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Social Influence, Self-Efficacy, Trust, and Corporate Digital Responsibility in Adoption of E-Marketing

Kamrul Islam Syed, Prof. Abu Bakr Sade, Prof. Huam Hon Tat Putra Business School, UPM, Malaysia

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INTRODUCTION

Conventional marketing mix blended with digital transformation is increasingly becoming popular in today's marketplace. It influences all aspects of consumption activities and post-purchase behavior. Bangladesh is no exception to this digital transformation and its different avenues. E-marketing as it implies electronic marketing using the Internet for buying and selling goods or services, and the execution of transactions by transferring money or funds (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020; Kotler, Keller, Ang, Tan, & Leong, 2018; Martin & Murphy, 2017). In the digital platform, the young generation usually helps their early generations in case of any difficulties (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). They are truly techno-savvy and have a strong influence on households in the adoption of digitalization. Therefore, it is increasingly important for both managers and consumer researchers to understand the trend in the context of a developing economy. At the same time, the perceived gap incorporates digital responsibility to safeguard privacy, information transparency, and promote ethical business practices should be taken into consideration for consumers to adopt e-marketing.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

E-marketing is the use of the Internet, social media, email, apps, search engines, and different channels to reach customers and similarly manage businesses (Appel et al., 2020; Cochoy, Hagberg, Petersson, McIntyre, & Sörum, 2017; Stephen, 2016). As such, the adoption of e-marketing is also rising in developing nations. It uses tools, techniques, technologies, and overall strategy to maximize business potential (Borone & Reeves, 2020). It is very predominant in shaping consumption patterns. From ordering food, grocery, banking, shopping, laundry services, maid services, and maintenance works to ride-sharing services, e-marketing is managing peoples' busy lifestyles.

According to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory & Commission-BTRC (2023), total mobile phone subscribers and Internet subscribers have reached 162 million and 101 million respectively. Since digital transformation is continuously bringing possibilities for marketers and researchers, it is equally important to understand what consumers buy and why. What stimuli motivate them to engage in buying behavior and resolve any post-purchase behavior. E-marketing has an instant appeal to need recognition and information search if not immediate purchase. It is also convenient to buyers in terms of information search, price check, product comparisons, quality of products, delivery time, etc. By the same token, the typical risks are involved the wrong shipment, faulty products, delays in delivery, scam, and unethical business practices. Also, if exchanges or refunds are needed the hassle customers go through to resolve the issues. Many companies opened their businesses in the past few years continue to evade regulatory oversight as well. Also, there is no official data as to how much money customers lost to the e-marketing scams.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Some of the significant changes and adaptations in new technologies the world has experienced in the last

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two decades are the result of the development of information technologies. It is one of the key determinants in modern-day civilization and social transformation. Digital transformation is lately the most significant component of the fourth industrial revolution that alters the way of doing business (Orbik & Zozul'aková, 2019). Bangladesh has also made good progress in using e-marketing and usage in different platforms. Many products and service-based businesses are being digitalized keeping customer value in mind. E-marketing is gaining popularity and has the potential to advance exponentially (Rahman, Islam, Esha, Sultana, & Chakravorty, 2018). At the same time, Bangladesh's rising digital platforms has been siphoned by a lack of monitoring and transparency for years both from the organizations and the regulatory authorities. Many claimed that the difficulties of ensuring consumers' rights in digital embezzlement and data protection are for not implementing the laws properly and the absence of proper regulatory authority to monitor the sector. This can be attributed to institutional failure in developing nations. The key decisions for designing, developing, and implementing e-marketing marketing strategy, selecting the right target market, and online value proposition are as challenging as conventional marketing practices (Chaffey, 2019). All these designs and analysis processes are emerging from transformations in technological innovations along with evolving customer behavior (Davenport 2018; Hair, Bush, and Ortinau 2008).

Covid 19 pandemic also boosted the growth as consumers started adopting the system due to lockdown and movement restrictions and eventually e-marketing and digital platforms started mushrooming everywhere. By the same token, responsibility in privacy issues, unethical business practices, and digital embezzlement will continue to be a big challenge in the 21st century. Many academic researchers on theoretical frameworks lack advanced knowledge of e-marketing (Ferrell, 2017). The proliferation of new media channels and customer-friendly technologies has also raised a challenge that may have serious consequences on consumers' personal, social, and psychological well-being. All these challenges require a unified solid framework to minimize the gap in the perceived corporate digital responsibility and to build trust among consumers toward adoption of e-marketing content.

Mistrust among consumers also arises from the unclear responsibilities of marketers and an experimental rather than a planned approach to e-marketing activities (Chaffey, 2019). Internet usage through mobile devices is increasing in Bangladesh with lowering Internet bandwidth and device costs being the key factors driving this change (Rahman, 2015; Taher, 2015). A study by Smart Insight (2017) identified the challenges of managing e-marketing content as planning, organizational capabilities, integration of digital channels into marketing, and ROI (return on investment) evaluation. Demographic and social shifts have altered the attitude of parents and thus given the teenagers and young adults an increased status of influencing purchase decisions (Flurry & Burns, 2005). Similarly, consumers especially children, teenagers, and young adults are more vulnerable to marketing stimuli that they get from e-marketing platforms.

Research Objective

Bangladesh's rising e-marketing content has been siphoned by a lack of monitoring and transparency for years both from the organizations and the regulatory authorities. Many claimed that the difficulties of ensuring consumers' rights in digital embezzlement and data protection are due to not implementing the laws properly and the absence of proper regulatory authority. Therefore, the general objective of this study is to see the relationship between perceived social influence, self-efficacy and the subsequent trust among consumers toward the adoption of e-marketing in developing nations, and to examine whether perceived corporate digital responsibility mediates the relationship.

Research Questions

Based on the background, problem statement, and research objective discussed above, especially with social influence, self-efficacy, and trust and to examine whether corporate digital responsibility mediates the relationship toward adoption of e-marketing contents in developing nations. Therefore, the research





questions will be as follows:

- 1. Is there any relationship between social influence and adoption of e-marketing?
- 2. Is there any relationship between self-efficacy and adoption of e-marketing?
- 3. Is there any relationship between trust and adoption of e-marketing?
- 4. Does corporate digital responsibility mediate the relationship between social influence and adoption of e-marketing?
- 5. Does corporate digital responsibility mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and adoption of emarketing?
- 6. Does corporate digital responsibility mediate the relationship between trust and adoption of emarketing?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Influence

Social influence in the context of technology adoption refers to the impact that the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of others have on an individual's decision to accept and use a technology (Zhao, Stylianou & Zheng, 2018). This influence can stem from various sources, including peers, family, colleagues, and social networks. The concept is grounded in social psychology and highlights the significance of social factors in shaping individual behavior. Grounded on social influence theory (SIT) marketers are more interested in exploring virtual communities and their preferred sites to engage in for social needs and other consumption-related behavior (Bagozzi& Dholakia, 2002; Dholakia, Bagozzi, &Pearo, 2004a). Virtual community influences members to comply with, internalize, and create a social identity (Bagozzi& Dholakia, 2002). Therefore, the 'presence of others in the marketplace may have huge influence on consumers' choices' (Argo, 2020).

Social influence is particularly pertinent in the digital age, where social media and online communities play a significant role in disseminating information and shaping opinions about new technologies (Joa, & Magsamen-Conrad, 2022). Social influence operates through various mechanisms, such as compliance, identification, and internalization (Joa & Magsamen-Conrad, 2022; Vrain, Wilson, Kerr, & Wilson, 2022; Kelman, 2006; Bagozzi& Dholakia, 2002). Compliance occurs when individuals accept influence from others to gain rewards or avoid punishments. Identification involves adopting behaviors from a group or individual one aspires to be like or belong to (Vrain et al., 2022). Internalization is the most profound form of social influence, where individuals accept influence because the induced behavior is congruent with their value system (Argo & Dahl, 2020). In the context of technology, social influence can manifest through observations of others' use of technology, recommendations from within one's social circle, or the perceived normative pressure to use certain technologies (Erkan & Evans, 2018). As such social influence may have greater impact on e-marketing adoption in Bangladesh. In the era of digital and social media, the scope of social influence has expanded dramatically (Liew, Tan, Yoo, Gan & Lee, 2023). Online reviews, influencer endorsements, and social media discussions play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of technology. The viral nature of online content can rapidly amplify the impact of social influence, making it a powerful force in technology adoption (Alalwan, 2018). For example, a positive review or recommendation from a trusted influencer can lead to widespread adoption of e-marketing content. Social influence is one of the significant issues in Bangladesh, as the country experiences rapid digital transformation and a massive social media use. However, most literatures ignore the risk of exploitation that consumers face in their use of e-marketing content, including online scams, identity theft, digital embezzlements and inappropriate contents.





Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy can be described as individual's ability to use computers, electronic devices, and digital technology in diverse situations (Chen & Yao, 2018; Saadé & Kira, 2009; Bandura, 1982;). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform specific tasks or behaviors effectively (Plangger and Montecchi, 2020). In the realm of technology adoption, self-efficacy relates to a person's confidence in their capability to use technology efficiently and effectively (Shaw, Eschenbrenner, & Brand, 2022). This belief in one's technological competencies is a critical determinant of how likely they are to embrace and utilize new technologies such as adoption to e-marketing content. The concept to self-efficacy is especially relevant in scenarios where individuals are required to adapt to new or complex technological systems (Skandalis, 2023).

The influence of self-efficacy on digital realm is profound and multifaceted. (Mishra, 2019) research underscores the significant role of self-efficacy in shaping purchase intentions and the adoption of e-marketing content. In an era where online transactions and digital interactions are commonplace, a consumer's confidence in their digital abilities can considerably impact their shopping decisions and behaviors. Additionally, the social cognitive theory, as elaborated by Liu, Huan, Lobschat, Verhoef & Zhao, (2019) suggests that verbal affirmations of one's capabilities can bolster self-efficacy, there by encouraging greater effort towards achieving specific goals. This aspect also highlights the potential of social influences, such as peer feedback or expert endorsements in enhancing a consumer's self-efficacy in adoption of e-marketing. However, the major impediment to the growth of safe e-marketing environment is the lack of self-efficacy and poor literacy level of the majority of the consumers in developing nations such as Bangladesh. Therefore, it is imperative to focus on developing technology self-efficacy among vulnerable populations who lack access to digital resources, skills, and knowledge.

Trust

Ambiguity and risk are essential conditions that explain trust (McKnight & Chervany, 2001). Trust can be described as "the depth and assurance of feeling based on inconclusive evidence" (Rahimnia & Hassanzadeh, 2013). When a consumer believes in any business entity's honesty and integrity in a transaction, trust can be established. Therefore, trust is a significant element for the establishment of relationships between two parties engage in a transaction. As such, e-trust in e-marketing adoption plays a vital role in company performance and long-term sustainability. It also boosts in loyalty and relationship development between patrons and businesses (Thielsch, & Hirschfeld, 2019; Rahimnia & Hassanzadeh, 2013; Kim & Niehm, 2009).

Corporate Digital Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility has been merged with corporate digital responsibility to some extent as technology guides us in every sphere of our lives. CSR and digital transformation are significant aspects of global competitiveness in this modern era (Lobschat et al., 2019; Orbik & Zozul'aková, 2019). Digital responsibility can be seen from a firm's responsibilities with ethical operations and the challenges of digitalization (Herden et al., 2021). In developing nations, the unethical practices of digitalization bypassing the weak regulatory framework is the norm. Most marketers with e-marketing content run on huge profit motive with fancy ad but fail to keep their promise alive. With the increased use of mobile devices, different digital platforms, and social network sites e-marketing content has become an integral part of billions of customers' everyday life (Stephen, 2016). Therefore, product and services-oriented companies are focusing more on digital channels to promote their businesses and services. There are many literatures on TAM and the recent development of the UTAUT model for technology marketing. However, there is still a gap in responsibility issues regarding securing data, privacy protection, sharing sensitive information, and

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unethical marketing practices in developing nations.

Lobschat, Mueller, Eggers, Brandimarte, Diefenbach, Kroschke, Wirtz, (2019) define "corporate digital responsibility (CDR) as the set of shared values and norms guiding an organization's operations concerning four main processes related to digital technology and data. These processes are the creation of technology and data capture, operation and decision making, inspection and impact assessment, and refinement of technology and data". However, the literature only focuses on CDR and lacks to explain of the other causes of digital responsibility. According to Herden et al., (2021) CDR has been devised to summarize "the emerging responsibilities of corporations relating to their digitalization-related impacts, risks, challenges, and opportunities". CDR, "on the one hand, compliance with relevant laws or guidelines, on the other hand, the perception of voluntary responsibility in helping to shape the digital society" (Julia Schymura, 2018).

The popularity of social media and networking sites has also raised concerns about the privacy issues and security breaches of personal information on e-marketing contents (Aboulnasr, Tran, & Park, 2022). In the age of information era, big data, and the use of personal information people are concerned about the absence of transparency and control over their personal information (Beke, Eggers, & Verhoef, 2018; Shaw, Eschenbrenner, & Brand,2022). According to Beke et al., (2018) the influence of organizations' privacy practices varies among firms, patrons, and environments. Digital technologies and data sharing are increasingly becoming risk factors for customers and burdening corporate digital responsibility with the business ethics (Lobschat et al., 2019). Managerial implications are very significant for protecting customers' rights and privacy as they tend to feel unsafe while dealing with digital platforms on e-marketing content.

Research by Cochoy et al. (2020) has shown digital devices such as smartphones, apps, and social network platforms stimulate consumer activities to a greater extent in various sociocultural contexts. In the digital market, infrastructure development and patronization from different sectors are also responsible for customers to embrace the consumption culture at a faster pace (Cochoy, Licoppe, McIntyre, & Sörum, 2020). There is a big gap between current curriculum approaches and data-driven marketing roles and the 'practice-informed' model that shows conceptual clarity, technical skills, and soft skills are required to develop holistic approaches for e-marketing practices (Kurtzke & Setkute, 2021).

E-marketing

According to Strauss and Frost (2001), e-marketing is "the use of electronic data and applications for planning and executing the conception, distribution, and pricing of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals". E-marketing encompasses the use of websites, social media platforms, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, email marketing, SMS, blogs, and other online and offline tactics to reach and influence digital consumers. It uses tools, techniques, technologies, and overall strategy to maximize customer convenience and business potential (Borone, Adam; Reeves, 2020). Marketers typically want their patrons to easily adopt e-marketing from their arm's length to solve any consumption-related issues. It is indeed gaining popularity even in developing countries such as Bangladesh. In e-marketing, infrastructure development and patronization from different sectors are also important for customers to embrace the consumption culture at a faster pace (Cochoy et al., 2020). However, customers are poorly informed about the kind of data collected and are deeply concerned about how that personal information is used by marketers (Timothy et al., 2015). Therefore, responsibility goes to businesses for how they manage privacy, data protection, and safeguard customers' rights and privileges in adopting e-marketing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper only concentrates on proposal development for the time being. Upon collecting primary data, the

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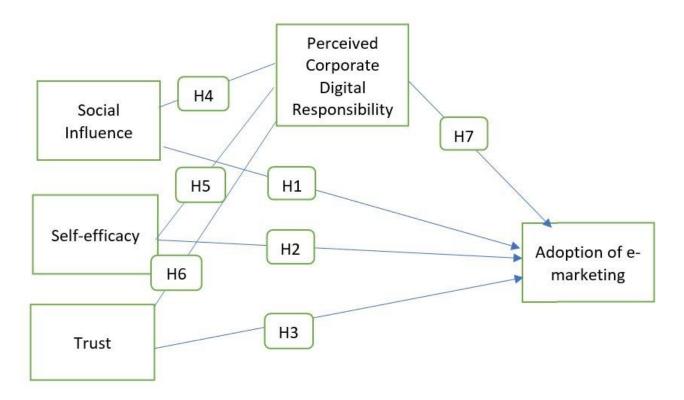
research will go for empirical findings. According to Creswell & Creswell (1994), "research is the process of making claims and then refining or abandoning some of them for other claims more strongly warranted". Marketing is debated to be a science and practical applications for the enhancement of scientific practices are also encouraged (Anderson, 1983). "Scientific method refers to the techniques and procedures used to recognize and understand marketing phenomenon" (Babin, d'Alessandro, Winzar, Lowe, Zikmund, 2020). Therefore, in marketing and consumer behavior, the positivism approach is more popular. It is also called the quantitative approach, scientific method, and empirical findings (Creswell & Creswell, 1994). Therefore, the study will discuss the operationalization of the variables in the future.

Data will be collected through in person, social media, and email using self-administered questionnaires. Self-administered survey is more effective and influences the level of satisfactory responses from the respondents (Babin et al., 2020; Malhotra, Nunan, & Birks, 2017). Moreover, completed questionnaires can be collected in a short period of time (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). The survey questionnaire is the best fit for the study of consumer as the unit of analysis. Questionnaires will be distributed to selective demographic respondents to obtain data. Google form may be used for easier fill out questionnaire. At least 500 people would be requested using non-probability sampling who use digital platforms with e-marketing contents for their everyday needs.

For future empirical findings, SPSS and Smart PLS software will be used to obtain statistical outcomes of descriptive analysis, reliability test, and inferential statistics (Henseler et al., 2009; Malhotra et al., 2017). A descriptive statistical analysis, Cronbach's alpha, factor analysis, and Pearson correlation will be conducted by SPSS. In this study, Smart PLS will be used to test all the hypotheses developed using SEM (structure equation modelling) method.

According to Henseler (2018), PLS can be used for confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis. It has graphical depiction with path analysis to show and evaluate the structural relationship between IV (independent variable) and DV (dependent variable). It allows researchers to examine the relationship among all variables in a single SEM.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



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Therefore, based on the literature findings, the following hypothesis are constructed:

- 1. There is a significant relationship between social influence and adoption of e-marketing.
- 2. There is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and adoption of e-marketing.
- 3. There is a significant relationship between trust and adoption of e-marketing.
- 4. Corporate digital responsibility mediates the relationship between social influence and adoption of emarketing.
- 5. Corporate digital responsibility mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and adoption of emarketing.
- 6. Corporate digital responsibility mediates the relationship between trust and adoption of e-marketing.
- 7. Corporate digital responsibility has direct relationship with adoption of e-marketing.

Sampling and Procedure for Future Data Collection

A high-quality sample is necessary to represent the population and to answer research questions (Wagner III & Gillespie, 2019). Research should be conducted concerning a query 'that needs to be answered or a problem that needs to be solved' (Saunders et al., 2019). For this study, quantitative approach would be followed with survey questionnaire from previous literatures. My study would be explanatory in nature with causal research and hypotheses testing. Descriptive research will also be used to answer who, what, when, where, and how questions with demographic information (Babin et al., 2020; Zikmund et al., 2014).

The study would be conducted in the context of developing countries covering few metropolitan cities, namely the capital Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, and Sylhet in Bangladesh because of the availability of respondents who use digital platforms regularly for their daily needs. My target respondents would be age group from 16 to 57 with minimum educational qualification from grade 0 and above. The size of the sample should be sufficient enough to estimate the features of the population suitably and offer a reliable outcome (Saunders et al., 2009). The sample size needs to be suitably broad to assess the characteristics of the population adequately to deliver realistic outcomes.

For empirical findings, a preliminary questionnaire will be adapted from previous literature related to the topic and instruments. It must go along with my research objectives and also in the context of a developing economy. Questionnaire items will be rated on a five-point Likert scale anchored at 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree) with socio-demographic information. The questionnaire can be pre-tested with a small sample group to ensure that wording, format, length, and sequencing are appropriate. All respondents should meet the following criteria: 16 years or older, able to speak Bengali or English and willing to participate. Before giving consent, respondents should be informed about the study. Respondents will respond using a self-administered questionnaire. Therefore, the present study would be unique in gathering a large sample in the context of developing nations.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

The findings are still in infancy without empirical data analysis. The research will examine consumers' adoption of e-marketing content in developing countries using three main variables- social influence, self-efficacy, and trust. In the present scenario majority of the population use mobile devices or smartphone for their e-marketing needs. The three variables are interesting phenomena in the context of developing nations and the objective is to examine perceived corporate digital accountability as a mediator to see the impact on e-marketing adoption. The empirical study will reveal the subject matter in a more meaningful way. It is expected to contribute new findings and help researchers and policymakers with future policy implications, especially with the corporate digital responsibility in developing nations. Therefore, companies that serve on the digital platform need to ensure that they are digitally responsible and gain maximum trust from

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consumers. Responsible e-marketing practices can also derive from this study which may require further scholarly works in the future.

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