responses were used to conduct this study, which is satisfactory. A structural equation modelling (SEM) technique based on partial least squares (PLS) (Chin 1998a)was used to test both the measurement model and structural model because the PLS technique is more efficient in testing complex and sophisticated conceptual models. PLS-SEM is a causal modelling approach aimed at maximizing the explained variance of the dependent latent constructs (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2011).

3.2. Measurement tools

The structured questionnaire used for conducting this study consists of two parts, in which, the first part consists of the demographic profile of the respondents. The demographic part included gender, years of study, name of universitiesand faculties, residential area (urban or rural), using devices,and previous online learning experience. The second part of the structured questionnaire includedquestions with scale for getting the opinions of the respondents regarding the variables used for this study. This questionnaire was prepared using multi-item scales with a 6-point Likert scale. To measureICT Infrastructure, Competencies in ICT, and Students-Teachers Interaction, four, eight, and seven items respectivelywere used. Items for measuring ICT Infrastructure were adopted from Auma and Achieng (2020) and Rahman et al. (2021); items of competencies in ICTwere adopted from

Auma and Achieng (2020) and items of Students-Teachers Interactionwere adopted from Rahman et al. (2021). Moreover, to measure mediating variable of Online Learning Motivation 8 items were used, 5 of which were adopted from Chalak and Kassaian (2010), and the remaining 3 wereadopted from Saade and Kira (2007). The effectiveness of online learning was measured by 8 items, 6 of which were adopted from Abbasi et al. (2020), Augung et al. (2020), and Auma and Achieng (2020); the rest 2 items were adopted from Baczek et al. (2020) and Rahman et al. (2021) each.The option of an even point (6-point) Likert scale was used to survey because Nuruzzaman (2013) stated that Asian ethnicity participants seemed to prefer the middle score or to be non-partisan in their responses as this pattern was presumed to produce a research result that provided mean error. Since, this study is carried out in Bangladesh, which has an Asian population, therefore, this study used a 6-point Likert scale which has been anchored with 1 (strongly disagree) and 6 (strongly agree).

4. Analysis and findings

4.1. Respondent profile

The demographic profile of the respondents (N = 408) is as follows:

Table1: Respondent profile

Demographic Characteristics	Categories	%
Gender	Male	70.34% (N=287)
	Female	29.66% (N=121)
	Prefer not to say	0% (N=0)
Residential area	Rural	28.17% (N=115)
	Urban	71.83% (N=293)
Types of university	Public	74.26% (N=303)
	Private	25.74% (N=105)
Faculty	Agriculture	5.88% (N=24)
	Arts & Fine Arts	12.75% (N=52)
	Business Studies	13.97% (N=57)
	Engineering	9.31% (N=38)
	Law	5.39 (N=22)
	Life & Earth Science	11.03% (N=45)
	Science	19.12% (N=78)
	Social Science	22.55% (N=92)
Year of study	1st Year	16.18% (N=66)
	2nd Year	19.12% (N=78)
	3rd Year	20.83% (N=85)
	Final Year	20.59% (N=84)
	Masters	23.28% (N=95)
Previous experience in online learning	Yes	14.22% (N=58)
	No	85.78% (N=350)
Choice of gadget	Mobile	70.83% (N=289)
	Desktop	35.42% (N=17)
	Laptop	24.02% (N=98)

Demographic Characteristics	Categories	%
	Tablet	8.33% (N=4)
Online learning platform	Zoom app	83.33% (N=340)
	Google Classroom	4.11% (N=18)
	Microsoft teams	1.47% (N=6)
	Google Meet	5.88% (N=24)
	Others; Mzizi ERP	4.90% (N=20)

4.2. Measurement model

The convergent validity calculates the correlation degree of several agreed-upon measures of the same construct. In addition, it refers to the degree to which various measures designed to tap the same construct correlate with each other (Hair et al.2017a). The factor loading of the predictor, composite reliability (CR), and the average variance extracted (AVE) are considered to check the convergent validity of the collected data (Hair et al. 2014). The reliability of the indicator is the proportion of indicator variance described by the latent variable. Values differ between 0 and 1. According to Hair et al. (2014), the outer loading values should not be less than 0.60, and if the exclusion of the indicator with outer loadings between 0.40 and 0.60 leads to a rise in CR and AVE, it should be considered for deletion (Hair et al. 2014). The composite reliability instrument is used to evaluate the internal accuracy of the construction indicators of a study. At present researchers are using CR to measure the internal consistency of the indicators of construct by PLS-SEM (Hair et al.2017). The CR is determined in PLS-SEM by measuring the loading values of the indicators of constructs (Hair et al. 2017). During the years 2006 to 2010, 85 papers using PLS were published in four major journals. As proof of acceptable CR, the authors' most frequently cited cutoff values of the products are 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). After measuring the internal consistency of the indicators of constructs it is needed to measure the validity of the indicators by using the AVE (Hair et al. 2014). As part of convergent validity, the indicators of AVE are considered and the loading value must be higher than 0.5, which will reflect at least 50% of the indicators explaining the construct (Hairet al.2011).

As shown in Table 2, to obtain the final loadings and AVE, three items of which one item (CI7) from the ICT Infrastructure, one (STI1) from Students-Teachers Interaction, and another (MV5) from Online Learning Motivationconstruct were deleted because of less than 0.60 loadings. Moreover, two items (EOL6 & EOL8) from the Effective Online Learning construct were deleted withthe same low loading. The AVEs of ICT Infrastructure, competencies in ICT, Students-Teachers Interaction, Online Learning Motivation, and Effective Online Learning were 0.659, 0.520, 0.618, 0.626,and 0.677, respectively are satisfactory as the values reflect more than 50% (.50) of the indicators explaining the construct.Moreover, table 2 shows the CR values ranging from 0.883 to 0.926, which were higher than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017).Therefore, there was no problem with the collected data in respect of convergent validity.

Table 2: Internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity

Construct	Measurement item	Outer loading	T Statistics	P Values	VIF	AVE	CR	CA α	rho_A
ICTI	II1	0.799	31.518	0.000	1.934	0.659	0.885	0.826	0.832
	II2	0.853	52.465	0.000	2.212				
	II3	0.852	47.621	0.000	2.000				
	II4	0.738	22.646	0.000	1.400				
CICT	CI1	0.624	16.142	0.000	1.409	0.520	0.883	0.844	0.850
	CI2	0.771	27.537	0.000	2.089				
	CI3	0.77	26.964	0.000	2.091				
	CI4	0.690	19.062	0.000	1.595				
	CI5	0.654	17.296	0.000	1.488				
	CI6	0.805	38.000	0.000	1.967				
	CI8	0.692	22.216	0.000	1.508				
STI	STI2	0.707	22.723	0.000	1.560	0.618	0.906	0.875	0.880
	STI3	0.783	29.959	0.000	1.918				
	STI4	0.718	21.98	0.000	1.703				
	STI5	0.780	32.351	0.000	2.273				
	STI6	0.848	56.356	0.000	2.867				
	STI7	0.829	45.268	0.000	2.380				
OLM	MV1	0.789	33.073	0.000	2.284	0.626	0.921	0.899	0.912
	MV2	0.643	16.979	0.000	1.549				
	MV3	0.866	51.876	0.000	3.001				
	MV4	0.767	27.36	0.000	1.930				
	MV6	0.679	18.067	0.000	1.685				
	MV7	0.862	64.748	0.000	3.247				
	MV8	0.862	51.621	0.000	3.087				
EOL	EOL1	0.852	53.733	0.000	2.731	0.677	0.926	0.903	0.909
	EOL2	0.847	45.676	0.000	2.614				
	EOL3	0.746	38.234	0.000	1.912				
	EOL4	0.841	47.978	0.000	2.779				
	EOL5	0.879	56.622	0.000	3.203				
	EOL7	0.720	24.403	0.000	1.682				

*CA α -Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. ** The rho_A function calculates the rho_A reliability indices for each construct.

Discriminant validity guarantees that a measure of construction is empirically distinctive and reflects phenomena of interest that are not captured by other variables in a structural equation model (Hair et al. 2010). Two major measures are used for discriminant validity, firstly, the Fornell-Larcker criterion which assessescorrelational values among the constructs (diagonal elements denoting the square root of AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Secondly, heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) as a new approach (Henseler et al.2015) to assess discriminant validity with the threshold value of 0.85 has been proposed by Kline (2015), while other researchers recommend a value of 0.90 (Goldet al. 2001; Hair et al.2019). Therefore, the HTMT value of this study satisfies the threshold of <0.90 as mentioned by Gold et al. (2001) and Hair et al. (2019). Table 3 and 4 shows the assessment of discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker and HTMT criterion. Hence, from the discriminant validity criteria,all the constructs of this study were found satisfactory. In summary, all the constructs demonstrate very strong reliability and validity.

Table 3: Discriminant validity of constructs Fornell-Larcker correlation check

Construct	CICT	EOL	ICTI	OLM	STI
CICT	**0.721**				
EOL	0.459	**0.823**			
ICTI	0.235	0.425	**0.812**		
OLM	0.514	0.844	0.344	**0.791**	
STI	0.508	0.808	0.356	0.847	**0.786**

Note: Diagonals (**in bold**) represent the squared root of the average variance extracted (AVE) while the other entries represent the correlations.

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) criteria

Construct	CICT	EOL	ICTI	OLM	STI
CICT					
EOL	0.516				
ICTI	0.279	0.488			
OLM	0.585	0.925	0.399		
STI	0.587	0.804	0.415	0.847	

Note: Criterion discriminant validity is established at HTMT0.90

4.3. Structural model evaluation

To estimate the structural model coefficients, a series of regression equationsis requiredfor assessment. In assessing structural relations, collinearity using variance inflation factor (VIF) must be inspected whichmeasures the existence of business problems in the collected data. According to the recommendations of Hasan et al.(2015) and Hair et al. (2014), the rule of thumb for multicollinearity tolerance level is less than 5.0. As such, the VIF values of each item of this study show below 5.0 indicating that there is no problem with the collinearity issue.To measure the statistical significance of the path coefficients, the bootstrapping technique needs to assessand inspect the underlying relationships between the constructs (Hair et al. 2017).Hair et al. (2014) suggest the minimum bootstrap sample should be 5000. They also mention that with a significance of 10%, 5%, and 1%, the t values are 1.65, 1. 96, and 2.58 respectively.To predict the dependent variable in a model, it needs to apply the Coefficient of Determination (R^2) which measures the predictive power of the independent variable(s). In general, R^2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 can be expressed as being weak, moderate, and substantial (Hair et al. 2019).The values of effect size denoted by f^2 state the degree of contribution of the independentvariable to the R^2 of the dependent variable (Rahman et al., 2021).Chin,(1998) recognized a threshold of f^2values and recommended higher than 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and high effect sizes. Q^2 represents a method for assessing the inner model's predictive relevance (Akter et al.2011).Particularly, when a Q^2 value is larger than zero for a particular dependent construct, it indicates the predictive relevance of the path model for that particular construct.The smaller the disparity between the predicted and the original values, the larger the Q^2 and hence the predictive accuracy of the model (Akter et al.2011). This study provides the result of 0.505 for endogenous construct and 0.450 for mediating construct, which is more than zero. The following table 5 and figure 2 show the evaluation of the structural model of the study.

Table 5: Result of the structural model assessment for direct relations

H	Relation	Std. β	SE	t-values	p-values	f^2	Decision
H1a	ICTI→EOL	0.132	0.029	4.538	0.000	0.061	S
H1b	ICTI→OLM	0.042	0.03	1.409	0.159	0.006	NS
H2a	CICT→EOL	-0.006	0.033	0.178	0.859	0.000	NS
H2b	CICT→OLM	0.111	0.034	3.261	0.001	0.033	S
H3a	STI→EOL	0.300	0.056	5.338	0.000	0.100	S
H3b	STI→OLM	0.777	0.026	29.768	0.000	1.517	S
H4	OLM→EOL	0.548	0.058	9.489	0.000	0.337	S

* S=supported, NS=not supported

Figure 2: Structural model representing outer loading, path coefficients, and R^2

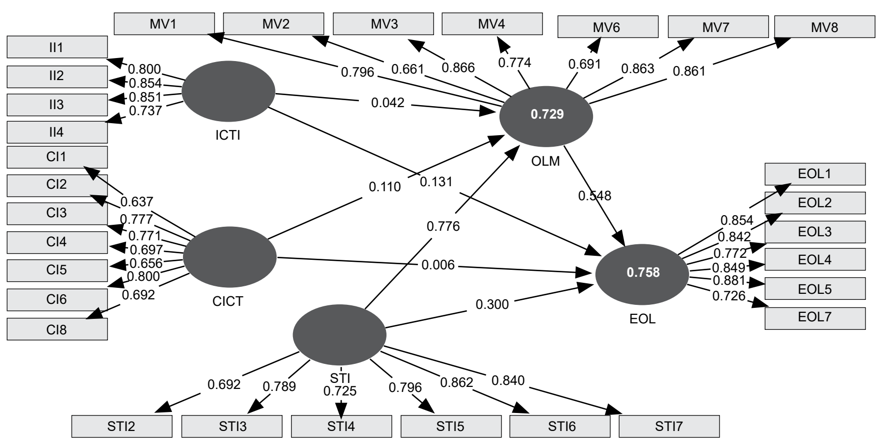


Table 5 and Figure 2 show the positive and statistically significant direct relationship between exogenous variablesand endogenous variables as hypothesized, except for hypotheses H1b (ICT Infrastructure→Online Learning Motivation) and H2a (Competencies in ICT→Effective Online Learning). Specifically, Information Communication Technological Infrastructure was not significantly directlyrelated to Online Learning Motivation (β = 0.042, t =1.409, p= 0.159) and competencies in ICT was not also significantly direct related to Effective Online Learning (β = 0.033, t =0.178, p= 0.859).

The following table 6 shows the mediating effect of Online Learning Motivation to establish whether it mediated the relationships between Information Communication Technological Infrastructure, Competencies in ICT, Students-Teachers Interaction, and Effective Online Learning. Online Learning Motivation (β = 0.061, t = 3.107, p=0.002) mediated the relationship between Competencies in ICT and Online Learning Effectiveness and Online Learning Motivation (β = 0.425, t = 9.156, p=0.000) also mediated the relationship betweenStudents-Teachers Interaction and Online Learning Effectiveness. But Online Learning Motivation (β = 0.023, t = 1.36, p=0.174) did not mediate the relationship between ICT infrastructure and Online Learning Effectiveness.

Table 6: Results of the structural model assessment for specific indirect effects

H	Relation	Std. β	SE	t-values	p-values	Decision
H5	ICTI → OLM →EOL	0.023	0.017	1.36	0.174	NS
H6	CICT → OLM →EOL	0.061	0.019	3.107	0.002	S
H7	STI → OLM →EOL	0.425	0.046	9.156	0.000	S

In order to describe the significance of the relationships between the exogenous and endogenous variables, it is required to report R^2 and f^2(Hair et al. 2017). This study found R^2 of Online Learning Motivationshown in figure 2 as 0.729 and Online Learning Effectivenessas 0.758, which emphasizes that the exogenous variables Information Communication Technological Infrastructure, Competencies in ICT, and Students-Teachers Interaction can describe 72.9% of the variability in students' Online Learning Motivationand 75.8% of the variability in their effective learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. From the f^2 perspective, all relationships indicate significant effects from the independent variables (H1a, H2b, H3a, H3b and H4: $f^2 > 0.02$) except the insignificant effects on the relationships between Information Communication Technological Infrastructure →Online Learning Motivation ($f^2 < 0.02$) and competencies in ICT→Effective Online

Learning ($f^2 < 0.02$). Moreover,this study employs the common method variance (CMV) to test the biasesusing Harman single-factor method which shows the first factor was responsible for only 34.021% of the variance, which was less than the threshold (<50%) and as such the values of CMV were satisfactory in this study (Podsakoff, Mackenzie & Lee, 2003).

5. Findings and discussion

From the statistical results and analysis of this study, it can be seen that competencies in ICT and Students-Teachers Interaction have noteworthy impacts on Online Learning Motivation. Students think thatCompetencies in ICT and Students-Teachers Interaction are significant motivators and students like to take part in online learningas they are used to online classes. Previous researches also support that as the motivator Competencies in ICT and Students-Teachers Interaction have positive and significant effects on online learning (Auma & Achieng, 2020; Rahman, et al.2021). The researchers also found that Students-Teachers Interaction has a positive and significant influence on the Effectiveness of Online Learning, which is supported by the findings of the studies by Rahman, et al. (2021) and Yukselturk and Yildirim (2008). According to them, Effective Online Learning is one of the most important variables for the success or failure of distance learners, which depends on the Students-Teachers Interaction. On the other hand, according to the results of this study,Competencies in ICT has anegative and insignificant direct effect on Effective Online Learning but in the case of a specific indirect effect between Competencies in ICT and Effective Online Learning, Online Learning Motivation mediates such relations and gets a significant positive relationship. Therefore, students' learning motivation is strongly mediating the Competencies in ICT construct as a positive and significant effect on Online Learning Effectiveness, which is the new finding investigated in this study. In the case of online learning, such learning depends on the ICT Infrastructure (Auma & Achieng, 2020; Ratheeswari, 2018)and as such, this study finds a positive and significant direct relationship between ICT Infrastructure with Effective Online Learning but insignificant relation with Online Learning Motivation. Moreover, the specific indirect relationship of ICT Infrastructure with Effective Online Learning in the mediation of Online Learning Motivation, a weak mediating relationship, has been found which is not supported by the previous studies by Abbasi et al.(2020) and Wei and Chou (2020). Therefore, students are de-motivating in making effective online learning because of lack of devices, weak internet connection, and costly internet data and such reasons bring the insignificant direct relation between ICT Infrastructure and Online Learning Motivation as well as indirect relation of ICT Infrastructure and Effective Online Learning with the mediation of students' motivation.

However, this study did find a very strong positive and significant relationship between Students-Teachers Interaction with Online Learning Motivationand a strong positive and significant relationship between Online Learning Motivation and Effective Online Learning. Earlier studies by Chen and Jang (2010) and Rahman, et al. (2021) emphasized motivation as the issue of having priority in online learning. This study did find a significant relationship between the overall Online Learning Motivation and Effective Online Learning.

6. Implications

This study did find the highest level of variability and lowest mean value in ICT Infrastructure, which means that participants do not have enough, and proper support for ICT Infrastructure for online classes and learning, therefore the level of their confidence varies greatly in such construct. The findings of the studies by Auma and Achieng (2020); Lee (2002); Ratheeswari (2018) and Rahman, et al. (2021) are also in line with the results of this study and suggest that online learning can be effective if significant attention is givento the arrangement of proper ICT Infrastructure. In this respect, concerned authorities i.e. departments, faculties, universities, University Grants Commission, and Education Ministry should take initiatives to provide proper support for ICT Infrastructure to the participants. Moreover, the excessive cost and weak connection tothe internet de-motivated participants to be attentive to the online classes or learning. The authorities should address these issues and such initiatives will enhance students' online learning motivation and makes effective online learning. Further, the findings of this study show that Competencies in ICT has insignificant effects on Effective Online Learning but the mediation of Online Learning Motivationcan change the effect and make it significant. For this, participants shouldbe provided necessary training on system infrastructure and how to conduct online classes. Moreover, the responsible bodies should develop and design online learning-based curriculums and course content, which will allow sufficient interaction and collaboration among the students-teachers.

7. Conclusions, limitations, and future research

This study examines the relationships between ICT Infrastructures, Competencies in ICT, Students- Teachers Interaction, and Online Learning Effectiveness of the students of universities in Bangladesh, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study also examines the mediating effect of Online Learning Motivation on the effectiveness of online learning. To examine such relationships and effects, the researchers of this study employed the PLS-SEM approach and found significant positive direct effectsof ICT Infrastructure, Students-Teachers Interaction, and Online Learning Motivation on Effective Online Learning, and a significant positive impact of Competencies in ICT and Students-Teachers Interactionon Online Learning Motivation. The study also found significant mediating roles of online learning motivation between Competencies in ICT, Students-Teachers Interaction, and the Effectiveness of Online Learning. The findings have significant implications for future researchers, the ministry of education, university grants commission, university authorities, faculties, departments, and other policymakers to integrate, prepare and execute proper platforms for online learning, including the concern of students' motivation, and make the available course of action of such implications to face the post-COVID-19 educational challenges. The researchers of this study recommend that ICT Infrastructure and competencies on in need to be enhanced and online-education-friendly curriculums are developed to motivate participants ensuring the highest level of online learning effectiveness.

This study is not free from limitations and needs attention to address for future research initiatives. Firstly, data were collected only from the university students and thus may not represent the actual context of the online education effectiveness of the country under study. In this regard, in further studies, the students of high schools and colleges should be included to generalize the results. Secondly, this study adapted three exogenous variables to investigate the extent of relations with the online learning effectiveness which may not be representative. To overcome such limitations further studies may use more variables i.e. students-student interaction, internet self-efficacy, direct instruction, etc. In addition, the inclusion of the nature of course curriculums and learning support as moderators could influence the Online Learning Effectiveness. Thirdly, this study was cross-sectional but further longitudinal study needs to be conducted after the COVID-19 context to spot the changes in the level of effectiveness of online learning. Finally, the results of this study might not explain the same problem from a different perspective even in the same context in a different country. Therefore, in the future, a cross-country study on online learning effectiveness may be conducted.

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Factors Influencing the Consumer Behavior: A Comparative Study between Public and Private University Students in Bangladesh

Ashek Mahmud*, Rokeya Parvin† and Farhana Kabir‡

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors influencing consumer behavior with a comparison between public and private university students in Bangladesh. Using a structured questionnaire, a survey was conducted of 200 students from two different universities. With the use of SPSS-26, the chi-square test was used to make a comparison between public and private universities. Results depict that the preference for brands and the awareness about consuming products were significant factors that influenced the consumer behavior of university students. It was evident that students of the public university were more aware of purchasing local quality products, and private university students were more interested in foreign brands. Most importantly, media advertisement was dominant and secondly, family friends were shaping perceptions of consumer interest that contributed to forming attitudes toward consumer culture. Alongside, feelings of superiority based on consumption level and the fascination with shopping malls shaped attitudes toward purchasing products in line with consumer behaviour. Balanced consumer behaviour was suggested to the educated youths for cultural development in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, Perception & attitude, Influential factors, University students.

1. Introduction

Contemporary society is marked by the growing importance of consumer culture, fueled by the rise of disposable earning capacities (Mathur, 2010). The social context has a significant impact on consumer desire, which is distinct from requirements or wants and expresses a passionate interest in particular consuming goods or experiences (Belk et al., 2003; Eckhardt & Mahi, 2012). Urban consumers around the world have a common understanding of shared signs and symbols, such as brands, thanks in part to international advertising (Alden et al., 2015).

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As globalization flourished with the spread of the Internet, the growth of world travel, and global media, global consumer culture is emerging (Alden et al., 1999; Holt et al., 2004). This culture is characterized by interest in global products and brands and by global consumer branches with similar interests in products and consumption activities that associate similar meanings with certain places, people, and things (Caudle, 1994). In line with the meanings, consumer perception describes how customers and potential customers view a company and its products and services. Consumer perception in this respect is important to hold success in businesses since it can influence consumer behavior, which ultimately affects the profitability of a business (Ahmed, 2014).

In the era of globalization, the customers' demand is not limited to the domestic market but also to the international market. In parallel with the rapidly developing technology in the 21st century, consumption patterns, requirements, and expectations are changing. Consumers are now using new communication channels, and they've switched from passive and follower mode to active and participator mode. This requires managers to have better insight into consumer perception and behavior to predict acceptance of foreign market; and when the customers make their buying decision, they evaluate the perceived benefits of a particular product and compares them with the costs (Ahmed, 2014). In this world of mass consumption, shopping represents a growing activity fueled by the rise of new physical or online shops and by advertising campaigns (Edbring et al., 2015). These intrinsic and extrinsic quality cues are connected to consumer knowledge, expertise, and beliefs about what is good quality (Cicerale et al., 2016).

Besides, a study surveyed a total of 400 Bangladeshi consumers aiming to determine critical factors of purchasing intentions for consumption, and the results depicted that attitude, environmental concern, and willingness to pay were the main factors of purchasing intentions (Chowdhury & Alamgir, 2021). Another research suggests that Facebook showing images of new brands as the cheapest form of advertisement directly affected the buying behavior of youth groups in Bangladesh (Uddin & Razu, 2019).

Thereby, the factors of consumer culture for the lives of individuals in these societies are pervasive, affecting the lives of the youths in many ways (Miller, 2009). However, there is very limited study on consumer behavior among the educated youths in Bangladesh. In this regard, the study aims to address the factors that are influencing consumer behavior among university students as representative of the educated youths in Bangladesh.

2. Literature review

2.1. Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior refers to the mental, emotional, and physical processes people use to decide whether to buy, use, or discard products and services in order to fulfill their needs and desires which encompasses the most extensive facets of consumer decision-making and goes beyond the act of purchasing (Priest et al., 2013). Consumerism places a strong emphasis on the idea that maximizing utility may be achieved through the purchase of material goods and sees symbolic exchanges as a way to satisfy society's needs and desires ("What is consumerism?", 2022).

The practice of consumer behavior is linked to perception and attitude. Perception, or what one thinks about something after taking into account some precise, logical facts about it, is not very subjective (Edwin, 2018). It is commonly known that daily activities and organizational performance are highly influenced by perception and attitude. Consumer perception, in this connection, takes into account both intellectual and emotional aspects. Consumer perception is influenced by reputation and advertising which have three stages of perception include: sensing, organizing, and reacting ("Brand Perception", n.d.). Some important factors that shape long-term relationships between customers and brands and influence customers' perceptions include price, quality, branding, and service. Furthermore, beliefs can be favorable or unfavorable toward a product or brand, they have a substantial impact on consumer behavior. Consumers' perceptions and interactions with products are influenced by their attitudes, which serve a variety of purposes, including adjustment, ego defense, and value expression ("Consumer Behavior-Attitude", n.d.).

2.2. Consumer behavior: National and international context

Cultural, social, and economic variables, as well as elements like brand recognition, price sensitivity, online shopping, sustainability, and social media, all affect consumer behavior. Evidence shows that a number of national and international studies were about the factors affecting the perceptions and attitudes of consumers on consumer objects. According to Eckhardt and Mahi's (2012) study on consumer conflicts in India's emerging market, customer choices can either support or oppose traditional beliefs and cultural norms, which has an impact on market dynamics. The study illustrates how customs and norms adjust to new options in the marketplace and elaborates on the role of consumer agency in globalization. Instead of concentrating on college students, this study looks at consumers in a wider commercial setting (Eckhardt & Mahi, 2012). Numerous studies have been conducted on online purchasing and customer attitudes. Al-Debei et al. (2015) studied customer attitudes regarding online shopping in Jordan and created a model that took into account trust, perceived advantages, and perceived website quality. According to the study, trust and perceived advantages have a considerable impact on customer sentiments and account for 28% of the variation. Wuan and Liat (2014) surveyed Malaysian university students online to learn more about the variables impacting their decision to make purchases online. According to the study, perceived utility was the second most important factor influencing students' desire to make an online purchase, while subjective norms had the highest predictive power. (Wuan & Liat, 2014). The evolving nature of attitudes and perceptions of consumer culture, however, is not made clear by this study.

According to Portin (2020), consumer behavior is affected by a moral disrespect for suffering that encourages indifference to suffering, and feeds a loop of want for more products that prevents fulfillment. In contrast to unfamiliar brands, Gavilan and Avello (2020) found that recognizable brands elicit higher degrees of visual mental imagery. The quality of visual and mental images is improved by brand favorability. These findings add to the body of knowledge of branding and mental imagery and provide insightful information for marketers.

To learn more about 350 university freshmen in Bangladesh's awareness, attitudes, and flexibility toward SMS advertising, Yazdani et al. (2021) conducted a survey. The study indicates that 'monetary benefits' and 'trust' had an impact on respondents' attitudes and behaviors regarding SMS marketing using PLS-SEM software. The study also found a strong correlation between SMS content and attitude. Anisur et al. (2018) also looked at Bangladeshi consumers' internet shopping habits. The study concludes that internet shoppers were driven by time savings and access to a wide selection of goods and services, using a self-made questionnaire with 160 participants. Customers of both genders had comparable preferences, favoring home delivery and the cash-on-delivery method while expressing resentment at not being able to personally inspect things.

Nurunnahar (2019) investigated Bangladeshi users' perceptions of social media advertisements on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter. Despite rising internet usage, the study's "Seven Factor Belief" model revealed a lack of agreement on how people view social media advertisements. The research, however, made no mention of alterations in young Bangladeshi people's attitudes toward commercial culture. In Chittagong city, Toufiqur et al. (2019) conducted a survey (n = 150) to look at how consumers perceive advertising media. The study found that while women, senior citizens, and young people preferred TV, business people chose newspapers. In order to investigate the variables impacting consumer behavior toward sustainable consumption in Bangladesh, Sanju et al. (2021) conducted a survey (n = 384). The study indicated that perceived environmental knowledge was the least important driving factor and that environmental concern was the most important.

3.Objectives of the study

The literature review suggests that very limited studies were conducted among the educated youth in Bangladesh which requires an experimental study on the factors affecting consumer behavior among the university students of Bangladesh. Therefore, our study follows two core objectives:

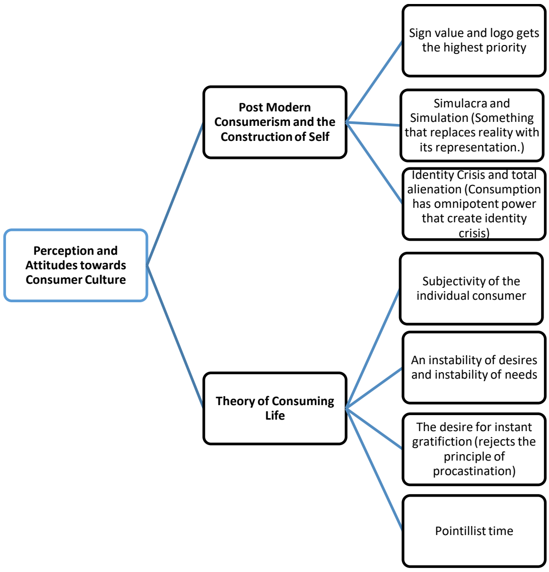
1. To examine the factors associated with consumer behavior among the university students in Bangladesh
2. To draw a comparison between public and private universities in the context of consumer behavior in Bangladesh.

4. Theoretical framework

Consumerism and consumer behavior were mostly theorized by Jean Baudrillard and Zygmunt Bauman. Popular French sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard explained in his well-known book, 'The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures'—how consumer behaviors are represented in contemporary society. In contrast to modern societies, which are centered on producing goods, Baudrillard (1998) claims that postmodern cultures are characterized by the dominance of simulation, where images and signs play a crucial role. Furthermore, according to Baudrillard (1998), consumerism is a development of his idea of the hyperreal and is associated with late capitalism. According to Baudrillard's viewpoint, everything we do every day is a simulation of reality that is made possible by the creation and consumption of things. Baudrillard uses the sign/ signifier technique to explain consumption so that what we purchase is not just a product, but also a piece of a "language" that creates a sense of who we are. For Baudrillard (1998), our purchases reflect our innermost desires so that consumption is caught up with our psychological production of self.

Furthermore, Bauman's consumerism theory focuses on the subjectivity of consumers, the effects of consumerism on society, and the formation of consumer culture. It emphasizes how people view time, enjoyment, and unfulfilled wants as motivating factors. According to Bauman (2000), consumer society's emphasis on wants and rapid gratification has created a lower class that is unable to fully engage in consumption. In contrast to the society of producers, the consumer society places more importance on short-term stability and security than long-term consumption (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Theoretical framework of consumer culture based on Baudrillard and Bauman's theories



For Bauman (2000), consumerism describes that society in which wanting has become the principal compelling and operating force that coordinates systemic reproduction, social integration, social stratification, and the formation of identity and life policies. In consumer society, thus, wanting, desiring and longing needs to be, detached or alienated from individuals and recycled/reified into an outlandish force. Therefore, consumer society rests on the promise to gratify human desires, the promise of satisfaction remains seductive only as long as the desire stays ungratified (Figure 1).

5. Methodology

5.1. Method and sampling

This quantitative study tries to pinpoint the variables affecting university students' views and attitudes toward consumer behavior in Bangladesh. In this study exploratory approach was employed because the aim of this study is to explore the perception and attitudes of university students towards consumerism. The study is concerned with quantifying the attitudes and opinions of respondents, particularly with reference to consumer culture and the influence of media advertising. Data were gathered using an exploratory method from public and private universities, including Hamdard University Bangladesh (HUB) and Jagannath University (JnU). 200 university students participated in a field survey for the study of which 100 students were selected from Jagannath University and the rest 100 respondents from Hamdard University, Bangladesh which aimed to explore the opinions of male and female students on consumer culture. In order to address potential challenges associated with data collection, the researchers employed purposive sampling techniques to gather data from a sample of 200 individuals. The students who were interested to give responses about their perceptions and attitudes toward consumer culture had been selected as respondents.

5.2. Study area

For the purpose of conducting research, it is essential to define study areas that set geographical boundaries for the analysis. In this research, two university areas have been selected to be studied. The first university is Jagannath University (JnU), a state-funded public university located at 9-10, Chittranjan Avenue in Sadarghat, Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Despite being one of the most renowned and academically distinguished universities in Bangladesh, Jagannath University has recently opened its first residential hall exclusively for females. Data for the research has been collected from various locations within Jagannath University (Figure 2), including Shanto Chatter, TSC (Teacher-Student Centre), the university cafeteria, and Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall.

Figure 2: Map of locations: Jagannath University and Hamdard University.

Source: Google

The second university under study is Hamdard University Bangladesh (HUB) (Figure 2), a newly established private university in Bangladesh, founded in 2012. HUB is situated in Hamdard Nagar, Gazaria Upazila, Munshiganj district. To ensure comprehensive data collection, the research has gathered information from different points within HUB, such as the BBA faculty, the area in front of the main building, the mathematics department, and even from students from within the university bus. By selecting these two distinct universities as study areas, the research aims to capture a diverse range of perspectives and insights from different areas within these institutions.

5.3. Data collection and data analysis

In this study, a quantitative data collection approach was employed, and surveys were used to gather reliable and authentic data. The data collection process involved the use of a structured questionnaire distributed to students at Jagannath University and Hamdard University Bangladesh during the first quarter of 2023. The primary source of data was the author's questionnaire.

5.4. Data analysis techniques

To conduct quantitative analysis, statistical methods were employed, including percentage distribution and the chi-square test. The analysis was carried out using the SPSS application (IBM SPSS-26). Descriptive data analysis was performed using the percentage distribution method within IBM SPSS-26. This approach provided insights into the characteristics of the collected data. Additionally, to explore the relationships between different variables, the Chi-square test was utilized. Data were analyzed under several themes such as 'Consumer Perception of Purchasing', 'Choice of Buying Products', 'Influential Factors of Shopping Perceptions', Typical Influential Factors of Perceptions ', and 'Attitudes Towards Consumption Culture'. All of the themes have been explained with a comparison between the students of public and private universities. The statistical test was allowed for an assessment of the associations between variables based on the information gathered from both public and private universities. By employing this comprehensive quantitative methodology, the research aimed to provide a robust analysis of the data collected from the two universities, shedding light on various variables and their potential interconnections.

5.5. Ethical issues

It's important to note that the ethical framework guiding this study is derived from the Belmont Report. The principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, as emphasized in the Belmont Report, are adhered to in all aspects of this study. Informed consent indicating the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits was received from the respondents. Voluntary participation was maintained. Moreover, to ensure the reliability of the collected data, a statistical measure known as the alpha number exceeding 0.7 was considered as data accuracy.

6. Findings and discussions

6.1. Descriptive statistics on respondents' consumer behavior

This part includes the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the percentage distributions of the respondents' consumer behavior covering choice of shopping places, purchasing attitudes, online shopping practices, shopping system, and product-using intentions.

6.2. Demographic characteristics

This questionnaire includes the demographic information of the respondents. The age distribution of participants reveals that the majority (44%) fall between the ages of 20 and 22, followed by 30.5% between 22 and 24, and 8% between 18 and 20. Additionally, the survey collected data on the average family income of the participants. It was found that 33% of respondents reported an income between Tk 30,000 and Tk 50,000, while 23.5% reported an income between Tk 20,000 and Tk 30,000. Furthermore, 19% reported an income between Tk 15,000 and Tk 20,000, and 24% indicated an income of Tk 70,000 or more (Table 1). In conclusion, the provided data and statistics offer valuable insights into the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their age distribution and average family income.

Table 1-Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Indicators	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-20	35	17.5
	20-22	88	44.0
	22-24	61	30.5
	24+	16	8.0
	Total	200	100
Gender	Male	89	44.5
	Female	111	55.5
	Total	200	100
University	Public	100	50
	Private	100	50
	Total	200	100
Marital status	Married	33	16.5
	Unmarried	164	82.0
	Divorced	3	1.5
	Total	200	100
Family members	4	72	36.0
	5	79	39.5
	6+	42	21.0
	No response	7	3.5
	Total	200	100
Family income	15000-20000	38	19
	20000-30000	47	23.5
	30000-50000	66	33.0
	70000+	48	24.0
	No response	1	0.5
	Total	200	100

Source: Field survey, 2023

6.3. Consumer perception of purchasing

The survey focuses on university students' perceptions of consumer behavior. The gathered information is categorized into five distinct aspects:

shopping location, favorite shopping techniques and explanations, preferred delivery methods, frequency of visits to shopping malls, and time-consuming shopping experiences. According to the research findings, the participants' shopping preferences are divided into three main categories. A majority, 52% of respondents, opt for local markets as their preferred shopping location. In contrast, 43% show a preference for larger shopping malls, 38% for online shopping, and a mere 4% choose sidewalks as their shopping destination. In terms of delivery methods, the most favored online shopping (Al-Debei et al., 2015), and most of them are interested in cash on delivery (Ahmed, 2014). This approach ensures customer satisfaction by allowing them to inspect the product before making the final payment. This survey shows the perceptions and behaviors of university students regarding consumer culture, shedding light on their shopping choices, delivery preferences, and attitudes toward various aspects of shopping experiences.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of consumer perception about purchasing

Indicators	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Place of shopping	Big shopping mall	86	43.0
	Local market	105	52.5
	The sidewalk	8	4.0
	No response	1	0.5
	Total	200	
Preference of shopping system	Online shopping	76	38.0
	Shopping in a mall	123	61.5
	Missing	1	0.5
	Total	200	100
Delivery system in online shopping	Cash on delivery	147	73.5
	Full payment delivery	51	25.5
	No response	2	1.0
	Total	200	100
Preference for easy return policy	Yes	177	88.5
	No	21	10.5
	No response	2	1.0
	Total	200	100
Frequency of visiting shopping malls	2-3 times in a week	40	20.0
	3-4 times in a month	103	51.5
	2-3 times in a year	50	25.0
	Others	6	3.0
	No response	1	0.5
	Total	200	100
Influence of purchasing product	Your family members	94	47.0
	Your Known people	57	28.5
	Your friends	44	22.0
	Your roommate	5	2.5
	Total	200	100
Perceptions about	Getting the best product at affordable prices	154	77.0

Indicators	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Buying a product	To buy branded product to show off	32	16.0
	To use branded product for prestige	9	4.5
	Save some money buying cheap clothes	5	2.5
	Total	200	100
Monthly budget for consuming product	2-4 thousand	98	49,0
	3-5 thousand	49	24.5
	5-10 thousand	36	18.0
	10 thousand+	17	8.5
	Total	200	100

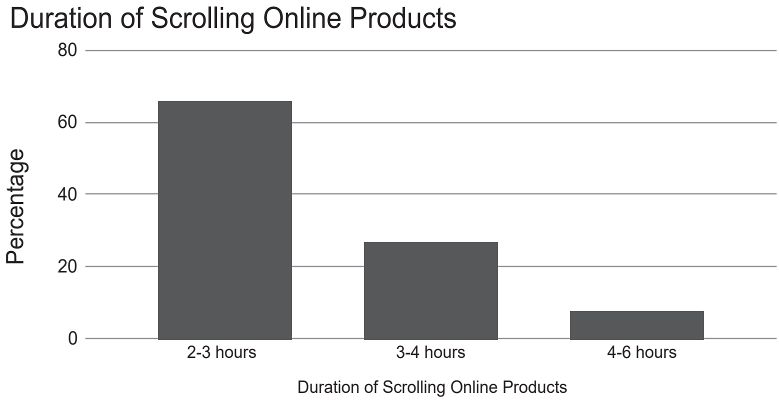
Source: Field survey, 2023

The study investigates how university students view consumer culture. It demonstrates that while purchasing, 22% of respondents are influenced by friends, 28.5% by acquaintances, and 47% by family. Surprisingly, just 2.5% of people who commute a long distance from home have roommate stress. 77% of consumers prioritize finding the best product at the best price, while 16% purchase branded products to exhibit, 2.5% do so to save money, and 4.5% to get status. With an emphasis on online buying behaviors and perspectives on convenient return policies, the study reveals that the highest percentage of students considered online shipping because of finding online as an easy way of shopping followed by getting ideas on products sitting at home and getting a chance to review the products (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Percentage distribution of the reasons behind online shopping

Source: Field survey, 2023

Figure 4: Percentage distribution of the duration of scrolling online products



Source: Field survey, 2023

The findings reveal that a sizable percentage of respondents (66%) spend 2-3 hours looking through things on the internet, while 26.5% spend 3–4 hours looking over items, and 7.5% spend 4-6 hours doing so, demonstrating a considerable dependence on the online shopping system (Figure 4). The study demonstrates that there are considerable differences in the respondents' frequency of trips to shopping malls. 25% of people visit malls twice to three times a year, while 51.5% go three to four times per month. Surprisingly, 20% of respondents said they go to malls twice or more weekly. The median value has a standard deviation of 0.776 and is 2.13%.

7. Results

In this part, the perceptions and attitudes toward consumer behavior existing among public and private university students are explained with comparative analysis. Also, the factors affecting consumer behavior have been explained using the chi-square test, and the results are compared.

7.1. Choice of buying products

The respondents' brand preferences among public and private university students were comparatively examined. Approximately 87% of respondents from the public university and 83% from the private university indicate that they purchased by expressing like or dislike during shopping. 74% of respondents from the public university and 67% of respondents from the private reported that they have a preference for a certain brand over others for both domestic and imported goods. Notably, public university and private university have similar experiences in brand preferences or purchase intentions. Respondents from both campuses tended to select local, inexpensive, and less well-known businesses. However, respondents from the private university are more likely to select well-known products that cost more, whereas respondents from public university like foreign corporations showing that they are thought to be more comfortable with hedonistic feelings and high quality. The statistics show a strong relationship between institution types and brand preferences for domestic and international companies relating to social position as well as consumer behavior awareness (with 89% of public university students and 60% of private university students reporting this awareness). That means the preference for local brands (λ^2 =15.6, p = 0.001) and foreign brands (λ^2 =15.73, p = 0.35), and awareness about consuming products (λ^2 =24.64, p = 0.000) are significantly differed by university type (Table 3). It shows public university students are more aware and private university students are more interested in foreign brands.

Table 3: Association between choice and reasons for buying products and university types

Indicators	Variables	Public (%)	Private (%)	Chi square value (P value)
Intend to buy a product	Yes	87	83	3.43
	No	12	15	(.489)
	No response	1	2	
	Total	100	100	
Preference to buy a product	Brand	74	67	1.97
	Non brand	26	32	(.361)
	No response	0	1	
	Total	100	100	
Choice about first brand	Local brands	47	47	2.04
	International brands	53	51	(.361)
	No response	0	2	
	Total	100	100	
Preference for local brand	Renowned with high price	21	37	15.58
	Less renowned with low price	78	54	(.001)***
	No response	1	9	
	Total	100	100	
Reasons behind preferring foreign brands	The brand logo carries practice	18	13	15.73
	Provides hedonistic feelings	10	17	(.001)***
	Makes people attractive	9	15	
	Good quality/comfortable to wear	63	35	
	Total	100	100	
Awareness about consuming product	Yes	89	60	24.644
	No	10	40	(.000) ***
	No response	1	0	
	Total	100	100	

Source: Field survey, 2023

Note: p= significant value, *p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ .001.

7.2. Perceptions of shopping and influential factors

The Table lists the buying preferences and consumer perceptions of students from public and private universities. There is a significant association between the desire for university environments and shopping malls. The majority of respondents from both public (77%) and private (70%) universities prefer cash on delivery. 94% of public students and 83% of private students from both universities favor a simple return policy. Universities have no bearing on the influencer's choice to purchase a product. There is visually no difference between private and public university students in selecting the place for shopping. Regarding the shopping system, the majority of students of the private university (52%) prefer online shopping to the public university (24%) which made a significant difference (λ^2 =18.14, p =0.000). Also, private university students visited more times than that of public making significant difference (λ^2 =23.03, p =.000). In terms of influential factors of purchasing products, most of the public university students were influenced by their family (55%), while most of the private university students were mostly influenced by familiar people (36%) that made a significant difference (λ^2 =8.83, p =.03) (Table 4).

Table 4: Association between consumer perceptions of shopping and university types

Indicators	Variables	Public (%)	Private (%)	Chi square value (P value)
Place of shopping	Big shopping mall	43	43	1.01
	Local market	52	53	(.799)
	The sidewalk	4	4	
	No response	1	0	
	Total	100	100	
Preference of shopping system	Online shopping	24	52	18.15
	Shopping in a mall	76	47	(.000)
	Missing	0	1	
	Total	100	100	
	Total	100	100	
Delivery system in online shopping	Cash on delivery	77	20	1.29
	Full payment delivery	22	29	(.524)
	No response	1	1	
	Total	100	100	
Duration of scrolling online product	2-3 hours	71	61	3.11
	3-4 hours	21	32	(.211)
	4-6 hours	8	7	
	Total	100	100	
Preference for easy re-turn policy	Yes	94	83	10.73
	No	4	17	(.005)***
	No response	2	0	
	Total	100	100	
Frequency of visiting	2-3 times in a week	9	31	23.03
	3-4 times in a month	52	51	(.000)***

Indicators	Variables	Public (%)	Private (%)	Chi square value (P value)
shopping malls	2-3 times in a year	32	18	
	Others	6	0	
	No response	1	0	
	Total	100	100	
Influence of purchasing product	Your family members	55	39	8.83 (.032)*
	Your Known people	21	36	
	Your friends	20	24	
	Your roommate	4	1	
	Total	100	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

7.3. Typical influential factors of perceptions

In Table 5, respondents from both private and public universities are surveyed about how advertising affects their purchasing decisions. The study focuses on brand awareness and the efficacy of various ad formats. The information demonstrates how advertising influence and university categories are related. The Table shows the respondents' brand knowledge. Brand awareness is also influenced by friends and family (18% of the public and 44% of the private respondents). Brand recognition and university type had a significant positive connection (λ^2 = 18.94, p= .000). According to the research, 63% of the public and 58% of the private respondents believe that media advertisements have a substantial impact on consumer decisions (Baudrillard, 1998), while 37% and 42%, respectively, hold the opposite belief (λ^2 = 18.94; p=.000). There is no link between university types and media effects. For both public (71%) and private (68%) university respondents, online commercials have the biggest impact. In contrast, billboard systems (private 9%, public 5%) and television advertisements (public 24%, private 23%) had less of an impact (λ^2 = 1.23, p = .541), which means there is no statistically significant correlation (Table 5). In short, media advertisement is dominant (Edbring et al., 2015), and secondly, family-friends are shaping perceptions of consumer interest that contribute to forming attitudes toward purchasing products.

Table 5: Association between effect of advertisement and university types

Indicators	Variables	Public (%)	Private (%)	Chi square value (P value)
Knowing about brands	From media advertisement	72	43	18.94 (.000)***
	From family friends	18	44	
	From cousin/relatives	2	4	
	From trustworthy people	8	9	
	Total	100	100	
Impact of adver-tisement on buying product	Yes	63	58	0.52 (.470)
	No	37	42	
	Total	100	100	

Indicators	Variables	Public (%)	Private (%)	Chi square value (P value)
Types of advertisement	Television advertisement	24	23	1.23 (.541)
	Online advertisement	71	68	
	Billboard system	5	9	
	Total	100	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

7.4. Attitudes towards consumption culture

The Table examines the relationship between the opinions of students from public and private universities toward product consumption. It explores how students from different types of universities perceive and engage in product consumption. When facing personal or financial challenges, the majority of respondents from both public (84%) and private (67%) universities quit making purchases. It indicates that a significant number of students from both public and private universities tend to stop making purchases when they encounter personal or financial difficulties. A higher percentage of public university students (84%) do so compared to private university students (67%). Consumption habits and academic categories are found to be highly correlated suggesting that there is a strong connection between the consumption habits of students and the academic categories (public or private university) they belong to. Furthermore, a larger number of private university students feel superior to public university students on the basis of consumption level (public: 24%; private: 44%) which is statistically significant ($\lambda^2 = 8.91$; p=.003) (Table 6). Data shows that the tendency to keep spending money during tough times or engaging in excessive consumption (up to 25% of income) is not strongly connected to the type of university a student attends.

Findings also claim that the results of the study provide insights into how customers (students) feel and think about their spending behaviors. A higher percentage of private university students don’t avoid shopping malls though it is more expensive than the public university which is significantly proved ($\lambda^2 = 17.9$; p=.000). However, a certain percentage of students, more so from private universities, do consider such comparisons. University types and attitudes toward shopping and product priorities are clearly associated. Concludingly, in terms of the student’s attitudes toward shopping and their priorities of purchasing products, there is no significant difference between public and private universities.

Table 6: Attitudes towards consumption culture: Comparison by university type

Indicators	Variables	Public (%)	Private (%)	Chi-square value (P value)
Feeling of superiority/inferiority based on consumption	Yes	24	44	8.91
	No	76	56	(.003)***
	Total	100	100	
25% Expense of income for purchasing	Yes	46	52	1.62
	No	52	48	(.446)
	No response	2	0	
	Total	100	100	
Avoiding shopping malls due to fear of purchasing too much	Yes	42	42	17.91
	No	29	40	(.000)***
	Rarely	28	9	
	Sometimes	1	9	
	Total	200	100	
Craving to buy less necessary product over necessary products	Never	35	30	2.48
	Sometimes	49	58	(.480)
	Several times	15	12	
	No response	1	0	
	Total	100	100	
Purchasing based on priority	Focus on necessary product	33	55	0.62 (.014)
	Focus on very necessary product	64	43	
	Focus on less necessary product	2	2	
	No response	1	0	
	Total	100	100	
Compare the product with others	Yes	13	31	9.44
	No	87	69	(.002)***
	Total	100	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

8. Conclusion

The study is oriented towards finding out the factors affecting consumer behavior in the present-day situation drawing a comparison between public and private university students. Currently, university students have grown their interest in upgrading consumer behavior. Therefore, the impact of public and private universities on Bangladesh's conceptions of consumer culture was investigated in this study. Empirically, students valued brand logos and quality above low-cost local brands.

Research shows that students from private universities have higher family income, and for this reason, their purchasing is high compared to public university students, and this variable is proven significant. Also, media influence was significantly impacted by online advertising. Furthermore, the study showed that female students overconsume and are drawn to branded goods despite their higher price tags. Moreover, public university students placed a higher value on quality, whereas private university students favored foreign brands.

The study clearly shows how students are embedded in consumer culture and cannot get out of it. The preference for local brands and foreign brands and the awareness about the quality of the consuming products significantly differed by university type. It shows public university students are more aware of local quality products and private university students are more interested in foreign brands. Most importantly, media advertisement is dominant and secondly, family-friends are shaping perceptions of consumer interest that contribute to forming attitudes toward purchasing products. Personal or financial difficulties encountered students' choices and preferences. Specifically, private university students have more feelings of superiority based on consumption level and fascination with shopping malls than public university students despite the expensiveness of the products. Most of the time it can be understood that the perception of branded products increases cost, yet paradoxically, there's reluctance to purchase these goods. This stems from the belief that increased consumption equates to higher social prestige. Future research utilizing larger samples may examine attitudes in other academic settings.

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Prospects and Challenges at Kuakata Sea Beach for Sustainable Tourism Development: A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract

Kuakata sea beach in Bangladesh has seen increased tourist growth since the Padma Bridge opened in 2022. Little is known about the obstacles and opportunities Kuakata has in implementing sustainable tourism. The purpose of this research is to look into the various prospects and challenges of sustainable tourism at Kuakata sea beach. The qualitative methods used in this study consisted of semi-structured stakeholder interviews; thematic analysis identified five key challenges such as environmental degradation, infrastructure and facilities development, socio-cultural issues, behaviour problems, and marketing, monitoring, and evaluation. The most significant obstacle to promoting sustainable tourism in Kuakata is beach erosion. Along with these challenges, this study has identified four new prospects such as exploring new tourist sites, developing community-based tourism, introducing a new tourist route, Payra seaport- new door to possibilities of tourism.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, Sustainable tourism development, Qualitative analysis, Prospects, Challenges, Kuakata, Beach nourishment.

1. Introduction

Travel has become an integral part of human life. The desire to see the globe is unstoppable, even in the face of terrorism and other international crises. Tourism was identified as one of the economic sectors having the greatest potential to make a positive contribution toward attaining sustainable development at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, 1992). Global tourism has far-reaching implications for economies, environmental systems, communities, and cultures (Nguyen et al., 2019, Pan et al., 2018; Wearing, Stevenson, & Young, 2010). It has the potential to play a role in the protection and promotion of the environment, as well as in the cultural appreciation and comprehension of other peoples (UNWTO, 2016). In many developing nations, sustainable development has lately emerged as a key topic on the development agenda for the tourism sector (Tosun, 2001; Helmy, 2004). Though tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world, there are many

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opportunities to increase the participation of tourism in the GDP of Bangladesh in the coming days. There is a great deal of interest in this topic among academics because of the impacts on quality of life, short-term gains, and limited long-term economic consequences. As a consequence, sustainable tourism has been a focus of attention for researchers for developing a tourism destination.

According to UNEP & UNWTO (2005, p. 12), sustainable tourism is understood as "a form of tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of tourists, the industry, the environment and host communities". Sustainable tourism development, like its parent paradigm of sustainable development, remains a highly discussed concept and it is seen as divisive, dividing the discussion between sustainable or 'good' forms of tourism and unsustainable, mass (or 'bad') types of tourism, as well as an inflexible blueprint that cannot be changed to different tourist development situations (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). It is hardly surprising that sustainable tourism has become a recurring theme in tourism research, given that it aims to resolve existing tensions between economic gain, environmental conservation, and social equity. The activities of sustainable tourism primarily cover the environmental, economic, social and cultural aspects of development. Natural resources are being exploited in the tourism business and sometimes tourism activities have key impacts on the environment, economy, and socio-cultural environment of the host destination (Pan et al., 2018). Thus, a comprehensive balance among environment, economy, and socio-cultural environment are required to ensure short- and long-term survival of the tourism sector. The principles of sustainable tourism should be used in a wide range of tourism activities and operations by setting long-term and short-term goals and programs (UNEP, 2002).

Kuakata is the second largest panoramic sea beach in Bangladesh. It is becoming more popular with tourists due to the fact that it offers a rare opportunity to see both the sunrise and sunset from the beach. Kuakata, locally known as "Shagor Kannya", means "Daughter of the Sea". It is situated in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali district, on the western bank of the Meghna estuary. The adjacent Fatra and Gangamati Reserved mangrove forests (both of which are part of the Sundarbans) have contributed to the enhancement of biodiversity in this area. Red crabs are one of the important species of crabs in Kuakata that attract tourists, found in a place named "Lal-kakrar Char". Rakhain, an ethnic group from Arakan, have a thousand-year ancient history and culture. The Rakhains currently live in Misripara in

Kuakata. Kuakata is a pilgrimage site for many Hindus and Buddhists, who visit around the festivals of Rush Purnima and Maghi Purnima.

Every week, at least 50,000-60,000 tourists visit Kuakata sea beach during the tourist season (TBS Report, 2021). The Bangladesh government has already opened the Padma Bridge, the largest and most expensive bridge in Bangladesh, on June 25, 2022. As a consequence, the economy of the southern part of Bangladesh will change drastically and this will have an impact on the Kuakata tourism industry. On the other hand, Payra Port, close to the coast in Kuakata, is the third port in Bangladesh. There are a coal port, a coal-fired power plant, a railroad, several roads and bridges, and a community at Kuakata. At present, the government has plans to implement 19 projects based on this Payra seaport such as an economic zone, a readymade garment factory, a pharmaceutical industry, cement factories, a coal-fired power plant, a fish processing zone, a fertilizer factory, an oil refinery, and a shipbuilding industry (Khan & Noman, 2021). A large number of economic activities and new jobs will be generated as a consequence. Therefore, it is hoped that these activities would boost tourism in Kuakata.

At the same time, it is expected that many more tourists would visit Kuakata than at present. If the socio-cultural and environmental resources of a tourist destination are destroyed for any reason, then the tourists as well as service providers move to another destination. But local residents are unable to relocate because of their roots. In the absence of a comprehensive strategy for sustainable tourism development, this growing number of visitors are likely to have unfavorable effects on the local environment as well as socio-cultural environment. However, research regarding identifying prospects and challenges of sustainable tourism on Kuakata sea beach remains limited. This paper addresses this gap by investigating the various prospects and challenges of sustainable tourism in Kuakata. The objectives of this study is mentioned below:

- To identify the challenges to sustainable tourism development in Kuakata sea beach
- To explore the prospects of sustainable tourism development in Kuakata sea beach

2. Literature review

There are many methods and definitions of sustainable tourism in the literature, and many of them begin by establishing a connection to the ideas of sustainability or sustainable development (Zamfir & Corbos, 2015). The term 'sustainable tourism' originated from the term 'sustainable development' and the necessity for the tourism sector to be sustainable (Jackson & Morpeth, 2000). Despite the fact that the phrase "sustainable tourism" is associated with a post-Rio paradigm of sustainable development, the literature is undergoing development.

To minimize the negative effects of tourism and enhance its positive impact on the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic components of sustainability is the goal of the abovementioned conventional definition of sustainable tourism proposed by the UNEP and the UNWTO. If a destination is to be considered a sustainable tourist destination, it must protect the local economy and contribute to the preservation of the local cultural identity and there must be a steady stream of visitors as well as a good ecological and environmental impact (Das, 2019; Kuklina et al., 2021).

The phrase 'sustainable tourism development' is frequently used to reflect a more integral and less self-interested approach to tourism development and it is closely linked to sustainable tourism, however it focuses on the necessity to guarantee sustainable growth of tourism (McDonald, 2006). According to the WTO (1998, p. 21), sustainable tourism development is defined as follows: *"Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present* tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological *diversity and life support systems"*.

The definition clearly states that successful sustainable tourism development requires sound environmental, social, and cultural resource management that meets the needs of all the stakeholders while protecting and conserving resources for present and future generations. These managerial, organizational, and pedagogical needs have come to be known as sustainable tourism development. Strong political leadership and informed engagement by all key stakeholders are required to achieve sustainable tourism development by broad participation and consensus building (UNWTO, 2004; UNEP & UNWTO, 2005). Achieving sustainable tourism is an ongoing process that needs continual impact control and, if required, the implementation of the appropriate preventative and/or corrective actions (UNWTO, 2004; UNEP & UNWTO, 2005). The notions of sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism development remain a topic of vigorous and occasionally contentious and cyclical ideological and political discussions (Moyle et al., 2020).

Sikkim, a tiny mountainous state in the Eastern Himalayas of India, had analyses of sustainable tourism and its issues and challenges (Das, 2019). Climate change, land degradation, overexploitation, and natural disasters with devastating consequences were the major challenges for developing sustainable tourism in Sikkim. It was also thought that a healthy relationship between tourism and the environment and the long-term success of tourism in the state requires sustainable planning that makes the best use of management. Allayarov et al. (2018), on the other hand, suggest that in order to improve the tourist industry in the Republic of Kazakhstan, it is necessary to first identify the current challenges encountered by the sector and then identify the government initiatives that started to improve it. Kazakhstan's tourism business suffers from a lack of supply chain and logistical facilities, infrastructure, and tourist services. Economical travelers also confront exorbitant prices while visiting Kazakhstan. Le (2016) research out of Vietnam divided up the places into categories and studied the environmental and non-environmental aspects of sustainable tourism. Positive and negative environmental consequences, economic effects, and sociocultural effects are only some of the six overarching themes that emerged. Sustainable tourism attempts to maximize the positive benefits and reduce the negative ones via rigorous and consistent implementation. In addition, three fundamental themes regarding the obstacles local stakeholders face in their involvement in sustainable tourism development in the area were discovered. These topics are as follows: operational, structural, and cultural.

The study conducted by Kisi (2019) centers on the formulation of an optimal sustainable tourism framework for Turkey. Only by shifting away from mass tourism and toward sustainable travel can we ensure the future of our planet's natural resources. Many studies have shown that long-term survival is possible only through environmentally, economically, and socially responsible practices. The only ethical method to restore the ecology and biodiversity is via sustainable tourism.

Sharpley has been advocating for the concept that sustainable development through tourism is unfeasible for more than 20 years (Sharpley, 2020). An avalanche of papers devoted to sustainable tourism has filled literature resources in the last decade (Niñerola et al., 2019). The problem is multifaceted and multi-relational, mostly linked to climate change (Moyle et al., 2020). To better understand the sustainability of the economy, researchers should focus on applied issues, rather than theoretical aspects ((Moyle et al., 2020; Kuklina et al., 2021).

3. Methodology

This empirical research was done during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was conducted in the locations of the municipality of Kuakata in the Patuakhali district of Bangladesh in March 2021. In the last few decades, researchers who study social issues have become more and more interested in qualitative research methods (Silverman, 2015). Qualitative data gives a more in-depth picture of a thing or subject, which helps us understand a problem better (Smith, 2015). The use of qualitative research methods is particularly valuable in situations where there is a significant lack of study in the existing literature (Mareeuw, Vaandrager, Klerkx, Naaldenberg, & Koelen, 2015). The qualitative research approach was adopted in this study because the researcher was more interested in explaining things than in measuring them or making generalisations about numbers (Kala & Bagri, 2018). Qualitative methods are helpful when there are many sources of evidence and the target group can easily say what they think. The present study used two qualitative research methods, namely face-to-face semi-structured interviews and document analysis, in order to collect data that would address the research aims. Conducting interviews and going through documents are two of the most common ways to obtain qualitative data (Chenail, 2011; Kvale, 2015).

Stakeholders from the supplier side, such as local residents, tourism business operators, and personnel of management agencies who are working on legal, administrative, communication, and safety-security aspects of sustainable tourism development, were selected as a sample. These stakeholders have lived in the area for a long time or worked in the tourism business; they can easily spot problems and find out more about them. The researcher conducted fieldwork in order to obtain a better knowledge of sustainable tourism development by carefully observing the surroundings while conducting interviews. In this study, the researcher used a nonprobability judgmental technique for selecting potential participants for a semi-structured interview to meet the objectives. Malhotra (2010) describes a judgmental sampling method as one in which the researcher's judgment is the primary criterion for selecting participants for the interview program. The judgment was formed via a review of the literature, the researcher's own experience, and contact with various stakeholder groups. Several criteria (e.g., information availability, relative role and significance in achieving objectives) were established by the researcher for various groups of stakeholders to be included in the interview program.

In all, there were a total of 27 in-depth interviews conducted. The participants that were chosen had to be at least 18 years old. The duration of each interview ranged from 45 to 90 minutes, which was all done in the

Bengali language. For the interview script, a list of questions based on the theme of the study was made. According to the participants' consent, all interviews were digitally recorded. An extensive interview program yielded voluminous amounts of high-quality empirical data that shed light on the broader context of sustainable tourism development. The empirical materials were translated into English and transcribed.

The data were analyzed manually and used a four-step data analysis process, beginning with the identification of major themes (note taking), followed by the assignment of codes to major themes (coding), the classification of responses under major themes (sorting), and ultimately, themes and reactions are included in the research discussion (writing). Themes may be found at all phases of data collection and tend to be abstract in nature (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Document analysis also helped identify themes that were pertinent to the study objectives. The study used thematic analysis to examine the empirical data collected from the interview programme, which identified two board themes to reveal the research objectives. All of these emerging themes and sub-themes are used to define the roles of sustainable tourism development and their respective efficiency of sustainable tourism at the Kuakata sea beach in Bangladesh. For the validity and reliability of the data, the interviews have been recorded digitally. A deductive thematic approach (Hassan et al., 2018; Patton, 2015) was used to analyse prospects and challenges for sustainable tourism development on Kuakata sea beach.

The first theme emerged from the analysis is titled ‘Challenges of sustainable tourism development’ with five sub-themes: (1) Managing environmental degradation, (2) Managing infrastructure and facilities development, (3) Managing Socio-Cultural issues, (4) Managing behaviour problem, and (5) Managing marketing, monitoring and evaluation. The second theme developed from the qualitative analysis is titled as, ‘Prospects of sustainable tourism development’ with four sub-themes: (1) Exploring new tourist sites, (2) Payra Seaport- new door to possibilities of tourism, (3) Developing community-based tourism (CBT), and (4) Introducing a new tourist route (Kuakata sea beach-deep sea-Sundarban).

4. Findings

4.1. Challenges of sustainable tourism development

4.1.1. Managing environmental degradation

Environment and tourism are integral parts in many ways. The natural environment and climatic conditions have a significant role in defining a region's feasibility and appeal as a tourism destination (Dwyer and Kim, 2003). The effective management of environmentally sensitive areas could contribute to the sustainable tourism development of Kuakata sea beach. The main environmental deterioration trends in Kuakata include beach erosion, ineffective waste management and littering issues, arsenic-laced tube well water, the restaurants lacking basic hygiene, loss of biodiversity, and plastic pollution killing marine life.

a) Beach erosion

The Kuakata sea beach has been eroding for over the past two decades, generating considerable anxiety among investors, visitors, merchants, and local residents. According to the municipality of Kuakata, the sea is eroding away at least 30 to 100 feet of beach land every year (Jewel, 2020). All the participants in this study noticed significant changes on the sea beach of Kuakata. This beach is being broken every year. The beach was 18 kilometres long and 8 kilometres broad (Rashid and Taskin, 2018). Due to persistent erosion, the 8-kilometer-long beach has decreased to the point that visitors are unable to access it during high tide (Das, 2021).

> *...there is no soil here (Kuakata sea beach). Everything here is* sand. When the waves hit, all the sand goes away. The waves on the shore hit the palm trees and all fell. - Hotel employee2

A motor bike driver at the beach, said “We are dissatisfied with the erosion since it is threatening our livelihoods and our way of life.” Saving the Kuakata sea beach is one of the biggest challenges for sustainable tourism here. If the sea beach is fragile, no tourists want to come here.

b) Ineffective waste management and littering issue

Despite the fact that the municipality of Kuakata is now eleven years old, there is no defined location for dumping trash and appropriate waste management. Managing litter is another major challenge in Kuakata.

> So far, there is no specific place in Kuakata where municipal waste can be collected and burned, dumped or recycled. *...Municipal garbage is dumped at a place called Ghatla after midnight. ... Ghatla is a canal through which water from 8* wards or villages is drained. That canal has merged with the sea. - Tour operator2

The majority of stakeholders focused on the littering problems on Kuakata sea beach that were impacting the environment. To indicate the situation, a local resident who is also the owner of a hotel in Kuakata, said, "Those who come on day-tour do not reserve a hotel. They throw all the waste on the road, which is detrimental to the environment. "

c) Loss of biodiversity

Climate change and tourism activities are both important reasons for the loss of biodiversity in Kuakata. Climate change exacerbates problems by increasing the abundance, distribution, recruitment, and mobility of aquatic animals such as invertebrates, fish, sea turtles, and cetaceans (FE Online Report, 2021). According to the Marine Journalists Network. at least 200 motorbikes carrying visitors travel to Kuakata every day, crushing at least 6,000 crabs beneath their wheels (FE Online Report, 2021). 90% of the plastic used by the tourists is dumped on the beach every day, causing a serious threat to the marine ecosystem in the region (TBS Report, 2021). S

> Tourists' plastic polythene bags are floating into the mangrove forest. The trees are dying from the plastic being stuck in their *roots. The forest is being destroyed*.... biodiversity such as red crabs is almost extinct. - Tour operator2

4.1.2. Managing infrastructure and facilities development

a) Poor internal transportation system

A well-established transportation system is a prerequisite to developing sustainable tourism in any destination. Transportation is the primary impediment to Kuakata's tourist growth. Although Kuakata can be easily reached due to the Padma Bridge, the Kuakata-Kalapara-Patuakhali highway is in poor condition. The internal transportation system between different spots in Kuakata is also in very poor condition. Visitors can visit different spots by only riding motorcycles or vans. Right now, there is no specific place for a bus terminal. All the buses are parked near the road on the seabeach randomly. That’s why there are constant traffic jams and a lot of noise and air pollution near the beach.

> There is no specific bus stand in Kuakata. All the buses are parked at random on the road, creating traffic jams and ruining the environment. - Hotel owner

b) Undeveloped tourist spots

Kuakata is still in the process of being developed into a viable tourist attraction. It is surrounded by several tourist sites, including the Gangamotir Forest, Fathrara Forest, the Misripara Buddhist Statue, Rakhain Palli (Village), and Shutki Palli (Dried Fish Village). As of right now, there are not enough tourist infrastructures in these sights. Only half a kilometer of the sea beach is lit after evening. As a result, tourists lack a sense of security and have little interest in spending extended periods of time in dark locations.

The washroom is a basic need for the visitors. There is no properly maintained hygienic washroom near the sea beach, nor is it there near the beach's surrounding tourist attractions. Even though Barisal to Kuakata is 120 kilometres away, there is no washroom beside the road for the passengers.

The 20-bed Kuakata Hospital is located three kilometres from the seaside. The hospital is run by a single doctor, and other personnel are in short supply. There is no ambulance service on the sea beach area under this hospital. In order to provide an idea of the present situation, a hotel employee said "There is no good medical service here. There is one doctor at the hospital in Kuakata. It is very depressing. You can get sick at any time of the night. There is no service for the tourists if they get sick at night."

c) Insufficient recreational facilities

Tourism, recreation, and leisure are all inextricably linked (Mandic et al., 2018). Recreational facilities are part of the physical infrastructure that supports economic and tourism development (Khadaroo and Seetanah: in Jafari and Xiao, 2016). Tourism has been active in Kuakata for over two decades, but no recreational facilities for such visitors have yet been developed. When travelling to Kuakata, tourists are limited to visiting the beach and nearby sites. There are no pleasant activities for the tourists. Kuakata has no theme park, movie theater, spa, bar, or gymnasium yet.

> There are no five-star hotel-type facilities. But the guests will come and ask for these. But we are not able to give them these services. Higher-class tourists do not come here. The middle-class people are the most numerous in Kuakata. That's because the upper class doesn't come here. - Hotel employee$_1$

4.1.3. Managing socio-cultural issues

There is a strong correlation between cultural heritage tourism as well as the desire of certain visitors to immerse themselves in the local culture, art, and history, as well as sampling the food and meeting the people (Carter et al., 2015). Not only the sea beach but also cultural heritage is another attraction for tourists to Kuakata. Socio-cultural repercussions are those that occur as a consequence of tourist interaction with the host community. Historically, the Rakhine population in Kuakata has a tradition that dates back approximately to two hundred years in this region. For various reasons, the number of Rakhine is decreasing day by day. At the same time, their culture is also getting lost.

Rakhine people rarely get a chance to show off their cultural activities. Especially when an important person or minister comes, they get a chance to show the culture. During the data collection for this research, a 10-day cultural activity was going on at the beach under the supervision of the

Bangladesh Police Authority. But the Rakhine were not given any opportunity to do any cultural show.

a) Insufficient financing and marketing for Rakhine handicrafts

One of the attractions of tourist shopping is the variety of Rakhine handicrafts, clothes and rituals. Tourists have a great demand for their handicrafts. Rakhine garments and craftsmen are disappearing day by day. The two main problems in the production of Rakhine handicrafts and handicrafts are 1) the problem of finance and 2) the problem of marketing. Due to these two problems, the Rakhines are not able to present their products to the tourists in the proper way. A Rakhine leader mentioned: “our handicrafts, clothing, and ceremonies are one of the attractions of visitors’ shopping. Our wares are in high demand for the tourists. Finance and marketing are the two primary concerns when it comes to creating handicrafts and weaving textiles. Due to these two issues, we are unable to properly produce our items for tourists”.

b) Conflict between the Rakhine-Bengali

Conflicts between the Rakhine and Bengali people occur sometimes, which causes the Rakhines to become even more concerned. The tourist industry suffers as a result. In Misri Para, Bengalis are running shops in the place of the Rakhines, but they are not renting land to the Rakhines properly. As a result, when the Rakhine people want to rent their land, the Bengalis are filing cases against them. As a result, the conflict is growing.

4.1.4. Managing behavior problem

Sometimes, tourists are confronted with a variety of behavioural issues by destination marketers and tourism service providers. In the voice of a hotel owner, the misbehavior of the service provider became clearer. He said, “Tourists are facing misbehavior from two classes of professionals. One is the photographer and the other is the motorcyclist. They want to rob the tourists. They want to make a lot of money with a little service”. The majority of the motorcyclists in Kuakata lack a valid licence. Many of them do not wear helmets when they drive, and that's dangerous. Riders under the age of 18 can be seen.

One tour operator mentioned that service providers are mistreating tourists. Sometimes tour operators cheat the tourists for visiting many sites. Actually, local tour operators take them to visit a few sites, but they proclaim too many sites’ names.

> The various tour operators here promise the tourists to go around 18 spots, but there are no 18 spots here. Isn't that

> cheating? The behaviour of the local people with the tourists should be good. - Tour operator2

4.1.5. Managing marketing, monitoring and evaluation

Though Kuakata sea beach is one of the few places in the world where you can see both the sunrise and the sunset, there is no proper marketing for this place. Kuakata depends on the local tourists and very few international tourists come here. The sea beach welcome the visitors for only six months (October to March), and the service providers are waiting for the guests for the rest of the year. Development starts with planning. Any development work will go well if it follows the master plan. The 2014 gazette issued Kuakata's master plan. People have constructed buildings wherever they like. Kuakata risks sustainable tourism if things are not rigorously regulated.

The Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner chairs the Kuakata Beach Management Committee, which oversees the beach. Local stakeholders claim the beach management committee is inefficient and has many problems. This committee does not arrange meetings regularly and does not monitor them properly. The mayor of Kuakata wants to restructure and strengthen the beach committee locally.

4.2 Prospects of sustainable tourism development

4.2.1. Exploring new tourist sites

Char Bijoy is a mesmerizing island in the Bay of Bengal, located around 40 kilometres southeast of the Gangamati forest and east of Kuakata. This island was found in December 2017 by a group of traveling explorers in the Patuakhali district. After its discovery in the month of Victory, the island was dubbed “Char Bijoy” or "The Victory Island." Char Bijoy Island is around 5,000 acres in size and is 10 kilometres in length and 3 kilometres in width. It is the habitat of red crabs, thousands of migrating birds, and an abundance of marine fish. This deserted island captivates all tourists with its spectacular beauty and the great expanse of water. That is why adventure-seeking travellers have elevated Char Bijoy to the top of their list of ideal camping spots. The island is about an hour and a half away by an engine-driven trawler or speedboat from Kuakata.

> Recently, an island southeast of Kuakata beach was seen. We gave it the name "Char Vijay." Char Vijay is about 10 kilometres long. Although no construction has begun there, several tourist boats visit on a daily basis. I went there. I spotted many large white birds that looked like ducks. Again, lots of red crabs have been seen. If the government and various non-governmental organizations work on it, more visitors will arrive. - Security Officer

4.2.2. Payra seaport- new door to possibilities of tourism

Payra Port is a third seaport in southern Bangladesh, located near the seashore at Kuakata. The Payra port's development is accompanied by the building of a coal terminal, a coal power plant, a train line, bridges and roads, and a settlement. The government intends to construct an airport in the area, which will be located around the Payra Port and Kuakata. The outcome is that, passengers will have an easier time travelling to Payra harbour and Kuakata for tourist purposes. Among the planned projects to construct are an eco-park, a foreigner-exclusive tourist zone, a marine drive, a marine park, a sea aquarium, a stadium of international standard, a golf course, a tennis court, a convention centre, a hotel-motel zone, and resort, a shopping mall, and a picnic area, among other recreational facilities (Khan & Noman, 2021). At present, the government has plans to implement 19 projects based on this Payra seaport. This includes an economic zone, a readymade garment factory, the pharmaceutical industry, cement factories, a coal-fired power plant, a fish processing zone, a fertilizer factory, an oil refinery, and the shipbuilding industry (Khan & Noman, 2021). As a result, huge economic activity and employment will be created in this area. Therefore, these activities will hopefully have a positive effect on Kuakata's tourism industry.

4.2.3. Develop community-based tourism (CBT)

The Rakhines are a minor ethnic group in Kuakata. They migrated from Arakan of Myanmar about 200 years ago. Misripara, Keranipara and Amkholapara are among the villages that make up Rakhine Palli. Community based tourism (CBT) is the bast way to see their way of life, culture, and tradition in their natural environment. CBT promotes local communities by spurring economic development, promoting cultural preservation, and enhancing their quality of life (Hossain & Uchinlayen, 2017). These, in turn, reinforce good attitudes and actions toward sustainable tourist growth among communities. It has a lot of opportunities to flourish through community-based tourism in Kuakata, centered around the Rakhine community.

> Once upon a time, the Rakhines were the owner of the land in this area. They are now reaping significant benefits because of *tourism. ...We proposed to establish "Community Based Tourism" to create a connection between them and tourism ...* Before, they had no educated children. Now they have. They, too, want to benefit from this tourism. - Tour operator$_1$

4.2.4. Introducing a new tourist route (Kuakata sea beach-deep sea-Sundarban)

Bangladesh has a diverse range of tourism products and many tourist destinations. Numerous tour operators offer a variety of trips. However, there is currently no circular or ring tour that connects Sea Beach, Deep Sea, and Forest. In Kuakata, such circular trips may be organized, which will boost tourism in this area.

By the sea, the distance between Kuakata Sea Beach and the Sundarbans (largest mangrove forest in the world), is about 40 kilometres **(Map 1)**. It takes about three hours by ship to cross this path. Visitors can visit Kuakata and Deep Sea before heading to the Sundarbans (Katak), or vice versa. Therefore, tourists can start their journey from Kuakata sea beach, watch the deep sea, and end the trip at Sundarbans. Tourists will be able to experience both romance and adventure on this trip.

> There are plans to open a route between Kuakata and the Sundarbans next year. We are interested in organizing a ring tour. Tourists may enter Khulna through Dhaka and make their way to Kuakata. Alternatively, you may enter the Sundarbans from Dhaka through Kuakata and return to Dhaka via Khulna. Tourists feel bored on a one-way tour. If a circular tour is designed for this, visitors will be able to see the sea beach, the deep sea, and the Sundarbans forest all at once. - Tour operator$_1$

Map 1: Sundarbans route from Kuakata sea beach to Katka ghat

5. Discussion

This study identified five challenges: Kuakata's environmental degradation, infrastructure and facilities development, socio-cultural issues, behaviour problem/Knowledge and awareness, and marketing, monitoring and evaluation which have the potential to influence sustainable tourism development in Kuakata. It is only by bringing them together and analysing their interactions that a clear picture of the fundamental challenges plaguing Kuakata's tourism becomes visible. These issues are critical to Kuakata's sustainable development and must be addressed if sustainable tourism is to materialize.

Beach erosion, inadequate waste management and littering, and biodiversity loss are the most prevalent challenges in Kuakata's environmental deterioration, which creates tensions between government, non-government, community, and tourist stakeholders. Findings from this research demonstrate that most tourists are accountable for littering problems, especially same-day visitors. Same-day visitors do not take any kind of accommodation, and they come here in a picnic mood. So, they throw plastic bottles and plastic lunch boxes everywhere. On the other hand, an adequate number of dustbins are not here. Every day, motorbikes transporting tourists drive to the sea beach smashing red crabs under their wheels in the process.

Numerous tourism scholars have already highlighted the critical role of service infrastructure, particularly transportation, lodging, catering, people services, recreational facilities, and tourist spot development, in the overall expansion of tourism from both a geographical and economic standpoint. The principal socio-cultural challenges in Kuakata include conflict between the Rakhine and Bengali peoples, difficulties in the manufacture of Rakhine handicrafts, the decline of the Rakhine population and as a consequence, the risk of losing their culture, and the litany of mistreatment faced by the tourists from the service providers.

5.1. Beach erosion-the biggest challenge for developing sustainable tourism in Kuakata

Tourist attractions in Kuakata are mainly based on the sea beach and the surrounding area. But the regret is that the sea beach is constantly breaking down. Simultaneously, more than two lakh trees of two thousand acres of forest have been lost in the sea due to the erosion of the sea beaches in 13 years (Das, 2021). Preventing the erosion of Kuakata Sea Beach is one of the most difficult issues to overcome. If the erosion of sea beach is not controlled, the tourism industry in this region may be wiped out at some point. There should be a coordinated effort by the Forest Department, the Water Development Board, the District Administration, the Local Administration, and the Bangladesh Tourism Board to maintain the forest and stop beach erosion. Aside from that, fresh afforestation must be carried out. The forest department should take the initiative to plant salt-tolerant trees to protect the forest from tidal surges. However, under the supervision of the Water Development Board, urgent repairs are being carried out in the surrounding erosive areas, including the Zero Point area of the beach, by dropping sand-filled geo-bags. However, this is just a short-term solution to the problem of erosion on the beach. That is insufficient to ensure the beach's long-term conservation and development. This requires mega projects with modern technology.

Many countries around the world whose beaches are eroding have solved this problem through **"beach nourishment."** Beach nourishment is the process of replenishing beaches with imported sand and is one of the most effective methods of rehabilitating beaches when erosion has become an issue (Rahman et al., 2013). Nourishment is popular because it protects beach resources and avoids the detrimental impacts of hard constructions. Beach nourishment has become one of the most well-known ways of coastal protection in both the United States and Europe to address the issue of beach erosion (Rahman et al., 2013).

If the various prospects of sustainable tourism in Kuakata are developed, improved, and well managed, the future tourism industry in Kuakata will be more attractive to tourists. These prospects have a significant impact on the tourism industry's future development and growth. When the government places a greater emphasis on promoting tourism, it, too, develop and strengthen this aspect of the economy. The relevance and influence of these concerns on sustainable tourism development will be assessed afterwards, relying on current theoretical models to explore how they may be modified to aid the growth of tourism in Kuakata.

6. Conclusion

The prospects for the growth of tourism in the Kuakata are very promising due to the territory's abundance of distinct tourist destinations. Despite the prevalence of numerous attractions in Kuakata, tourism in the area is still in its infancy. Considering the relevant concept of sustainable tourism development, this research focuses on the various prospects and challenges of sustainable tourism at Kuakata sea beach with a belief in established literature so that it can be managed through proper initiatives by the stakeholders. The mechanism of tourism is an open system that is impacted by complex interactions and interrelationships. The notion of sustainable tourism development refers to the management of all tourism resources in such a manner that they meet the economic, social, and aesthetic demands of stakeholders while also preserving the cultural integrity and ecological diversity of the destination (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; WTO, 1998; McKercher, 2003). Environmental sustainability in tourism is achieved through protection of biological diversity, effective use of energy, water availability and management, waste disposal and wastewater treatment, controlling atmospheric pollution, and appropriate management of infrastructure development and landscape. It also achieved the socio-cultural dimension of sustainability of tourism on the host community through local public safety, the local community's capacity to carry out its social responsibilities, cultural heritage preservation, and overall quality of life. Moreover, economic sustainability is attained by taking into account the economic benefits of tourism for the host community, ensuring tourist satisfaction, planning an appropriate tourism-related strategy, and enforcing an efficient institutional regulation and monitoring system ((Durovic & Lovrentjev, 2014). Beach erosion is the greatest barrier to the development of sustainable tourism in Kuakata. The government should immediately start the "beach nourishment" project to save the Kuakata sea beach.

Sustainable tourism development should not be seen as a goal in itself, but rather as a process. The concept of sustainable tourism, from theory to practice, is faced with a long road to implementation because of the various challenges that the tourist sector has to overcome in order to embrace sustainable practices, as determined by a great number of studies (Tosun, 2001; Le et al., 2006). This study examines the various prospects and challenges of sustainable tourism in the context of a highly vulnerable developing nation so that it can meet the tourism needs of future generations.

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