



## Live Mannequin: Exploring Female Fashion Entrepreneurs on Facebook Live in the Context of a Developing Country

Mahin Akter, Bangladesh University of Textiles; Md Arif Iqbal, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; Jin Su, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro; Effat Hasan Mahdi & Jannatul Ferdous, Bangladesh University of Textiles

Keywords: Fashion entrepreneurship, Facebook Live, Female entrepreneur, Social media

**Introduction, Purpose, and Literature Review.** Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in sustainable development and poverty reduction by creating job opportunities and supporting youth and women (Lichy et al., 2020), especially in developing countries such as Bangladesh (Tabassum, 2019). Recently, a growing number of female fashion entrepreneurs in Bangladesh have been conducting their business activities on social media platforms, particularly Facebook (Constantinidis, 2011; Sultana & Akter, 2021). Facebook now has 43.25 million regular users in Bangladesh, and one new user joins the platform every 20 seconds (Statista, 2023). There are approximately 10,000 businesses using the Facebook platform in Bangladesh and having a noteworthy presence of women entrepreneurs (Hossain & Rahman, 2018). Despite the rise of online female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, academic research related to online female entrepreneurs is very limited in the context of Bangladesh. This study aims to understand the motivation, challenges, and impact of small fashion business entrepreneurs who grow their businesses through Facebook Live.

The social media network Facebook has a function called Facebook Live that enables users to stream live videos to their followers in real time. Facebook Live offers small fashion business owners an effective platform for establishing their brands and expanding their clientele through engagement and connections (Brahem & Boussema, 2022; Delacroix et al., 2019; Steel, 2017). For instance, they might broadcast a live video showcasing new products, talking about upcoming trends, or offering advice on how to dress (Constantinidis, 2011). By engaging directly with customers in real-time, these entrepreneurs build trust, potentially leading to increased sales and loyalty from the customers. Viewers can engage with the host during a Facebook Live broadcast by commenting on the video, asking questions, or offering emoticons like likes or hearts. The host can respond to the remarks and inquiries in real time, fostering interaction and a sense of community among the audience. Previous literature maintains that social media platforms promote female entrepreneurship and provide female entrepreneurs with channels to access resources, information and social interactions (Camacho & Barrios, 2022; Olsson & Bernhard, 2021; Ukpere et al., 2014). Hossain and Rahman (2018) investigated the factors influencing women to start businesses on social media. Sultana and Akter (2021) examined the present state of women's e-commerce entrepreneurship in Bangladesh. Tabassum (2019) employed a quantitative approach and investigated the opportunities and challenges of Facebook-based women entrepreneurship in Bangladesh, but they did not focus on the motivations and impacts of Facebook-based women entrepreneurship.

**Methodology.** An in-depth interview (qualitative approach) with a purposive sample approach was used to accomplish the goal of this research. The interview was conducted in Bengali language. Researchers used a snowball sampling strategy to enroll female fashion entrepreneurs who run their businesses through Facebook Live. Nine interviews were conducted in-person, over the phone, or through online meeting facilities (Zoom, WhatsApp, etc.) during Fall'22 - Spring'23. The sample size was determined based on the saturation of the data (Hodges, 2011). All the participants were female, and their age range was from 22 to 39. The participants were asked questions like *What motivated you to start your business?*

*Why did you decide to go live? Why do you think that it can be a business option via Facebook Live? and What barriers do you face?* All the interviews were transcribed and then translated into English. All the members of the research team analyzed the interview texts collectively following the thematic analysis procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Willis J., 2007).

**Results, Discussion, and Conclusions.** The themes that emerged during the data analysis were organized according to motivations, challenges, and impacts (Figure 1). Multiple participants stated that their *family culture* was their primary motivation to be a fashion entrepreneur on Facebook Live. As participant P7 said, “Mainly, my mother is a businesswoman. I got motivated watching her.” In Bangladesh, consumers are concerned about clothing fit and quality when they make an online purchase. Facebook live entrepreneurs are *taking advantage of this consumer uncertainty*. One participant said, “The most important matter is that they believe as the person is going live, she will not provide less quality product” (P3) because “when we upload pictures, there is always an option to edit. In Facebook live, we can’t edit it” (P4). Some of the respondents mentioned that they became motivated by *social influences*. Participant P2 said, “Some of my friends are doing business on Facebook Live. Then I thought, why not me. That is how I started my business”. Other participants stated their driving force for starting their own Facebook Live businesses is their *search for independence*. P8 said, “I was pregnant with twin babies. One of my

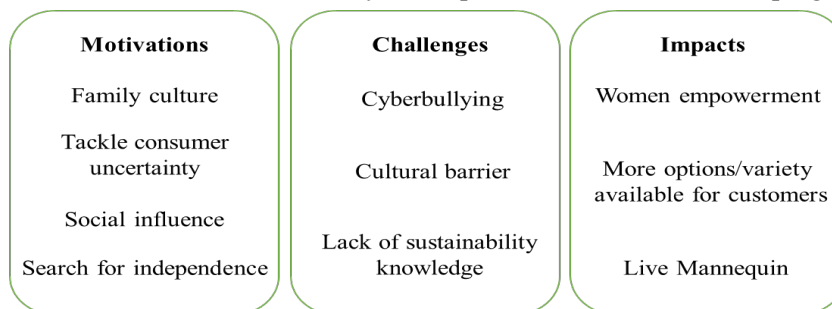


Figure 1. Emerging Themes

babies was a miscarriage. I was blamed for the miscarriage. That is why my study was closed off. Then I thought of doing something (to earn money) by staying at home.” Regarding the challenges, almost all the participants mentioned *cyberbullying*. As participant P3 said, “Personally, I have faced cyberbullying, and I totally

ignored it. Because it is just way too common.” Participants raised their concerns about some *cultural barriers* also. Because of the social structure in Bangladesh, it is not taken positively yet that women can lead businesses of their own. As participant P9 said, “My friends and relatives made fun of me when I started. They always make fun of me.” Although women form an overwhelming majority in Bangladesh’s apparel industry (Alamgir & Banerjee, 2019; Su et al., 2023), it is evident from the data that all these Facebook-based female entrepreneurs *lack fundamental knowledge of sustainability and sustainable fashion*. For example, P8 said, “No, I don’t know anything about sustainability.” Regarding the impacts, participants agreed that they *felt empowered* after being an entrepreneur and being able to create jobs for others (Beninger et al., 2016; Miniesy et al., 2022). For example, P4 said, “I am happy with my business on Facebook Live. I hired eight people working with me.” As small entrepreneurs, although they have limited resources, their businesses provide consumers with *more options in the market*. As P8 stated, “There are always some common products. I always try to find a way to get out of it. I am always searching for newer products.” Female entrepreneurs who sell fashion products on Facebook Live see themselves as a *live mannequin*. As participant P7 said, “Going to live is a big option. When I am going to live, people can watch the dresses I am showing along with me.”

This study contributes to the literature on how technology influences small female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh. Future research can investigate how female entrepreneurs’ self-efficacy beliefs (leadership

self-efficacy, creative self-efficacy, learning self-efficiency, and entrepreneurship self-efficacy) impact their entrepreneurial cognitions.

### References

- Alamgir, F., & Banerjee, S. B. (2019). Contested compliance regimes in global production networks: Insights from the Bangladesh garment industry. *Human Relations*, 72(2), 272–297.
- Beninger, S., Ajjan, H., Mostafa, R. B., & Crittenden, V. L. (2016). A road to empowerment: Social media use by women entrepreneurs in Egypt. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 27(2–3), 308–332. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2016.073987>
- Brahem, M., & Boussema, S. (2022). Social media entrepreneurship as an opportunity for women: The case of Facebook-commerce. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14657503211066010>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Camacho, S., & Barrios, A. (2022). Social commerce affordances for female entrepreneurship: The case of facebook. *Electronic Markets*, 32(3), 1145–1167.
- Constantinidis, C. (2011). How do women entrepreneurs use the virtual network Facebook? *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 12(4), 257–269. <https://doi.org/10.5367/ijei.2011.0050>
- Delacroix, E., Parguel, B., & Benoit-Moreau, F. (2019). Digital subsistence entrepreneurs on Facebook. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 146(June 2018), 887–899. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2018.06.018>
- Hodges, N. (2011). Qualitative Research: A Discussion of Frequently Articulated Qualms (FAQs). *Family & Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 40(1), 90–92. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1552-3934.2011.02091.x>
- Hossain, M., & Rahman, M. F. (2018). Social media and the creation of entrepreneurial opportunity for women. *Management*, 8(4), 99–108. <https://doi.org/10.5923/j.mm.20180804.02>
- Lichy, J., Farquhar, J. D., & Kachour, M. (2020). Entrepreneurship via social networks – “connected woman” in Lebanon. *Qualitative Market Research*, 24(4), 426–448. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-01-2020-0004>
- Miniesy, R., Elshahawy, E., & Fakhredin, H. (2022). Social media’s impact on the empowerment of women and youth male entrepreneurs in Egypt. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 14(2), 235–262. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-06-2021-0085>
- Olsson, A. K., & Bernhard, I. (2021). Keeping up the pace of digitalization in small businesses—Women entrepreneurs’ knowledge and use of social media. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, 27(2), 378–396. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBr-10-2019-0615>
- Statista. (2023). *Facebook users by country 2023* | Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268136/top-15-countries-based-on-number-of-facebook-users/>
- Steel, G. (2017). Navigating (im)mobility: Female entrepreneurship and social media in Khartoum. *Africa*, 87(2), 233–252. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972016000930>
- Su, J., Iqbal, M. A., Haque, F., & Akter, M. M. K. (2023). Sustainable apparel: A perspective from Bangladesh’s young consumers. *Social Responsibility Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-01-2022-0035>
- Sultana, F., & Akter, A. (2021). Women E-Commerce: Perspective in Bangladesh. *Journal of Management, Economics, and Industrial Organization*, 5(3), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.31039/jomeino.2021.5.3.1>
- Tabassum, T. (2019). Facebook-based women entrepreneurship in Bangladesh: Opportunities and challenges. *Bangladesh Journal of Public Administration*, 26(2), 79–96. <https://doi.org/10.36609/bjpa.v26i2.22>
- Ukpere, C. L., Slabbert, A. D., & Ukpere, W. I. (2014). Rising trend in social media usage by women entrepreneurs across the globe to unlock their potentials for business success. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(10), 551.
- Willis J. (2007). Frameworks for qualitative research. In *Foundations of Qualitative Research* (pp. 147–183). SAGE.