

# An Investigation into Viewers' Evaluation of Advertisements

**SSM Sadrul Huda**



East West University Center for Research and Training  
**East West University**  
Plot- A/2, Main Road, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar,  
Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh



**Center for Research and Training**

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E-mail: [ewucrt@ewubd.edu](mailto:ewucrt@ewubd.edu)  
Website: [www.ewubd.edu](http://www.ewubd.edu)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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SSM Sadrul Huda  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Business Administration  
East West University

## **ABSTRACT:**

The influence of advertisement on the viewers mind and action is always an issue of interest for the advertisers, academicians and also for the researchers. This paper is an attempt to explore the views of the ad audience regarding different aspects of advertisement. In order to do so, it follows the survey method of research pursuing convenience sampling method. Quantitative method is used to analyze the data. Through a regression model, factors affecting the success of advertisement are identified. According to the sample of this research the success factors are creativity in advertisement, advertisement regulations, non-offensive advertisements and ability of the advertisement to act as source of information. The statistical analysis also shows that creative ads and well regulated advertisement environment get the positive nod of the viewers. Conversely, too much informative ad and offensive ad receive negative rating from the viewers. Interestingly, transformations of advertisement content and techniques do not come out statistically significant. This research collects ample information considering viewers' perspectives, which the stakeholders may find important for developing their respective courses of action.

## **Keywords:**

**Advertisement, Media, Viewers, Regulation, Creativity**

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## **1.0. INTRODUCTION**

In an era marked by increasing global competition, rapidly changing environment, revolutionary developing technology, the intelligent and productive use of time and opportunities is critical to keeping pace. As consumers have innumerable alternatives, businesses must put some extra effort to establish position in the minds of their target group and so corporations are seeking innovation and speed to capture market opportunities and meet new challenges.

Advertising and promotion play a very important role in attaining the business objectives by portraying the corporate identity in the consumers' minds. Advertisements and promotions are an integral part of our social and economic systems. In the complex society, advertising has evolved into a vital communications system for both consumers and businesses. The ability of advertisements and other promotional methods to deliver carefully prepared messages to target audiences has given them a major role in the marketing programs of most organizations. Companies ranging from large multinational corporations to small retailers increasingly rely on advertising and promotion to help them market products and services. In market based economy, consumers have learned to rely on advertising and other forms of promotion for information they can use in making purchase decisions. Thus, it is very important for the advertisers to know the viewers' reaction to the advertisements. The success of the marketing campaign depends to a large extent on the success of the advertisements.

## **2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Developed countries have extensively studied attitude towards advertising. One of the earlier studies conducted by Bauer and Greyser in 1968 reveals that people generally has positive attitude towards advertisements (Bauer and Greyser, 1968). According to them advertisements play a positive role in society. At the same time, research studies demonstrate that people with positive attitude find advertising more acceptable, informative and enjoyable (Bauer and Greyser, 1968; Bartos and Dunn, 1974; Lutz, 1985). Moreover, consumers with positive attitude are more likely to be attracted by advertisements and thus persuaded to buy the advertised products (Lutz, 1985; Mackenzie and Lutz, 1989). Other researchers try to show attitude towards advertisement through classical conditioning perspective (Gresham

and Shimp, 1985). Affectively-valenced advertisements (either negative or positive but not neutral) do not have a significant influence on subjects' attitudes toward the advertised brands. (Gresham and Shimp, 1985). Negative affect advertisements may operate more in accord with the classical conditioning hypothesis than do positive affect advertisements (Gresham and Shimp, 1985). The expectation was that the experimental group's cognitive structure for each test commercial would not differ significantly from a control group (Gresham and Shimp, 1985). However, concern has been expressed that the full range of potential benefits that the advertisement construct may contribute to the understanding of how advertising works cannot be reached until advertisement is operationalized in a multidimensional fashion (Moore and Hutchinson 1985).

**The present research offers titillating if not compelling evidence in favour of the proposition that advertising influences attitudes toward advertised brands but this research has not clarified the mechanism by which affectively valenced advertising influences brand attitudes as observed by Gresham and Shimp (1985). However, this research examines the critical factors of success of advertisement from the viewers' point of view, which was not discussed extensively in the earlier research in this field.**

Attitude as is defined as 'viewers' point of view' toward the advertisement is defined in this study as "a predisposition to responding in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a particular stimulus during a particular exposure occasion" (Lutz 1985).

Past studies reveal that people hold positive attitude towards advertisements when the advertisements are informative (Zanot, 1984). According to Shabitt et.al. (1998), people react more favorably to those advertisements that are entertaining, truthful, informative and useful in purchase decision making. In addition, they reported that Americans were more favorably willing towards advertising than previously thought. However, several studies represent that people find TV advertisements misleading (Barkdale and Darden, 1972; Sandage and Leckenby, 1980; Schutz and Casey, 1981; Andrews, 1989; Mittal, 1994; Larkin 1977) but informative (Schutz and Casey, 1981; Ogilvy and Mather, 1985; Alwitt and Prabhakar, 1992; Mittal 1994). According to Aaker and Bruzzone (1985), commercials which create happy and warm feelings, use humor, use a trust worthy promoter or provide useful product information are acceptable among the audience.



It indicates that viewers consider an advertisement as a source of information and they also want the advertisement to be entertaining and lively. This study also examines the advertisement as a source of information and whether it is a success factor for advertisement or not.

Additionally, Bauer and Greyser's (1968) documented that consumers believe advertisements play a positive role in the economy in "raising the standard of living" and "lowering product prices", and also play an adverse role in the social context in "persuading the consumer to buy what they do not need". Sandage and Leckenby (1980), reported a study which was conducted by American Association of Advertising Agency. The study reveals that Americans believe advertisements raise their standard of living. In addition, a significant number of studies reported that respondents tend to believe that TV advertisements increase price of the products (Haller, 1974; Russell et.al. 1989; Mittal, 1994). It is imperative that advertising do affect lifestyles of the consumers. Consumption of unnecessary products and change of lifestyle due to ad influence are the key impact of ad on viewers. This notion also requires extensive scrutiny in the context of Bangladesh viewers, as this country is marching towards globalization and consumerism and, advertisement has a key role in both of these processes in the form of supplying product information to the consumer.

Ethical issues of advertisement also came under scrutiny. A study conducted on European consumers represents that most of the respondents believe that TV advertisements misrepresent information about product quality (Zahn, 1976; Ashill and Yavas, 2005). They suggested that advertisers should avoid "over blowing" the product claims in the advertisements. Wills and Ryans (1982) conducted a study across 32 countries on four different groups; consumers, students, managers and academicians. They stated that the managers believed that the advertisements provided factual and important information whereas most of the consumers believed that advertisements were misleading. What is imperative from this discussion is that consumers are concerned about the ethical standard of the advertisement. The present research also sheds light on this topic by examining viewers' attitudes toward the factors like puffing words, comparative advertisements, etc as the basis of ethical foundation of the advertisements.

According to Cummins (1996), consumers use TV advertisements as a means of escaping fantasy and do not consciously process the advertisement information. Fam and Waller's study on identifying likeability attributes; a qualitative study of television advertisements in Asia suggested that in order to be likable, a TV advertisement should possess funny, amusing/humorous, interesting and warm attributes. They also reported that the likeable attributes were dependent on differences in local culture, attitude towards advertising in general, cultural outlook, consumer confidence and number of hours of TV viewing per week. Humor in TV commercial is effective in attracting attention and increases liking of the product when it is related to the product (Sternthal and Craig, 1973; Madden and Weinberger, 1984; Weinberger and Gulas, 1992). Alden and Hoyer (1993) also reported that humor was effective regardless of product categories. Further, sixty two percent of the respondents identified humor as the most important attribute for TV commercials in a Video Storyboard's survey (Custer, 1994).

Television adverts are also undergoing a dynamic evolution, a trend that has been persistent in the industry in Bangladesh for the last five years. While ingredients like melodrama, humor, animation and others are being constantly experimented and used in these commercials, audiences from all classes of life are appreciating this new trend (Chowdhury, 2009). The present paper further analyzes the case so as to relate the humorous nature of the advertisement with advertisement success.

TV advertisements which create irritation have been said to create negative attitude toward advertisements. Aaker and Bruzzone (1985) identifies TV advertisements which show sensitive products based on unrealistic scenario threaten family relationships, have poor casting and use persons based on their appearance or knowledge, increase irritation. Further, Mittal elaborated that people believed that TV advertisements were silly, boring, irritating, offensive and of bad taste. Moreover, people generally dislike TV advertisements which are irritating (Alwitt and Probhakar, 1994). Similarly, college students in the United States were also stated to feel irritated by TV advertisements (Aaker and Bruzzone, 1985; Larkin, 1977). This could be because of the product advertised was sensitive or embarrassing to watch (e.g. female hygiene products) (Aaker and Bruzzone, 1985; Barners and Dotson, 1990). Furthermore, young people who could not identify their values with the TV advertisements disliked it more (Alwitt and Probhakar, 1994). Sandage and Leckenby (1980), revealed that a

significant number of respondents believed that TV advertisements were annoying and offensive. The cases of repetitive advertisement, advertisement of offensive products, etc. are also examined in this paper to see the impact of offensive advertisements on the viewers and its ultimate impact on the success of advertisement.

The impact of technology in the form of new types of media is added in recent times like fm radio and mobile advertising to promote the new products. Concepts like mobile commerce or mobile marketing are known to be derived from the concept of mobility. Mobility is defined as “the quality or state of being mobile” (The free dictionary, 2009). As understood from the definition, anything that is wireless, moving and portable is perceived to be mobile. Oh and Kun-Pyo (2005) have listed properties that they have linked with mobile objects, such as portability, activity and interactivity. Since mobile marketing enables more personal and interactive brand-consumer communication than traditional marketing, many brands are investing in mobile marketing applications. These applications, such as mobile marketing platforms and global wireless systems, enable brands and consumers to interact in a more personalized and customized way (Rohm & Sultan, 2006:5). Mobile advertising is one of the most common forms of mobile marketing. Leading companies like Procter & Gamble, Microsoft, Disney, Coca-Cola, Sony Pictures and McDonalds have been embracing mobile advertising and including it within their marketing budgets. Since the first mobile text advertisement was done in Scandinavia in 1997, mobile advertising has grown consistently. As a reference, it took two years for broadcast TV, four years for the Internet and five years for cable TV advertising to reach \$1 billion in ad revenue, and five years for Internet and broadcast TV advertising to reach \$5 billion (Hanley & Becker, 2006:68). Studies aiming to explore the attitudes toward mobile marketing and mobile advertisements are based on technology acceptance model theory. Among the various theories that contribute to the understanding of the adoption process of new information – communications technologies, the technology acceptance model (TAM) is one of the most widely accepted (Yang, 2007:34). Mobile advertising studies regarding consumer attitudes have mostly cited the study of Ducoffe (1996) where he aims to measure the advertising value on the Web.

Viewers’ attitude toward the advertisements in the new media is also examined in the paper to see whether this new trend has any impact on the success of advertisement.

The discussion presented above show that many studies have been carried out to see the viewers' attitudes towards one single aspects of advertisement. But no other study evaluates the consumer perception about multiple aspects of advertisement and few studies try to identify the success factors of an advertisement. The present research does that and thus contributes to the literature in a novel way.

### **3.0. OBJECTIVE(S):**

The major objective of the current paper is to find out whether the advertisement industry of Bangladesh is successful in communicating the theme of the advertisements through television commercials, the factors critical for successful communications and how these factors affect the success of the advertisement.

### **4.0. METHODOLOGY**

Secondary research was first conducted to find the studies on different aspects of advertisement including history, growth, governance, transformations, success of advertisements. The sources of information were the internet, published documents of different organizations, etc. and their websites, and also the newspaper articles. Information was collected about the government policy of advertisement, previous surveys on viewer's attitude towards advertisement, and other aspects of advertisements published from time to time in the newspapers.

Quantitative research technique is applied to analyze the situation. In case of quantitative research descriptive statistics and after that inferential statistics are measured to know the viewers attitudes to advertisement.

Survey research technique was employed for the purpose of data collection. The respondents are the viewers of television advertisements located in different parts of Dhaka city. Convenience sampling method was used to select the respondents and the sample size was 410. A structured closed-ended questionnaire was used for the survey with few exceptions. The questionnaire is based on secondary research. The factors most suitable to explain satisfaction of the viewers about the TV commercials were reflected in the hypotheses. The survey questions measured each attribute of a factor on a five point Likert scales with

“strongly agree” reflecting the highest favorable response and “strongly disagree” indicating the least favorable response to each of the statement. Demographic questions using nominal scale were also included in the questionnaire.

#### **4.1. Respondents Profile**

A total of 410 respondents participated in the survey. Out of them, 64.7% are male and the rest (35.3%) are female. A cross section of viewers have participated in the sample representing business people(11%), private service holders(28%), students(32.7%),government service holder(7%), housewives(12%) and the rest (9.3%) are others. Among the respondents 35.3% are graduates, 26.0% are master’s degree holders, HSC 16.7% and below SSC 22.0%. Of the respondents, 46.6% belongs to 21-30, 20.9% belongs to 31-40, 13.9% belongs to 41-50 age groups and the rest (18.6%) belongs to other categories. Income wise 24.6% belong to no income group (student/housewives), 27% belong to below Tk. 10000, 21% belong to Tk.20000-Tk30000, 11.6% belong to more than Tk.30000 income group and the remaining 15.8% were non-respondents. This demographic composition proves that the views of this research represent the opinion of cross section of people and are well represented in society.

#### **5.0. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS:**

The primary objective of this paper as mentioned above is to see how successful the advertisers are in communicating the corporate offers to the consumers in the form of television commercials (TVCs) and the important factors which determine the success rates of the TVCs.

In the analysis stage the variable communication success is considered as the dependent variable and eleven other variables are considered as the explanatory variables. The variables are firstly described in the form of frequency analysis and finally regression analysis technique is used to identify the important independent variables.

#### **5.1. Descriptive Analysis:**

The results of the frequency analysis of the chosen independent variables are given in the following paragraphs.

*a. Advertisement as a source of information*

<b>Advertisement as a source of information</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Advertisement informs existence of products/services	73.8 (n=303)	4.6 (n=18)	21.6 (n=89)	100 (N=410)
Advertisement helps in making comparison about product and services	60.0 (n=246)	6.6 (n=27)	33.4 (n=137)	100 (N=410)
<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>65.9</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>100</b>

As described in the earlier research, the viewers of Bangladesh also consider ad source of product information. The respondents of the research agree with each other to appreciate the role of advertisement as the source of product information. The advertisement also helps a lot to make the purchase decision by aiding the customers to choose the right product from the evoked set. It is clearly seen from the above table that majority of the respondents endorse the role of advertisement as the source of information.

*b. Transformations of advertisement*

<b>Transformations taking place</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Stories and messages of present day advertisements are more interesting than those of the past	89.0 (n= 365)	3.2 (n= 13)	7.8 (n= 32)	100 (N= 410)
The rate of repetition of advertisements in the present day is higher than that of	86.1 (n= 353)	4.8 (n=20)	9.1 (n= 37)	100 (N= 410)

the past				
The cultural and the social issues are better portrayed in the recent advertisements than those of the past (e.g. social class, age, gender, education etc.)	74.4 (n=305)	7.1 (n=29)	18.5 (n=76)	100 (N=410)
The use of puffing words in advertisements is higher in the recent advertisements (e.g. Koto kotha bole re of Banglalink) than those of the past	91.2 (n=374)	4.2 (n=17)	4.6 (n=19)	100 (N=410)
Introduction of celebrity is also a more attractive aspect of the present day advertisements than those of the past	85.6 (n=351)	4.9 (n=20)	9.5 (n=39)	100 (N=410)
The presence of female model is more in the recent	86.0 (n=353)	6.1 (n=25)	7.9 (n=32)	100 (N=410)

advertisements than those of the past				
Print advertisements are more colorful at present than those of the past	94.1 (n= 386)	2.7 (n=11)	3.2 (n=13)	100 (N=410)
At present use of computer graphics/animation are higher in both print and TV advertisements than those of the past	94.4 (n= 388)	2.2 (n= 9)	3.4 (n=13)	1000 (N=410)
The new trends of ads are favorable for growth of advertisement industry	88.0 (n=361)	6.1 (n=25)	5.9 (n=24)	100 (N=410)
<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>87.63</b>	<b>4.58</b>	<b>7.79</b>	<b>100</b>

The advertisements are undergoing a dynamic evolution, a trend that has been persistent in the industry since the last five years. Ingredients like, melodrama, humor, animation and others are being constantly experimented and used in these commercials, On the issue of transformations of advertisement, the study investigates several key issues: i) Stories and messages of present day advertisements are more interesting than those of the past, ii) The cultural and the social issues are better portrayed in the recent advertisements than those of the past, iii) The use of puffing words in advertisements is higher in the recent advertisements (e.g. Koto kotha bole re of Banglalink) than those of past. iv) Introduction of celebrity is also a more attractive aspect of the present day advertisements than those of before, v) The



presence of female model is more in the recent advertisements than those of the past vi) Print advertisements are more colorful at present than those of the past vii) At present use of computer graphics/animation are higher in both print and TV advertisements than those of the past, viii) The new trends of advertisements are favorable for growth of advertisement industry. It is observed that the viewers agree or strongly agree with most of the individual propositions, which indicates that advertisers considering the technical issues of advertisements are changing. The striking feature of this finding is that majority of the respondents consider that this process of transformation is favorable for the industry.

*c. Ethical Issues*

<b>Ethical issues taking place</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
The advertisers of Bangladesh make conscious decision to stick to a high moral standard in developing ad	55.8 (n=229)	12.2 (n=50)	32.0 (n=131)	100 (N=410)
The use of puffing words (e.g. g-r-eat) is an ethical issue as the performance of a product may be the same as its competing product	48.0 (n=197)	20.0 (n=82)	32.0 (n=131)	(N=410)
The advertisements are misleading as a source of	59.5 (n=244)	12.9 (n=53)	27.6 (n=113)	100 (N=410)

information for the average consumers				
Advertisement helps to increase awareness in society regarding different important issues like AIDS, Smoking, Drug, Dowry tradition	91.2 (n=374)	2.7 (n=11)	6.1 (n=25)	100 (N=410)
The advertisements of Bangladesh uphold the ethical, moral, cultural standard of our society	65.4 (n=268)	12.2 (n=50)	22.4 (n=92)	100 (N=410)
<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>63.89</b>	<b>12.03</b>	<b>24.08</b>	<b>100</b>

Ethical dimensions of advertisements are also important to examine the trends of advertisements, because advertisements are rated very high by the respondents' of the survey. 91.2% respondents agree that advertisements help to increase the awareness level of the society about AIDS, Smoking, etc. as shown in the above table. But only 56.0% respondents agree that advertisers make conscious decision to stick to a high moral standard in developing advertisement in the country. It means that the viewers are questioning the intention of the advertisers.

*d. Impacts of advertisement*

<b>Impacts of advertisement</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Advertisements make people buy expensive products just to show off	54.6 (n=224)	7.8 (n=32)	37.6 (n=154)	100 (N=410)
The advertisements of Bangladesh are able to create confidence among customers about the products or services.	55.8 (n=229)	11.8 (n=48)	32.4 (n=133)	100 (N=410)
The advertisements are changing the culture or lifestyle of the people	72.9 (n=299)	4.4 (n=18)	22.7 (n=93)	100 (N=410)
Ads influence me to purchase the product	71.2 (n=292)	8.1 (n=33)	20.7 (n=85)	100 (N=410)
<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>63.4</b>	<b>8.02</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>100</b>

This study also confirms the earlier research findings in that the advertisements are changing the culture or lifestyle of the people. 73% of the respondents support the proposition that advertisements are changing the lifestyle or culture of the people. Though mixed results are

found in the past studies, regarding the impact of ad on sale, this study reveals the majority of the viewers (71.2%) agree that an advertisement has some influence on product purchase.

*e. Irritating*

<b>Advertisements are becoming irritating</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
There are too many Advertisements between and within the programs of most of the TV channels	93.9 (n=385)	1.5 (n=6)	4.6 (n=19)	100 (N=410)
I change the channels during commercial breaks	83.2 (n=341)	5.6 (n=23)	11.2 (n=46)	100 (N=410)
There is too much dance, music or color in the TV advertisements	77.8 (n=319)	5.9 (n=24)	16.3 (n=67)	100 (N=410)
The presence of too many advertisements in newspaper distracts the attention of the readers from the news item	69.5 (n=285)	8.8 (n=36)	21.7 (n=89)	100 (n=410)

The presence of too many advertisements on TV distracts the attention of the viewers from the main program	82.6 (n=339)	2.0 (n=8)	15.4 (n=63)	100 (N=410)
<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>81.33</b>	<b>4.83</b>	<b>13.84</b>	<b>100</b>

The study reveals that advertisement is causing irritation among the viewers. Reasons are frequency of ad (93.9%), too much dance/music/color (77.8%), too many advertisements within the program (82.6%), etc. The tendency of changing the channel during the commercial break is also highly reported by the respondents.

*f. Offensive advertisements*

<b>Offensive advertisements makes embarrassment</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
I feel embarrassed when I see advertisements of contraceptive and female hygienic products	63.2 (n=259)	6.1 (n=25)	30.7 (n=126)	100 (N=410)
I feel embarrassed when I see the HIV/ AIDS awareness advertisements	40.7 (n=167)	3.9 (n=16)	55.4 (n=227)	100 (N=410)

<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>52.05</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>42.95</b>	<b>100</b>
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The above table illustrates that the viewers are not much critical about the controversial advertisements (advertisements of HIV/AIDS). The viewers marginally agree with the statements that they feel embarrassed to see the offensive advertisements. Interestingly, the respondents disagree with the statement which talks about the advertisement of HIV/AIDS prevention that they do not feel uncomfortable to see the advertisement with their family members. It shows that the communication is successful in making people aware of the issue, so that they consider it as a diseases rather than a social taboo which can not be discussed publicly.

***g. Regulation***

Importance of advertisement regulatory body	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
There should be an ad regulatory body set up by government to regulate the advertising industry of the country	87.1 (n=357)	4.2 (n=17)	8.7 (n=36)	100 (N=410)
The advertisements should be checked by a government censor board before commercial	87.6 (n=359)	3.9 (n=16)	8.5 (n=35)	100 (N=410)

release				
There should be fixed portion of time in TV channels and allocation of space in print media for public interest advertisements e. g. awareness of Bird Flu	81.9 (n=336)	2.7 (n=11)	15.4 (n=63)	100 (N=410)
There should be a specific ratio between program and commercial time in a given hour for TV and specific ratio between news item and advertisement for advertisements in print media	87.1 (n=357)	5.6 (n=23)	7.3 (n=30)	100 (N=410)
Advertisement industry should be monitored and regulated by a strict regulatory commission	81.2 (n=333)	6.3 (n=26)	12.5 (n=51)	100 (N=410)
<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>84.84</b>	<b>4.64</b>	<b>10.52</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of the respondents in general agree that regulation of advertisement is important. Regarding the forms of regulation, 81.2% opt for regulatory commission, 87.6% favor censor board, and 87.1% ask for standard program vs. commercial time ratio.

*h. Success/Merits of Ads*

<b>Advertisements are successful</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
TV advertisements are more entertaining than print advertisement	92.4 (n=379)	3.2 (n=13)	4.4 (n=18)	100 (N=410)
Emotional advertisements are more memorable than informative advertisements	79.5 (n=326)	7.8 (n=32)	12.7 (n=52)	100 (N=410)
<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>86.1</b>	<b>5.35</b>	<b>8.55</b>	<b>100</b>

Success of advertisement is defined as memorability and entertaining ability of the ADVERTISEMENTS. What appears from the above table is that respondents consider TV advertisements as more entertaining than print advertisements and emotional advertisements are more memorable than informative advertisements. In general, advertisements are rated as successful by 86% of the respondents.



*i .Gender Issue:*

<b>Advertisements are becoming gender biased</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
The advertisements contain female character even when they are not relevant	85.6 (n=351)	3.7 (n=15)	10.7 (n=44)	100 (N=410)
The men are more likely to be portrayed as product authorities and women as product users	73.7 (n=302)	12.2 (n=50)	14.1 (n=58)	100 (N=410)
Male viewers appreciate the presence of female model on both TV and Print advertisements	55.4 (n=227)	19.0 (n=78)	25.6 (n=105)	100 (N=410)
Female viewers appreciate the presence of male model on both TV and Print advertisements	55.1 (n=226)	19.0 (n=78)	25.9 (n=106)	100 (N=410)
Female models favor more TV ads than Print	86.6 (n=355)	5.6 (n=23)	7.8 (n=32)	410 (N=410)

advertisements				
The increasing economic and social role of the women of Bangladesh is shown in the advertisements	70.5 (n=289)	9.5 (n=39)	20.0 (n=82)	410 (N=410)
<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>74.13</b>	<b>9.74</b>	<b>16.13</b>	<b>100</b>

The respondents (74%) in general agree that advertisements are getting gender biased. The above table illustrates that 85.6% of the respondents think that female characters are presented even when they are not relevant and 73.7% respondent think that men are portrayed as product authorities whereas females are as product users. In both cases it reveals a case of gender biased ness. In one case males are highlighted and in the other case females are pampered. Interestingly, the over use of the female models in the advertisements are well appreciated by the male viewers but the degree of appreciation by the female viewers regarding the presence of male models is lower. It is also seen that female empowerment are portrayed more in the recent advertisements than in the previous advertisements.

*j. Creativity*

<b>Advertisements are creative</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
The technical issues regarding advertisement for example the photography, set, printing, and the production are up to the mark	70.5 (N=289)	12.7 (n=52)	16.8 (n=69)	100 (N=410)

The advertisements of BD are able to act as a source of inspirations for changing the lifestyle, and behavior e .g din bodoler pala of Banglalink	81.2 (n=333)	5.6 (n=23)	13.2 (n=54)	100 (N=410)
The advertisements of BD are able to touch the emotion of the viewers.	72.9 (n=299)	12.0 (n=49)	15.1 (n=62)	100 (N=410)
I'm satisfied with the creativity of the present day advertisements	72.7 (n=298)	8.0 (n=33)	19.3 (n=79)	100 (N=410)
<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>74.47</b>	<b>9.45</b>	<b>16.08</b>	<b>100</b>

The creativity in advertisements is highly appreciated by the majority of the respondents (74.0%). Reasons are identified as the use of technology (71.0%), use of positive emotion (73.0%), and advertisements is the source of inspiration for changing the life style (81.2%). Creativity is considered as a major issue in ad literature.

***k. Future Trend***

Future trends of advertisement are newer technology oriented	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
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I appreciate searching internet for product information, if it is available	70.5 (n=289)	5.8 (n=24)	23.7 (n=97)	100 (N=410)
Newer technology will affect the future trend of advertisement industry of Bangladesh	85.4 (n=350)	5.3 (n=22)	9.3 (n=38)	100 (N=410)
<b>Weighted average</b>	<b>78.1</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents show their intention to use internet, whenever its available, and they believe that future trend of advertisement will be technology oriented.

#### *1. Success of Communication*

Advertising agencies are successful in communicating the theme	<b>STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE/DISAGREE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Weighted average</b>	57.1 (n=234)	10.7 (n=44)	32.2 (n=132)	100 (n=410)

It is seen that fifty seven percent of the respondents believe that the advertisement agencies are successful in communicating the message to the viewers, which reveals viewers confidence in the advertisement agency's ability to communicate the marketing themes.

## 5.2. Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical method used to describe variability among observed variables in terms of a potentially lower number of unobserved variables called factors. In other words, it is possible, for example, that variations in three or four observed variables mainly reflect the variations in a single unobserved variable, or in a reduced number of unobserved variables. Factor analysis searches for such joint variations in response to unobserved latent variables. The observed variables are modeled as linear combinations of the potential factors, plus "error" terms. The information gained about the interdependencies between observed variables can be used later to reduce the set of variables in a dataset. Factor analysis originated in psychometrics, and is used in behavioral sciences, social sciences, marketing, product management, operations research, and other applied sciences that deal with large quantities of data.

### 5.2.1. Data Reduction

To reduce the number of factors and also to get the right combinations of factors, factor analysis is performed. To see the sample adequacy, KMO test is successfully performed with a value of 67% and Bartlett's test is performed with significance level .000, both of which confirm that the data is acceptable for factor analysis (see Figure:1).

*Figure: 1*

#### **KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.669
Bartlett's Test of Approx. Chi-Square		918.385
Sphericity	Df	91.000
	Sig.	.000

Factor analysis identifies five components out of fourteen factors, which explains sixty percent variation in data (see Figure: 2).

**Figure: 2**

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
	1	2.734	19.528	19.528	2.734	19.528	19.528	2.060	14.715
2	1.778	12.697	32.225	1.778	12.697	32.225	1.754	12.531	27.246
3	1.439	10.275	42.500	1.439	10.275	42.500	1.589	11.348	38.593
4	1.369	9.782	52.282	1.369	9.782	52.282	1.566	11.189	49.782
5	1.172	8.370	60.652	1.172	8.370	60.652	1.522	10.870	60.652
6	.902	6.444	67.096						
7	.829	5.920	73.016						
8	.718	5.125	78.141						
9	.646	4.611	82.752						
10	.570	4.070	86.822						
11	.527	3.762	90.584						
12	.507	3.622	94.207						
13	.429	3.066	97.273						
14	.382	2.727	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal

Component Analysis.

The five factors are renamed as regulation, sources of information, offensive advertisements and creativity & transformation (see Appendix 1). Descriptive statistics of the newly formed factors are described below:

**Figure: 3**

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Regulations	409	1.00	5.00	4.2070	.83043	.690	-1.313	.121
Creativity	407	1.33	5.00	3.7445	.82397	.679	-.617	.121
Sources of information	410	1.00	5.00	3.1967	.94009	.884	-.323	.121
Offensive	409	1.00	5.00	3.1406	1.30249	1.696	-.146	.121
Transformations	409	1.00	5.00	4.4988	.66375	.441	-2.257	.121
Valid N (listwise)	405							

What is apparent from Fig: 3 is that most of the respondents are quite agreeable with the different newly formed variables. As each of the variables has scored reasonably fair (max mean 4.49, min mean 3.19) whereas the neutral value is 3 as per 5 point likert scale measurement. Out of the five, two score above 4 (one is closer to 4.50) and the other two score 3 and one 3.75.

Transformation scores the highest value 4.50 with lowest std. deviation. It means transformation of advertisement is recognized by most of the respondents with minimum variation. The other variable which receives above 4 score is regulation with a std. deviation .83043, which means the respondents emphasized the regulation of the advertisements industry for its success. The minimum mean score goes to offensive advertisements with the highest std. deviation which means respondents do not feel much un-comfortable with advertisements containing social sensitive issues but there is a high level of variation among the respondents in this regard. Creativity receives the highest score in the below 3 category (3.75) with a std. deviation .82397. It means creativity in advertisement is well appreciated by the respondents.

Besides, the reliability estimates of the composite factors are also standard. The alpha value for Regulations is .74, for creativity is .68, for source of information is .60. These scores are more than .6 which, according to Nunnally (1978) is an acceptable estimation. For offensive advertisements and transformations reliability can not be computed because these two factors have only two items.

### 5.3. Regression Analysis:

Finally, a regression analysis is carried out considering success of communication (advertisement agencies are successful to communicate the theme of advertisement) as the Dependent Variable and five composite factors (creativity, transformations, regulations, offensive advertisements, advertisement as source of information) as the independent variables.

The beta weights of the composite factors are sought to provide clear picture to the readers regarding the most important factors which affect the agencies success of delivering marketing messages to the audience.

All four factors (creativity, regulations, offensive advertisements and advertisement as source of information) except transformations -- emerge as significant variables to influence the advertisement agencies' success in communicating marketing theme to the customers. The model is significant at  $P < .05$  ( $F = 15.611$ ) (see table 1) and explains 74 % (see table 2) of the variation in the dependent variable. For an exploratory study of this nature, especially considering that the scales were previously untested in the country of study, the results are very satisfying.

**Table 1: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.300 <sup>b</sup>	.090	.074	1.438



Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.300 <sup>b</sup>	.090	.074	1.438

b. Predictors: (Constant), Transformation, offensive advertisements, Creativity, Regulations, Sources of information  
c. Dependent Variable: advertisement agencies are successful in communicating the theme of advertisement

**Table 2: ANOVA<sup>c</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	81.248	7	11.607	15.611	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	821.231	397	2.069		
	Total	902.479	404			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformation, offensive advertisements, Creativity, Regulations, Sources of information

c. Dependent Variable: advertisement agencies are successful in communicating the theme of advertisement

The standardized betas (see table:3) indicate that the greatest impact on agencies' success in meaningful communication comes from regulations and creativity. It is noted, however, that offensive advertisements and source of information have negative coefficients, suggesting that reduction of offensive advertisements would increase agencies' success and the role of advertisement as sources of information is not appreciated by the viewers. It can be explained by the fact that the unguided nature of current advertisements sometimes creates confusion among the viewers and also sometimes deceives the customers. So, the authenticity of advertisement based information is questionable in the viewers mind.

**Table 3: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.863	.534		3.488	.001
Offensive Advertisements	-.251	.102	-.196	-2.464	.014
Transformations	-.048	.085	-.038	-.562	.575
Regulations	.282	.089	.157	3.164	.002
Creativity	.233	.092	.129	2.543	.011
Sources of information	-.185	.080	-.116	-2.321	.021

a. Dependent Variable: advertisement agency are successful to communicate the theme of advertisement

## 6.0. DISCUSSIONS

The discussion part of the paper centers around the composite factors which affect the success of communication.

### 6.1. Advertisement Regulation:

In the era of globalization, when multinational companies flourish and global campaigns are common occurrences, local regulation ultimately delineates the basic boundaries of advertising. Comparative examinations have revealed significant differences in international advertising regulation (Boddewyn, 1991; Gao, 2005; Harker, 1998; Miracle and Nevett, 1987; Petty, 1997). In subscribing to different regimes of advertising regulation, countries provide their consumers varied degrees of protection. Yet, as Kanter (1974) argues, regulations should be developed by taking account of consumers' views. This argument becomes especially potent in the context of developing economies where the consumer, often handicapped by limited education and market knowledge, may be much less skeptical of advertising (Cassim and Langton, 1996).

To date, no study has specifically focused on consumer attitudes toward advertising regulation, even though new technologies such as the internet and mobile phones have dramatically empowered consumers and made them a formidable force in shaping the regulatory landscape (Crosier and Erdogan, 2001; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Volko et al., 2005).

This paper fills the gap in literature in this regard. The viewers of Dhaka City strongly recommended tight regulatory control of the ad industry. This result also establishes the earlier findings of Cassim in that developing countries need stricter regulation because of viewers' state of disempowerment. For example, challenges to unfair and deceptive advertising in China are initiated by the government, competitors, and consumers through either the administrative or judicial process, and the Chinese law does not require extrinsic evidence, literal falsehood, or materiality when interpreting deception (Gao, 2008). Chinese advertising laws categorically ban the use of superlative, unsubstantiated exaggerations, or subjective claims (Gao, 2007), so that puffery is not a possible defense in China. The Chinese law bans direct comparison of products in advertisements and requires indirect comparisons to be substantiated (China State Administration of Industry and Commerce, 1993). In a developed country like USA action against unfair and deceptive advertising can be initiated by self-regulatory body such as the NAD, the government, competitors, and consumers (Petty and Kopp, 1995). In sharp contrast to the Chinese position, the US law treats puffery as a special subcategory of opinion that is not actionable because it is unlikely to deceive consumers acting reasonably (FTC, 1983), though critics argue that puffery deceives the consumer and should be prohibited (Preston, 1996). Comparative advertising is legal in the USA.

This factor refers to different government rules and regulations required for and desired by the respondents of this research. It is expected that industry friendly rules and regulations would increase the chances of successful communication through advertisements.

## **6.2. Sources of Information:**

An advertisement as a source of information is also considered by the viewers as an important factor affecting the success of advertising communication. Studies suggest that

individuals use advertisements for three basis purposes- Information Seeking, Entertainment, Social Expression (Eadie et al. 2007; Gordon 2006; Couler et al. 2001). Individuals use advertisements to seek necessary, valuable information to support their purchase related decision-making and to remain updated (Krishnam and Smith 1998). Information seeking is the process or activity of attempting to obtain information to bridge the knowledge gap (Kumar 2010). Information seekers bridge above knowledge gap and seek information of their interest by monitoring, browsing, searching, being aware. Information seekers also attach high value to the information that is accessible, updated, accurate and reliable (Bates 2002). In light of the past research this paper sees the attitudes of the viewers towards the role of advertisement as information hub. The research also supports the earlier findings. A negative beta value is associated with this factor signifying that the lower the level of deception information in advertisement, the higher the rate of communication success.

Advertisements are generally considered as sources of information. Not only informative advertisement, but other types of advertisement i.e. emotional advertisements, also carry message in one way or another. Especially, in the introduction and growth stage of products information dissemination is essential for the convenience of the customers. Information about price, discounts, other promotional offers, place, etc. need to be shared with customers.

### **6.3. Offensive ADVERTISEMENTS:**

Academic research which lays the foundation of "controversial advertising" is found in studies of "unmentionables", "socially sensitive products", "decent products", "acceptable advertising" and "advertising ethics"(Wilson and West, 1981; Rehman and Brooks, 1987; Triff et al., 1987; Shao and Hill, 1994a; Fahy et al., 1995). These studies have primarily focused on attitudes towards the advertising of various controversial products, legal restrictions on advertising and possible strategies for marketing.

Wilson and West (1981) discussed "unmentionables", which they described as: "... products, services, or concepts that for reasons of delicacy, decency, morality, or even fear tend to elicit reactions of distaste, disgust, offence, or outrage when mentioned or when openly presented". The examples they presented of unmentionables were: "products" (for personal hygiene, birth control, warfare, and drugs for terminal illness), "services" (for abortion, sterilisation,

VD, mental illness, funeral directors, and artificial insemination), and ``concepts" (for political ideas, palliative care, unconventional sexual practices, racial/religious prejudice and terrorism).

Feminine hygiene products and contraceptives were the main focus of Rehman and Brooks (1987) research, which found that contraceptives for men and contraceptives for women were unacceptable among the college students. In a study that focused on advertising ``sensitive products", Fahy et al. (1995) asked a sample of more than 2,000 people about their attitudes towards the advertising on certain products on television. Comparing the attitudes according to sex, age, income, region, education and race, they found that women, particularly aged 50 and over, had much higher disapproval levels for such commercials.

This current research also finds that advertisement of sensitive products significantly affects the success of advertisements. Ads sometimes can become offensive, while carrying socially sensitive information like information about birth control, HIV/AIDS, female hygiene products, etc. in a conservative Muslim society like Bangladesh. Proper handling of these advertisements is required to make the communication successful.

#### **6.4. Creativity:**

Analyses of the advertising industry commonly explore the question of the ‘source’ of creativity, which is either located in individual genius, or organizational forms. Creativity can be seen as an outcome or effect rather than as a cause (Pratt, 2006). The concept of creativity in advertising was not discussed much until the 1960s, when a sea change in the way of producing advertising transformed the field forever. The central feature of this Creative Revolution was that creativity came to be valued over the formulas and research that previously drove the production of advertisements. Creative teams, a mainstay of nearly all agencies since the 1960s, did not exist prior to that time (O’Barr, 2007).

The Creative Revolution was advertising's response to the momentous changes and social transformations taking place in the wider society during the 1960s. Just as a distrust of the establishment characterized a major trend in American society, the advertising revolutionaries of the 1960s balked at their own establishment and its rules. Advertisements poked fun at advertising and refused to continue promoting dreamy, romantic visions.

Instead, they talked openly to consumers for the first time; they urged them to "think small" and look beyond fluff and empty promises. The 1960s was a period in which advertising underwent its own transformation—one that more-or-less paralleled the changes occurring in wider society (Frank, 1997).

“Advertising can explain how a brand helps to remove the problem and/or offer better performance than the consumer's current brand creatively. This type of advertising has been called "informational" (Puto and Wells 1984; Wells 1981 ), "thinking" (Foot Cone & Belding 1978), or "rational/reason why" (Young & Rubicam) advertising” (Burke & others 1990). Also creative advertisements can make consumers feel good or empowered about the products. “In this case, advertising can communicate a brand image, mood, or the sensory qualities associated with the brand; known as "transformational" (Puto and Wells 1984; Wells 1981 ), "feeling" (Foot Cone & Belding 1978), or "emotional" (Young & Rubicam) advertising” (Burke & others 1990).

The findings that creative factors were important antecedents of advertising attitude are consistent with previous studies. Specifically, it is supportive of the proposition of earlier research that visual and emotional effects of advertising might be mediated by an individual's evaluation of the advertisement. This means that creative factors are important variables to consider in studies of the Internet advertising effects. As Bruner (1990) and Park and Young(1986) emphasized that background music in advertising enhanced consume affection by increasing likeability of the brand.

### **6.5. Transformations:**

With the development of the digital devices and computer software, various formats of advertising have been introduced in advertisements causing transformation of advertisements. This trend includes traditional TV commercials (with animation, text message and color) as well as Internet advertising (Hyun and Jun, 2007). It is empirically proven that those heuristic elements evoke positive consumer attitudes and behaviors in the Internet advertising environment. It is obvious that advertising character may affect consumer attitude. Visual information with sound, color, motion, and other factors in advertisements is important in affecting consumer attitude formation (Cho, 2003).

Messages with background music in advertising are more influential to consumers' affect than cognition because the characteristics of music such as happiness and sadness modes affect the listener's feelings. Indeed, music in television commercials has been related to viewers' affection during analytic cognitive situations.

Advertisements are transformed conceptually, story wise, technically, in terms of presentation, etc. Advertisement making in this 21<sup>st</sup> century is completely different than that of the previous century. Technical advancement, globalization, consumer taste change, consumer life style and expectation, exposure to the advertisements of other cultures by virtue of cable connections make the advertisement making more challenging now a days. In order to make the advertisement successful the modern trend of advertisement has to be followed. However, the proposition transformation is not proved statistically significant with regard to its effect on success of ADVERTISEMENT.

## **7.0. CONCLUSIONS:**

Advertising is a form of communication whose purpose is to inform potential customers about products and services and how to obtain and use them. Many advertisements are also designed to generate increased consumption of those products and services through the creation and reinforcement of brand image and brand loyalty. For these purposes advertisements often contain both factual information and persuasive messages. Every major medium is used to deliver these messages, including: television, radio, movies, magazines, newspapers, video games, the Internet, and billboards.

The success of these advertisements can be measured by observed change in market conditions, and change in consumer behavior both of which are difficult to measure. One comparatively easier way to measure the acceptance of advertisement is by measuring the attitudes of viewers/readers towards the advertisement which is being done in this paper.

A considerable amount of research has been conducted to uncover the relationships between advertising communication variables and consumer decision making, and to identify the conditions under which specific communication approaches (e.g., ad formats, appeals, layouts, emotions, presenter characteristics) will have an impact on consumer behavior thus leading to success of advertisement (Burke et al., 1990).

This study also contributes significantly to understanding what is important to make an advertisement successful. The findings of this study can be an aid to the advertisers in their effort to design and broadcast the commercials for ensuring success. In the context of Bangladesh, where the advertisement market is completely unregulated, the respondents of the paper rightly pointed out the need for a regulated ad industry. Majority of the viewers are favoring regulations of advertisements because they get irritated by advertisements floods within and between the programs. Both the policy makers and advertisers should take it into their serious consideration. In this open world when the viewers have access to the 'electronic world' through cable connections and the internet, their expectation about creativity in advertisement is also justifiable. The advertisers should be careful before airing advertisements of sensitive products, as viewers have reservations regarding these types of advertisements. Advertisers should also be careful about claims of the advertisement. A good majority of the viewers are skeptical about the false claims of the advertisements.

Future researchers are expected to carry out research where this present research has stopped with a bigger sample size and enlarged geographical scope to come up with a more generalized result.



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## Appendix 1 : Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>

	Component				
	Regulations	Creativity	Sources of information	Offensive advertisement	Transformations
The advertisements should be checked by the government censor board before commercial release	.790	.133	-.036	.165	.154
There should be an advertisement regulatory body set up by the government to regulate the advertising industry in the country	.789	.089	-.002	.155	.121
Advertisement industry should be monitored and regulated by a strict regulatory commission	.727	.176	.030	-.039	.072
I'm satisfied with the creativity of the present day advertisements	.101	.704	.044	-.159	.022
The advertisements of Bangladesh uphold the ethical, moral, cultural standards of our society	.164	.699	.072	-.064	.048



The increasing economic and social role of the women of Bangladesh is shown in the advertisements	.140	.672	.140	.092	-.032
The advertisements of BD are able to touch the emotion of the viewers.	-.368	.433	-.122	.217	.197
Help to make a comparison between the product and service	.051	.254	.741	.060	.059
Inform about the existence of a product or service	.113	-.050	.734	-.034	.131
Advertisements provide true information about the products	-.124	.043	.669	-.006	-.045
I feel embarrassed when I watch the HIV/ AIDS awareness advertisements with my family	.074	-.036	-.004	.859	-.136
I feel embarrassed when I watch the advertisements of contraceptive and female hygienic products with my family	.123	-.039	.022	.826	.124
Print advertisements are more colorful	.076	.055	.082	.036	.843

Use of computer graphics/animation are higher	.185	.020	.046	-.045	.817
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

## Appendix 2: Viewers Questionnaire

East West University Centre for Research and Training

**Project Name: The Growth, Transformations, and Governance of Advertising Industry in Bangladesh during 1971-2005**

**Supervisor: SSM Sadrul Huda**

**Assistant Professor, East West University**

To explore the different key issues affecting commercial communication strategies of the companies, specially the issues regarding the advertisements placed in TV and PRINT media, the proposed research aims to solicit opinions, suggestions, and facts from the different key stakeholders, which include Advertisers, Advertising Agencies, Media and Target Audience (readers/viewers) of those media. As a part of this information gathering process, you are requested to fill up the following questionnaire, as a **Viewers/Readers of Advertisements**. We would like to assure you that all the information given by you will be kept confidential and used only for academic purpose. For additional information, please feel free to contact Mr. SSM Sadrul Huda, Assistant Professor, East West University, at 01552393548.

<b>Respondent's Profile:</b>	
<b>Age:</b> 1. Below 20    2. 21-30    3. 31-40    4. 41-50    5. 50 +	<input type="text"/>
<b>Educational Background:</b> 1. Primary    2. Secondary    3. Higher Secondary    4. Graduate    5. Master 6. No education    7. Others (Pls specify)_____	<input type="text"/>
<b>Monthly income:</b> 1. Below TK 10,000    2. TK 10,000-20,000    3. TK 20,000-30,000 4. TK 30,000+    5. Nil	<input type="text"/>
<b>Profession:</b> 1. Student    2. Public Service    3. Private Service    4. Businessman    5. Housewife 6. Others (Pls specify)_____	<input type="text"/>
<b>Locality:</b> 1. Gulshan/ Baridhara/ Banani    2. Dhanmodi/ Mohammadpur 3. Malibag/ Mogbazar/ Khilgaw    4. Old Dhaka    5. Mirpur	<input type="text"/>
<b>Gender:</b> 1. Male            2. Female	<input type="text"/>

**Which of the following channels do you think have more advertisements?**

- a. Bangladeshi Channels
  - i. BTV ii. NTV iii. ATN iv. CHANNEL I v. RTV vi. ETV vii. Bangla Vision
- b. Hindi Channels
- c. English Channels
- d. News Channels
- f. Others. Please specify.....

**Which of the following newspapers do you think have more advertisements?**

- a. Prothom Alo b. Ittefaq c. Jugantor d. Amar Desh e. Somokal f. Daily Star
- g. Observer h. Independent i. News Today j. New Age k. Jai Jai Din
- l. Others (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

**Which of the following types of channels do you think have more interesting advertisements?**

- a. Bangladeshi Channels b. Hindi Channels c. English Movie Channels
- d. News Channels e. Sports channels f. Others (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

**When and how long you do watch TV-**

- |                                |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Morning: before 9am         | b. Day: 9-6 pm                 | c.                             |
| Evening: after 6 pm            |                                |                                |
| i. Nil                         | i. Nil                         | i. Nil                         |
| ii. Less than ½ hour           | ii. Less than ½ hour           | ii. Less than ½ hour           |
| hour                           |                                |                                |
| iii. One hour                  | iii. One hour                  | iii. One hour                  |
| iv. One and ½ hour             | iv. One and ½ hour             | iv. One and ½ hour             |
| v. More (please specify) _____ | v. More (please specify) _____ | v. More (please specify) _____ |

**When and how long you do read newspaper-**

- |                        |                      |                        |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| a. Morning: before 9am | b. Day: 9-6 pm       | c. Evening: after 6 pm |
| i. Nil                 | i. Nil               | i. Nil                 |
| ii. Less than ½ hour   | ii. Less than ½ hour | ii. Less than ½ hour   |

iii. One hour	iii. One hour	iii. One hour
iv. One and ½ hour	iv. One and ½ hour	iv. One and ½ hour
v. More (please specify) _____	v. More (please specify) _____	v. More (please specify) _____
(please		specify)_____

1. Please rank the following media according to your preference you like most for getting product information through advertisement (1=best and 7=worst)

1= TV

--	--	--	--	--	--

2= Newspaper

3= Billboard

|

4= Magazine

5= Radio

6= Mobile

7= Internet

2. Please rank the following types of information according to your preference you like to know from the advertisements (1=best and 4=worst)

1= Product information

--	--	--	--

2= Service information

3= Price information

4= Location (selling points)

3. What should be the duration of advertisements on TV-

1= 15-20 sec

--

2= 30 sec

3= 31-40 sec

4= 60 sec

5= Others (pls specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What type of newspaper advertisements do you expect? You can answer more than one option.

--	--	--

- 1= Display advertisements (throughout the newspaper)
- 2= Classified advertisements (arranged under subheads)
- 3= Special advertisements and inserts (government and financial report and notice)
- 4= Others (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. According to your preference please rank the following types of attractions of any TV advertisements (1=best and 5=worst)

--	--	--	--	--

- 1= Story/Concepts
- 2= Model
- 3= Music
- 4= Zingle
- 5= Shooting spots

6. According to your preference please rank the following types of attractions of newspaper advertisements (1=best and 4=worst)

--	--	--	--

- 1= Model
- 2= Color
- 3= Graphics
- 4= Size of ads

7. Which of the following time you consider is most suitable for TV advertisement?

- 1= During drama
- 2= Before drama
- 3= During news
- 4= Before news
- 5= During cinema
- 6= Before cinema
- 7= During talk shows
- 8= Before talk show
- 9= Others (Pls specify) \_\_\_\_\_

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

8. Please express your degree of agreement or disagreement with the statements mentioned below, where 5=strongly agree, 4=agree. 3=neutral, 2=disagree and 1=strongly disagree. Please circle in the appropriate answer.

*a. Advertisement as sources of information for making buying decision*

S/ N		Degree of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Generally advertisements inform me about the existence of a product or service in the market information	1	2	3	4	5
2	Generally advertisements help me make comparison and to choose the right product and service	1	2	3	4	5

*b. Transformations of advertisement*

S/ N		Degree of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
3	Stories and messages of present day advertisements are more interesting than those of before	1	2	3	4	5
4	The rate of repetition of advertisements in the present day is higher than that of past	1	2	3	4	5
5	The cultural and the social issues are well portrayed in the recent ads than the advertisements of past (e.g. social class, age, gender, education etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
6	The use of puffing words in ads is higher in the recent advertisements (e.g. Koto kotha bole re of Banglalink) than those of past	1	2	3	4	5
7	Introduction of celebrity is also another attraction of the present day advertisements than those of before	1	2	3	4	5
8	The presence of female model is more in the recent ads than those of past	1	2	3	4	5
9	Print advertisements are more colorful at present than those of past	1	2	3	4	5
10	At present use of computer graphics/animation are	1	2	3	4	5

	higher in both print and TV advertisements than those of past					
11	The new trends of advertisements are favorable for growth of advertisement industry	1	2	3	4	5

*c. Ethical Issues*

S/ N		Degree of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
12	The advertisers of Bangladesh make conscious decision to stick to a high moral standard in developing advertisement	1	2	3	4	5
13	The puffing words (e.g. g-r-eat) are an ethical issue as the performance of the product may be same as the other product	1	2	3	4	5
14	The advertisements are misleading as a source of information for the average consumers	1	2	3	4	5
15	Advertisement helps to increase awareness in the society regarding different important issues like AIDS, Smoking, Drug, Dowry tradition	1	2	3	4	5
16	The advertisements of Bangladesh uphold the ethical, moral, cultural standard of our society	1	2	3	4	5

*d. Effects of/ Impacts of Ads*

S/ N		Degree of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
17	Advertisements make people buy expensive products just to show off	1	2	3	4	5
18	The advertisements of Bangladesh are able to create confidence among customers about the products or services.	1	2	3	4	5
19	The advertisements are changing the culture or lifestyle of the people	1	2	3	4	5



20	Advertisements influence me to purchase the product	1	2	3	4	5
----	---	---	---	---	---	---

9. According to your preference please rank the following media where advertisements are memorable (1=best and 7=worst)

1= TV

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

2= Newspaper

3= Billboard

4= Magazine

5= Radio

6= Mobile

7= Internet

*e. Irritating*

S/ N		Degree of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
21	There are too many advertisements between and within the programs of most of the TV channels	1	2	3	4	5
22	I change the channels during commercial breaks	1	2	3	4	5
23	There is too much dance, music or color in the TV advertisements	1	2	3	4	5
24	The presence of too many advertisements in newspaper distracts the attention of the readers from the news item	1	2	3	4	5
25	The presence of too many advertisements in TV distracts the attention of the viewers from the main program	1	2	3	4	5

*f. Offensive*

S/ N		Degree of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
26	I feel embarrassed when I watch the advertisements of contraceptive and female hygienic products with my family	1	2	3	4	5

27	I feel embarrassed when I watch the HIV/ AIDS awareness advertisements with my family	1	2	3	4	5
----	---	---	---	---	---	---

*g. Regulation*

S/ N		Degree of agreement Agree				
		1	2	3	4	5
28	There should be an advertisement regulatory body set up by the government to regulate the advertising industry the country	1	2	3	4	5
29	The advertisements should be checked by the government censor board before commercial release	1	2	3	4	5
30	There should be a fixed time on TV channels and allocation of space in print media for public interest advertisements e. g. awareness of Bird Flu	1	2	3	4	5
31	There should be a specific ratio between program and commercial time in a given hour for TV and specific ratio between news item and advertisement for advertisements in the print media	1	2	3	4	5
32	Advertisement industry should be monitored and regulated by a strick regulatory commission	1	2	3	4	5

*h. Success/Merits of Ads*

S/ N		Degree of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
33	Advertisements provide true information about the product	1	2	3	4	5
34	TV advertisements are more entertaining than print advertisement	1	2	3	4	5
35	Emotional ads are more memorable than informative advertisements	1	2	3	4	5

*i. Gender Issue:*

S/ N		Degree of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
36	The advertisements contain female character even when they are not relevant	1	2	3	4	5
37	The men are more likely to be portrayed as product authorities and women as product users	1	2	3	4	5
38	Male viewers appreciate the presence of female model on both TV and Print advertisements	1	2	3	4	5
39	Female viewers appreciate the presence of male model on both TV and Print advertisements	1	2	3	4	5
40	Female models are used more on TV ads than Print advertisements	1	2	3	4	5
41	The increasing economic and social role of the women of Bangladesh is shown in the advertisements	1	2	3	4	5

*j. Creativity*

S/ N		Degree of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
42	The technical issues regarding advertisement for example the photography, set, printing, and the production are up to the mark	1	2	3	4	5
43	The advertisements of BD are able to act as a source of inspirations for changing the lifestyle, and behavior e .g din bodoler pala of Banglalink	1	2	3	4	5
44	The advertisements of BD are able to touch the emotion of the viewers.	1	2	3	4	5
45	I'm satisfied with the creativity of the present day advertisements	1	2	3	4	5

10. According to your preference please rank the following issues which creates an advertisement creative (1=best and 4=worst)

--	--	--	--

- 1= Story
- 2= Shooting technique
- 3= Model
- 4= Shooting spot

*k. Future Trend*

S/ N		Degree of agreement				
		1	2	3	4	5
46	I appreciate searching internet for product information, if it is available					
47	Newer technology will affect the future trend of advertisement industry of Bangladesh					

11. According to your preference please rank the following types of advertisements which influence you more in making product purchase decision (1=best and 4=worst)

1= Humorous

--	--	--	--

2= Emotional/Inspiration

3= Logical

4= Informative

12. Do you have any comments regarding- transformations/gender/ethics/ creativity/ future trends? Please write in the given space below.

Please specify:

---



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13. Which of the following factors may affect the growth of the ad industry in future? You can answer more than one option.

1= Law

--	--	--	--	--

2= Information technology (MMS, SMS, internet)

3= Media industry

4= Increased competition in the consumer market

5= Entry of foreign ad firms  
6= Others (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

14. Can you recall any TV advertisement (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

15. Can you recall any Print advertisement (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

16. Which of the following types of advertisement are more interesting? You can answer more than one option.

1= Consumer product

2= Real estate

3= Mobile company

4= Social advertisements

5= Others (Please Specify)\_\_\_\_\_

--	--	--	--

|

17. Advertising agencies are successful to communicate the theme of the advertisement-

1= Strongly disagree

2= Disagree

3= Neutral

4= Agree

5= Strongly agree

--

**Thank you for your participation**

**For official use only**

<p><b>Details of Interviewer</b></p> <p><i>Name:</i></p> <p><i>Time of interview -</i></p> <p><i>Date:</i></p>
--

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the interviewer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the supervisor

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Plot No- A/2, Main Road, Jahurul Islam City,  
Aftabnagar, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh.

E-mail: [ewucrt@ewubd.edu](mailto:ewucrt@ewubd.edu)

Website: [www.ewubd.edu](http://www.ewubd.edu)



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# East West Journal of Business and Social Studies

Vol. 3, January 2012

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East West University  
Plot No-A/2, Main Road, Jahurul Islam City,  
Aftabnagar, Dhaka-1212  
Phone: 9858261, 09666775577  
Emails: editor\_ewjbss@ewubd.edu, ewucrt@ewubd.edu  
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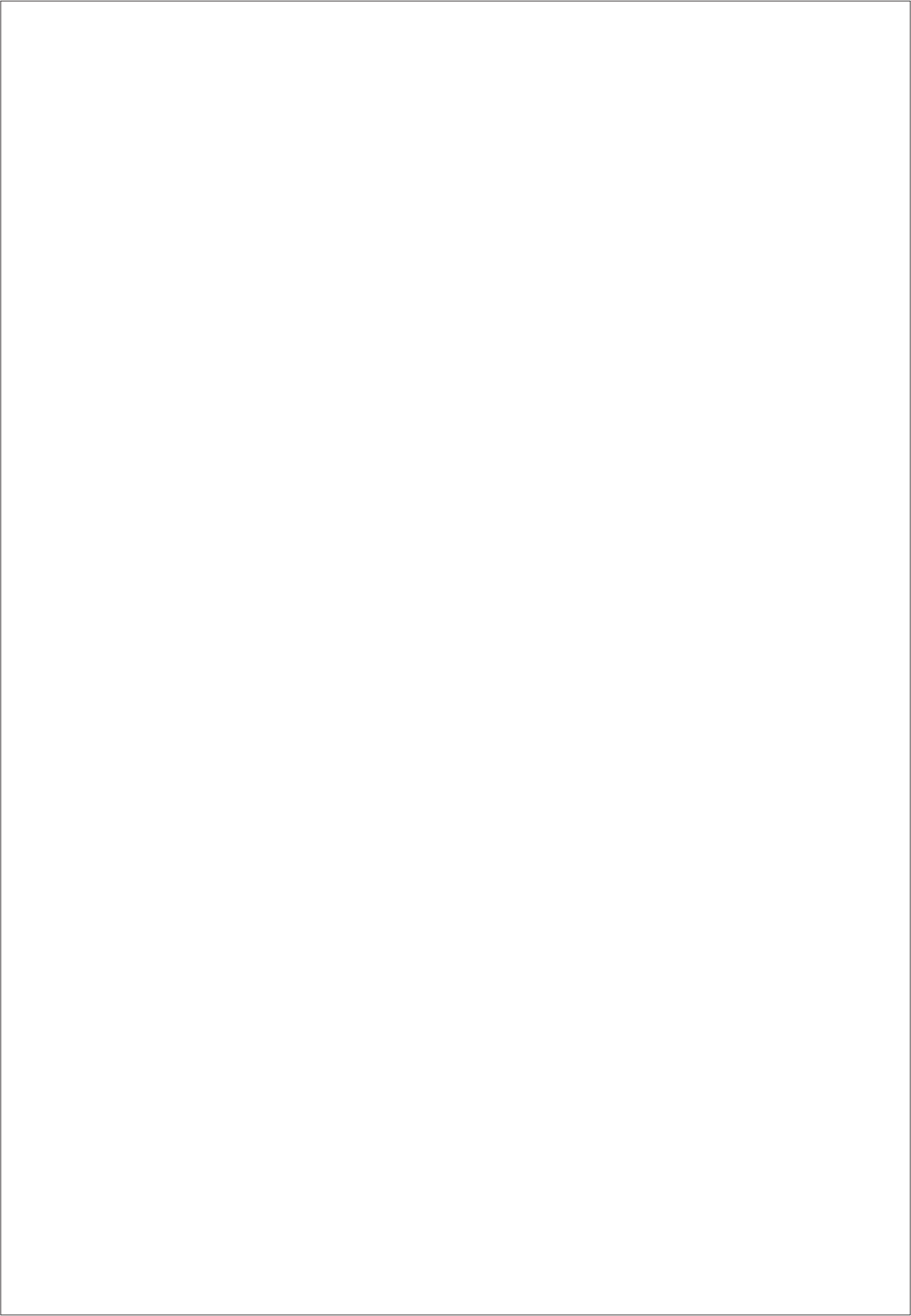
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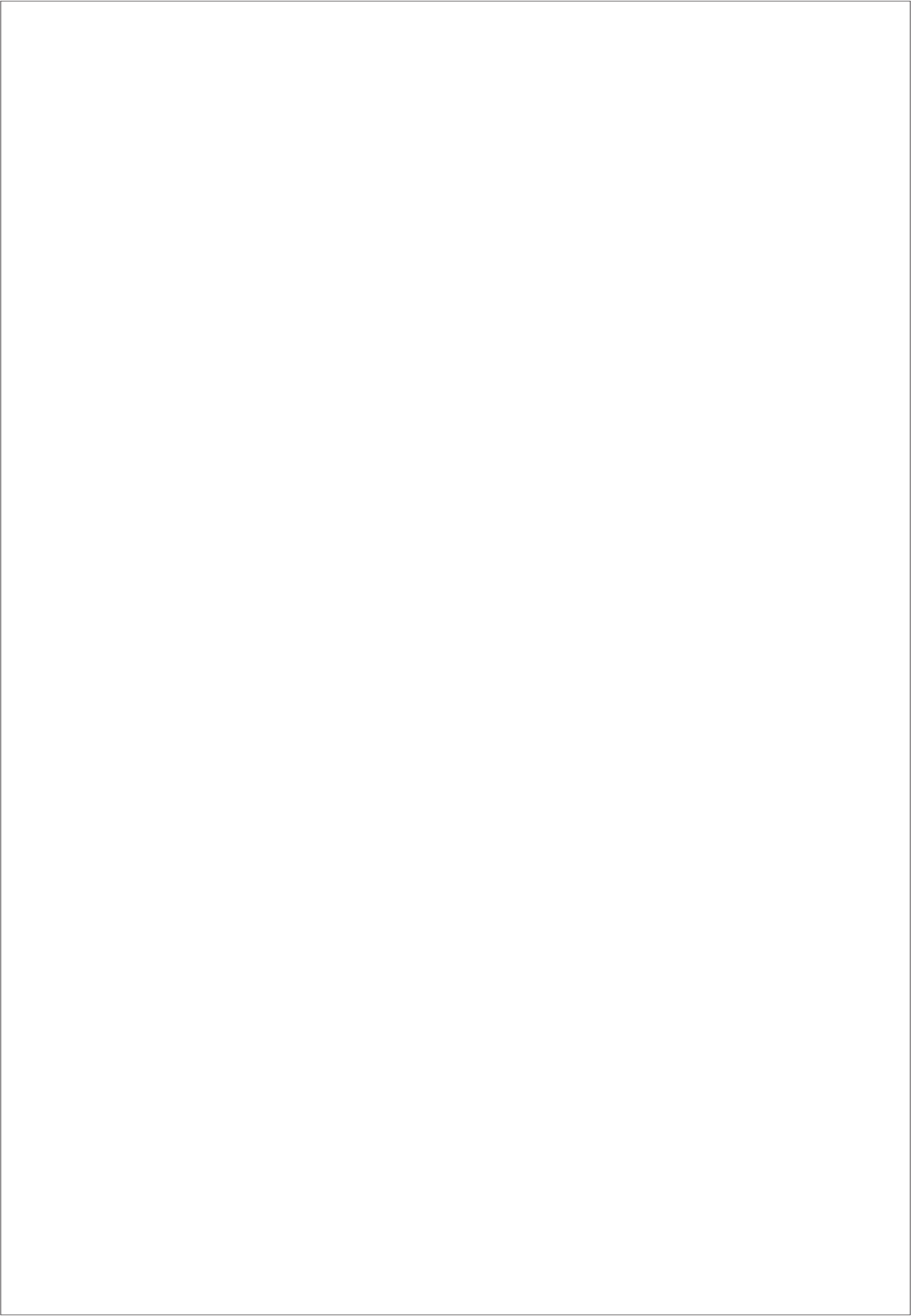


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## Editorial

We are living through an unprecedented era of economic, social and cultural change and development which are intrinsically multifaceted that demand an understanding of human capital development process in the contemporary world. In such a context, there is a growing consensus and demand to conceptualize and materialize a balanced methodological rigour of research in conducting educational research through multiple lenses and interdisciplinary approaches. With this in mind, the *East West Journal of Business and Social Studies (EWJBSS)* is intended to bring out its third volume to address diverse socio-economic and cultural issues in order to promote inclusive learning process in an academic space.

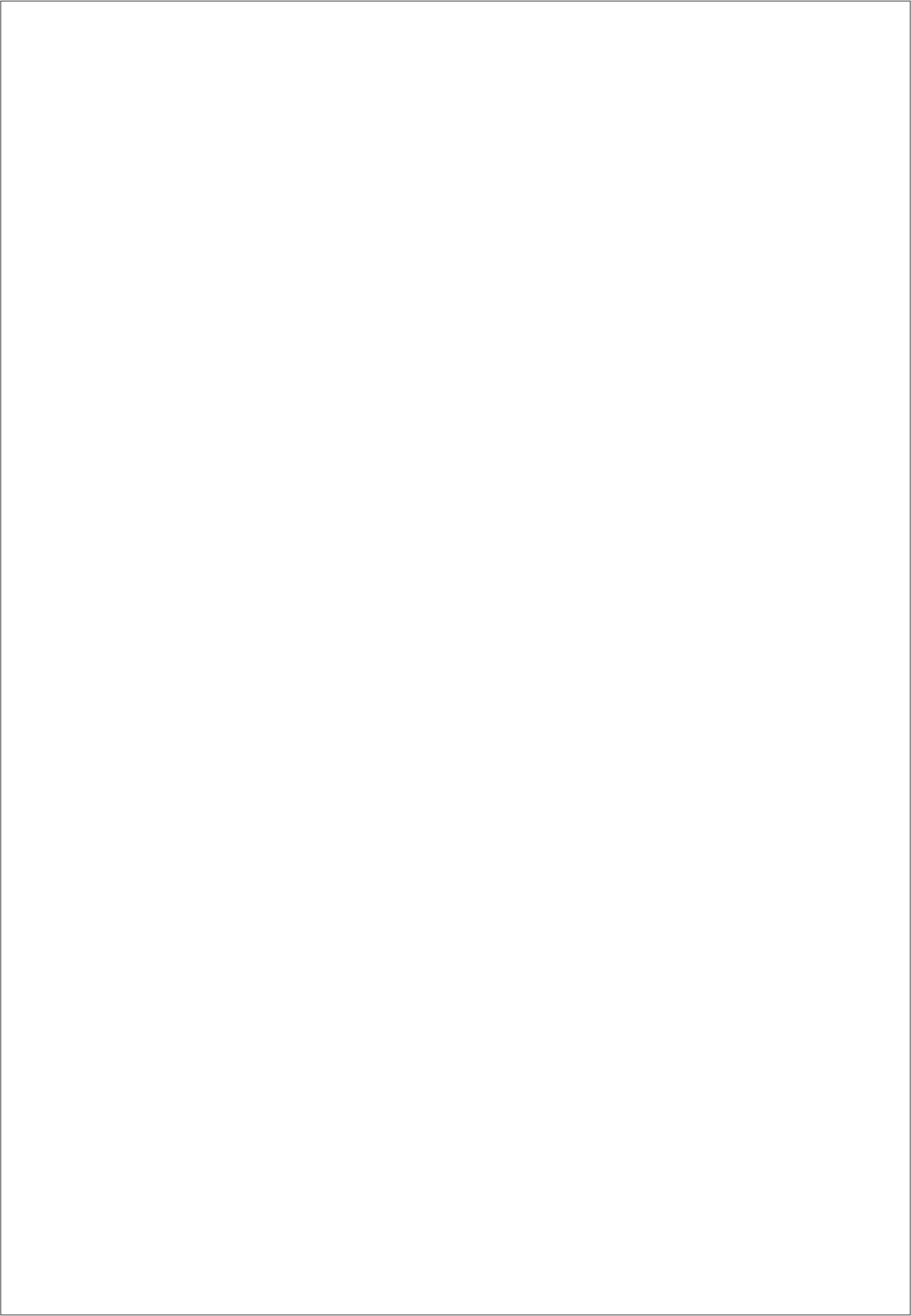
We believe that the papers collated in this edition of *EWJBSS* would certainly provide insightful and in-depth perspectives to readers, scholars and researchers in cutting-edge learning environment for academic development.



**Md. Humayun Kabir Chowdhury, Ph.D.**

Editor

East West Journal of Business and Social Studies (EWJBSS)





# **In the Lineage of the King: Conversion, Identity and Why the Rajbanshi in Bangladesh Claim to be Kshatriya**

Dr. Margot Wilson\*

## **ABSTRACT**

Claims to Kshatriya status by lower caste or tribal groups are by no means restricted in time and place to the Rajbanshi. Nevertheless, Rajbanshi claims provide a characteristic example of the colonial, caste and academic dialogues about conversion, elite emulation, ethnicity, and identity development which surround the processes defined as Hinduization and Sanskritization by Weber and Srinivas. This paper relies on ethnographic research in a Rajbanshi community in northwest Bangladesh to augment and illustrate discussion points from that literature.

## **Introduction**

This paper uses ethnographic data from fieldwork among the Rajbanshi<sup>1</sup> of northwest Bangladesh to discuss the acculturation and identity development among minority groups in South Asia. Claims of royal descent from the Barman kings of Kamrupa, combined with Brahmanical justifications found in stories of warrior caste persecution in ancient texts, provide the basis for Rajbanshi claims to Kshatriya status. These claims characterize the acculturative processes of Sanskritization and Hinduization as defined by M. N. Srinivas (1952) and Max Weber (1958). These models emerge in the colonial and immediately post-colonial era, but are less prominent in academic discussion of late. The Rajbanshi of Bangladesh are largely unknown in the anthropological literature and although they follow the strictures of Hinduism, they are routinely discounted as “tribals” by people in other parts of the country.

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\* Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

<sup>1</sup>Also spelled Rajbangshi, Rajbonshi and Rajbansi,

### Sanskritization and Hinduization

Sanskritization and Hinduization are sophisticated and complex advancement strategies that, nevertheless, have been largely unsuccessful for most lower caste, tribal, aboriginal (adivasi) and Dalit people in South Asia. Even after converting to Hinduism and assimilating into the mainstream of South Asian society, these groups rarely find their social, economic or political circumstances improved, and continue to find themselves ranked many rungs below other Hindus in society (Jivha, 2003). Further, while they may be reluctantly recognized as Hindu, these groups are often treated with overt hostility and repression, and have been targeted by the majority community (Clarke 2004, 1, see also Basu 1995).

Gooptu (1993) contends that ancient South Asian kingdoms were ruled by Dravidian (indigenous/Dalit) people prior to the arrival of the Aryans. As the autothonomous inhabitants of Hindustan (India) these rulers were, by definition, the “original” Hindus, having *bhakti* as their religion. Archaeological and linguistic work on the Indus Valley civilization, also known as Harappan, supports claims for “a unique culture which owes its uniqueness to indigenous influences” (Fairservis 1989, 215). Phule (1991) takes this argument further yet. Characterizing Aryans as invaders who subjugated the indigenous inhabitants of India, he claims lower ranked castes as descendants of these “original” inhabitants and upper castes as descendants of foreigners. Thus, caste represents a mind-set of belief system predicated on an internalized hierarchical pattern, relying on the degree of ritual purity...[that is] alien to India’s original people” (Jaffrelott 2003, 2, 11). Weber (1958:4) similarly views caste as the “fundamental institution of Hinduism...a system of particularly rigid and exclusive hereditary estates...social rank as determined by one’s social distance from the Brahman caste which holds the central position” (quoted in Pearce 2003). In this sense, caste constitutes a “sacralised social order” (Gould 1987) for which Brahmans provide “universal references” or role models in contrast to which all other castes are ranked in terms of their relative purity (Dumont 1970, cited in Kolenda 1978).

M. N. Srinivas (1952) has defined Sanskritization as the process by which a lower ranked Hindu caste, tribal or other group changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a higher ranked, and frequently, “twice-born” caste – what Lynch (1969) has called elite emulation.<sup>2</sup> Weber (1958) used the term Hinduization to describe the specific process by which groups outside the caste

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<sup>2</sup>Xaxa (1999: 1521) also uses the terms Kshatriyisation and Rajputisation

system convert to Hinduism and, depending on their occupation and wealth, negotiate social ranking within the system. More recently, Hinduization, sometimes called Saffronization (Jamanadas 2003), has been equated with the concept of *Hindutva* (a term coined by V. D. Sarvarkar in 1969) in advocating for the consolidation of religious, ethnic and cultural minorities into a “Brahmanic construction of an Indian nation” (Clarke 2004 1-3); a construction that in Clarke’s opinion “manifests a propensity to eradicate all forms of variant plurality [and] threatens all minorities.” Jamanadas (2003, 1-4) further argues that this process should more properly be termed Brahminization as it reflects the maintenance of Brahmin supremacy.<sup>3</sup>

Sanskritization provides not only an avenue for challenging and possibly improving one’s position within the system but a mechanism by which upper castes can consolidate their own position while simultaneously undermining the solidarity among the lower castes. Emulation of Brahman elites reinforces the existing hierarchy and the privilege of the Brahman caste, creates tension between lower ranked castes, and provides coherence in a system that does not display any real cohesion (Jaffrelot 2003, see also Kolenda 1978, Tylor 1972). In this regard, Srinivas (1967:92) argues that although a caste may struggle for a higher position for itself in the local hierarchy, it simultaneously resents the efforts of other castes (particularly lower ones), to move up in the system. Furthermore, the struggle to move up frequently results in dissension among closely related castes or division within single castes with successfully Sanskritized segments “pulling rank” on other segments of the same caste through actions such as refusing to give their daughters in marriage or to accept food and drink. The final effect is to increase the number of existing *jatis* and prevent solidarity by creating divisions and dissent among them (Kolenda 1978). Gould (1988, 146) argues that, “one of the prime forces behind Sanskritization is...repressed hostility which manifests itself not in the form of rejecting the caste system [*in toto*] but in the form of its victims trying to seize control of it” (quoted in Jaffrelot 2003); what Ambedkar (1989, 101-102) has called “graded inequality.”

Thus, there is no real challenge to the authority of the caste hierarchy. Rather, it is self-reinforcing and the primary focus of Sanskritization becomes maneuvering for position within the system rather than overthrowing or opting out of it. Furthermore, although this strategy is sometimes successful for some segments of

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<sup>3</sup>Throughout the rest of this paper, I use the term Sanskritization to refer to conversion and/or elite emulation as a means to engage the caste system at a higher rank

society, that success is never sufficient to allow caste members to achieve true equality with the higher castes. Kolenda (1978,100) has argued that “Sanskritization is...at best a very slow method for a *jati* to raise its status. It is likely to be successful only if reinforced by economic or political power.” Nevertheless, from Vedic times, Sanskritization has theoretically offered a way by which high status is conferred on groups both inside and outside of the caste system. Indeed the broad appeal of this strategy is evidenced by the pervasive spread of Hinduism throughout South Asia (Jivha 2003), where even today communities attempt to raise their status through conversion to Hinduism and/or emulation of high caste behaviours and beliefs, such as wearing the sacred thread, becoming vegetarian and hypergamy (marrying their daughters into higher caste groups).

In the context of this paper, Sanskritization among the Rajbanshi of northwest Bangladesh provides an example of an unsuccessful attempt to improve the status of one group and achieve social, political and economic advancement through conversion and elite emulation. I begin the discussion that follows with an explanation of how I became interested in these issues and a description of the historical sequence of the Rajbanshi. This is followed by an examination of Sanskritization as a change strategy and its less than successful outcomes for Rajbanshi people. I’ve struggled to find a middle ground between colonial interpretations of caste and Sanskritization on the one hand and indigenous scholars’ critiques of those interpretations on the other. I’ve also tried to contextualize my research in the ongoing debate about identity politics.<sup>4</sup>

### **Chuchuli and the Rajbanshi**

I had never heard the word Rajbanshi before the middle of July 1989, although I had already spent some 10½ months in Bangladesh working in the capital and conducting research in the rural areas. I was riding in a jeep with the District Chairman to attend a tree planting ceremony when he looked out the window and seeing a group of people walking along the side of the road remarked, “Do you

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<sup>4</sup>“Identity politics” has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups. Rather than organizing solely around belief systems, programmatic manifestos, or party affiliation, identity political formations typically aim to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. Members of that constituency assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness that challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of greater self-determination (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

know these people?" I said that I had noticed people like them before in other parts of northern Bangladesh, people whose faces are different from the people of the south.<sup>5</sup> He said: "These are Rajbanshi people. They have two castes: the Rajbanshi and the Shujabanshi" A literal translation of the term Rajbanshi is "lineage (or family) of the king," or "Royal Race" (Hunter 1876, Basu 1995) and the Chairman translated Shujabanshi as "lineage of the sun or priest." He was a kind man and supportive of my research: indeed, when I expressed an interest in knowing more about the Rajbanshi people, he suggested I live in his household and conduct research in a neighbouring Rajbanshi village. In the end for a number of reasons, I was not able to accept his offer and in the midst of finding another village in which to do my research, I put the Rajbanshi out of my mind. Indeed, I forgot the word entirely and later had to retrieve it in conversation with the villagers of Chuchuli, where I finally conducted my research.

Following a series of discussions about the different ways in which people identify and define themselves in Bangladesh generally and in Chuchuli in particular, about religious divisions, economic differences, gender roles, political affiliations and citizenship (*Bangalees* vs Bangladeshis vs *bideshis*, i.e. foreigners), my landlord said: "And of course, we are Rajbanshi." Shortly thereafter, my friend and research collaborator who had lived his whole life in Chuchuli came to my house and quietly said, "How can we claim to be in the lineage of the king? We are only poor rural people with nothing to support this claim. What we really are is *poliya*."<sup>6</sup> Now this was another word that I had heard but had not used because I had been warned it was derogatory and insulting to rural people—a word, I had been told, that roughly translates into English as "rustic" or "country bumpkin." Nevertheless, it is a word that appears regularly in the colonial literature as a descriptor for certain groups who live in this part of Bangladesh and in neighbouring West Bengal.

These two conversations piqued my interest in the Rajbanshi but in contextualizing my research, I found a relatively small amount of information about them and even less about the Shujabangshi, who are sometimes called Sivabangshi or Surajbanshi (cf. Dalton 1872, Risley 1891). In the seminary library in Dhaka, I located a single monograph written in English and published by the

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<sup>5</sup>Risley (1891) has described the Rajbanshi as Mongolo-Dravidian people living in lower Bengal and Orissa, as broad headed, dark complexioned and medium in stature, the offspring of Tibeto-Burman people invading from the east and the autochthonous Dravidians (cited in Tylor 1973, 14-15)

<sup>6</sup>Also spelled paliya – I'll return to this point later

Asiatic Society in Calcutta (Sanyal 1965). Aside from this and a few more recent references in academic articles primarily focused on other issues (cf. Bandyopadhyay 2009, Chatterjee 2008, Sengupta 1990, Toulmin 2006), much of the published material on the Rajbanshi comes from the British colonial literature and administrative accounts, and more recently from the internet. Some exceptions include Basu's (2003) and Mukherjee's (1994) discussions of caste movements and associations, and Das Gupta's (2010) discussion of festivals among the Rajbanshi.<sup>7</sup> Much of the internet material focuses on political activism by the Kamatapuri People's Party, establishment of self-governance, the expansion of opportunities for economic development by Rajbanshi people in India (cf. [www.revolutionarydemocracy.org](http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org), 2003), and agitation for the preservation of a distinct Rajbanshi cultural and linguistic identity – a claim supported by Toulmin's (2006) linguistic research (see also Chatterjee 2008, Mukherjee 1994). The demand for a separate Rajbanshi state called Kamatapuri is undoubtedly a response to the relatively recent creation of the new “tribal” states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal/Uttarakhand in India in November 2000 (Hazarika 2004).

### **Historical Sequence for Northwest Bangladesh**

The majority of Rajbanshi people in Bangladesh live in Dinajpur, Rangpur and Mymensingh districts, which comprise the northwestern portion of Bangladesh, bordering the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal where Rajbanshi groups are also found. Rajbanshi groups also live in Nepal. The historical experience of this part of Bangladesh has been distinct from that of southern portions of the country (cf. Bahadur 1966, Bessaignet 1964, Gait 1963). In fact, until the establishment of the Moghul Empire in 1566, this area along with present-day Assam, was part of a series of kingdoms known variously as Pragjyotisha, Kamarupa, Kamrup, Kamata and Cooch Bihar.

References are made to Pragjyotisha in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and there is little doubt that the Kings recorded in the Mahabharata were indeed historic figures who ruled over Pragjyotisha (Bahadur 1966). Greek accounts of the area from 400 BC indicate that the southern boundary of Pragjyotisha was the Lohitya Sagara, a sea that covered most of what is now southern Bangladesh. By 200 A.D. when Ptolemy described the Gangetic coast, the southern islands in the Lohitya Sagara had coalesced and formed a landmass, which subsequently

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<sup>7</sup>See also Mukherjee (1994. footnote 1) for a list of studies on the Rajbanshi up to 1994

became known as Samatata. A Chinese pilgrim, Hsiuen Tsang visited Pragjyotisha in approximately 640 A.D., describing the country and the people in some detail, and reporting that the area is now known as Kamarupa. Reputed to be a land of magic and incantation, the Tantric form of Hinduism is said to have developed here. Indeed, the name Pragjyotisha derives from *prag* meaning "eastern" and *jyotisha* meaning "star," "astrology," or "shining"; hence, the land of eastern mysticism. The capital city (currently Guwahati) was known as Pragjyotishpur (Bahadur 1966, Gait 1963).

The earliest inhabitants of Pragjyotisha are believed to have been Austric people who were replaced by Dravidians who came from the west, probably from the Indus Valley (Harappan) civilization. Indeed some villagers in Chuchuli claimed that they are descendants of people who came from "Sindhudesh" (most probably a reference to the Indus Valley region). Aryan influence began to reach Pragjyotisha by approximately 100 A.D. bringing with it rudiments of the caste system. Divided into two major divisions – Aryans and non-Aryans, Aryan society was further divided into four sub-categories or *varnas* (for an extensive treatment of caste see Mandelbaum 1970, Dumont 1970, Kolenda 1978). More recent discussions of the impact of caste on tribal groups can be found in Mukherjee (1994), Chatterjee (2008) and Xaxa (1999). The assimilative nature of Aryan culture and religious belief allowed the incorporation of deities and beliefs not manifest in the original Vedas and many customs, including *linga* and *yonis* cults (which play such a large part in Hindu religious practice), are now ascribed to pre-Aryan Dravidian (indigenous) belief. Indeed, Gooptu (1993), Jivha (2003) and Tylor (1973) (among others) argue that it is indigenous belief that forms the basis of present-day Indian society, culture and religion. Thus, it was the syncretic nature of indigenous (Dravidian) belief (or *bhakti*) that permitted the incorporation of imported (Aryan or Vedic) custom and belief.

Tibeto-Burman people from the Indo-Chinese group were also present in large numbers in Pragjyotisha, having entered the area through the Himalayan passes to the north and northeast. Although Aryans were present in Kamarupa from a very early period, the majority of the population was, and still remains, non-Aryan in origin and "even now the people of Dravidian and Mongoloid origin largely predominate" (Bahadur 1966, 15, see also Tylor 1973.) Bhadra (2004), Chatterjee (2008) and Mukherjee (1994) have discussed the ways in which Rajbanshi and Koch (tribal) groups are related, and the impact of the Kshatriya Movement in northern Bengal, Bangladesh and Assam.

The earliest rulers of Kamarupa belonged to the Danava dynasty founded by Mahiranga prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. He was succeeded in a direct line by a series of 25 rulers about whom little is known (Assam Homepage 2003, 1), however, Gait (1963, 16) suggests that “the appellations *Danab* [Danava] and *Asur* suggest that they were non-Aryans.” Certainly the mythical Danava and *Asura* referenced in early Hindu texts (see the *Asura* myth in the *Rig Veda* in particular) are believed to be pre-Harappan in origin (see Tylor 1973, see also Frawley 2002). Kumar (1999) disputes these interpretations arguing that terms such as Aryan, *Asura*, *Danava* and *Mlechchha* have behavioural rather than “racial” connotations. Misinterpreted by colonial researchers, these terms are properly applied to any person (regardless of their ethnic origin) who assumes a particular behaviour, occupational role or position vis-à-vis the caste system.

A popular and colourful figure in legend and a direct descendent of Mahiranga, King Narakasura is reputed to have been of “the Mongoloid race” and was the first king of Kamarupa to convert to Hinduism. He constructed a temple at Kamakhya (near present-day Guwahati) and established Pragjyotishpur as the capital of his kingdom, which the Kalika Purana and Vishnu Purana confirm extended for 450 miles in all directions (Social History of Assam 2003, 1-2, see also Bahadur 1966, Gait 1963). Despite (or perhaps because of) his ability to unify the kingdom of Pragjyotisha, Narakasura is routinely characterized as a demon and his death anniversary is commemorated as Naraka Chaturdashi, the first day of Diwali. It was Narakasura’s son, Bhagadatta, who distinguished himself in the Mahabharata war.

By the time the Chinese visitor, Hsiuen Tsang, arrived in the court of Bhaskar Barman in 640 A.D., a long line of Hindu dynasties had been documented by stone and copper inscriptions. Nevertheless, it is unclear to what extent the general population had apostatized to Hinduism (Assam Homepage 2003, 1). Indeed, Kumar (2003) argues that, for people of the northwest, converting to Hinduism is a complete misconception – a colonial lie; already Hindu and Kshatriya, Kings actually converted to Brahmanism (see Jamandas 2003 for a similar argument). Although Buddhism is not in evidence in Kamarupa at the time of Hsiuen Tsang’s visit, nevertheless, he described Ashokan stupas in the village of Dhamrai (near present-day Dhaka) in the kingdom of Samatata immediately to the south. Between 730–1197 A.D., the ruling family of Gaur (present-day Dinajpur) patronized Buddhism, which flourished under their tutelage (Belitz, 2001).



Kamarupa eventually became a centre of Vajrayana<sup>8</sup> Buddhism and Bahadur (1966, 9-10) has argued that although there is no obvious connection between the name Pragjyotishpur and the reputation of Kamarupa as the birthplace of Tantric Hinduism, the widespread practice of Vajrayana Buddhism and the presence of the Kamakhya temple may have contributed to the area's reputation as a land of magic and sorcery.

### **Viswa Singha and the Rajbanshi**

By the end of the fifteenth century, Kamarupa no longer enjoyed any form of centralized government and the area was ruled by a number of tribal chiefs. One chief, reputedly the grandson of Haju, a Koch warlord, rose to a position of power through military strength and ability. Amassing support, Hajo conquered the southern portion of Kamarupa and proclaimed himself king in 1515. He apostatized to Hinduism, changed his name to Viswa Singha, and was integrated into the caste system at the level of Kshatriya (Bahadur 1966, Bessaignet 1964, Gait 1963).

All kings, if they are Hindu, must demonstrate their right to claim Kshatriya status—what is sometimes called the Kshatriya movement (Hazarika 2004, see also Xaxa 1999, Chatterjee 2008). Accordingly, the Brahman courtiers of Viswa Singha created an origin myth for him based on the persecution of Kshatriya warriors at the hands of Parasurama, an incarnation of the god Vishnu. The story follows that Parasurama's father had been insulted and badly treated (perhaps even killed) by a group of Kshatriya warriors. In retaliation, Parasurama vowed to rid the world of all Kshatriya. One group of warriors are said to have saved themselves by running away and hiding in the jungles of Kamrup, adopting the customs of the indigenes and accepting tribal women as wives. By arguing that he was a descendant of these runaway warriors now reclaiming his rightful heritage, a legitimate claim to Kshatriya status was established for Viswa Singha. This story also provides substantiation for present-day claims to higher status by the Rajbanshi. Jamanadas (2003) recognizes this as a common strategy recently adopted by the *Hindutva* movement to support assimilation policies.

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<sup>8</sup>Also known as the Thunderbolt Vehicle, in contrast to Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism, Vajrayana Buddhism was established in Tibet in the 11th Century. Founded on a doctrine of reversal, "instead of denigrating the phenomenal world,...[it] insists that the phenomenal world can be used as a means of attaining salvation" (Tylor 1973,62-65).

A divine origin was devised for Viswa Singha in another story, which accredits his conception to the god Siva, who seeing the great beauty of Hira (the daughter of Haju and mother of Viswa Singha), assumed her husband's form and had sexual intercourse with her. This divine justification not only supports present-day Rajbanshi claims for high status in the caste system but also provides the basis for the title Sivabangshi. Members of the royal family who expressed concern regarding their own position in the caste system are reputed to have been reassured that since they were “*rajbanshi*”, literally “of the king's lineage,” they were assured a high place in the caste system. Other members of the community were not accorded such high status and many subsequently converted to other religions (Bahadur 1966, Bessaiget 1964, Giri 1950, Mukherjee 1963, Sattar 1971).

After the death of Viswa Singha in 1540, his son Narnarayan took control of the kingdom, extending the borders, consolidating his power and repulsing attacks of Ahoms from the east and of Muslims from the south. It is also during this time that a *Vaishnava* reformation took place under the tutelage of Sankar Deb who preached salvation through faith and prayer rather than the ritual sacrifice demanded by Saktism (Bahadur 1966; Gait 1963). Narnarayan's brother, Sukladhvaj, was also known as Chilarai or the “Kite King” because of his great agility in battle.<sup>9</sup> Between the two brothers, they extended the kingdom into parts of Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Rangpur in present-day Bangladesh (Bahadur 1966, Gait 1963). In the late 1500s, however, the kingdom was divided into east and west portions under warring factions of the royal family. The western portion, (where Chuchuli is located) continued to be known as Kamarupa, but also took the name Koch Hajo after one of its kings. Allied with Muslim forces securely established immediately to the south, the western portion shortly thereafter became no more than a satellite of Bengal. The eastern half of the kingdom fell under the control of the Ahoms and became known as Kamata Koch and later Cooch Behar. It continued to exist until under the Cooch Bihar Merger Agreement of August 1948 when it became part of the Indian union.

### **Conversion and the Hindus of Chuchuli**

Whether the Kshatriya origins of Viswa Singha are legitimate or contrived, the term Rajbanshi has remained in popular use and conversion of tribal groups to Hinduism is common and ongoing throughout northern Bangladesh, northern

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<sup>9</sup> A kite is a bird of prey of the Falconidae family

West Bengal, and Assam (Bahadur 1966, see also Mukherjee 1994, Chatterjee 2008, Xaxa 1999). Conversion to Hinduism has also been documented among a number of plains groups (Basu 1995, Hazarika 2004, Risley 1891, Sattar 1971) and today, large numbers wear the sacred thread (*lugun*) and claim Kshatriya status (Bahadur 1966, Giri 1950). Mukherjee describes Rajbanshis in north Bengal who "follow the occupation of *Vaisya*, in the absence of the occupation of the *Kshatriya*, and because they became fallen in the past" (1963, 208-9). Jaffrelot (2003) similarly asserts that "myths of origin of the low castes are always centred around the idea of an initial decline...they have fallen from this rank."

These claims take caste as a given; they recognize and reinforce the superiority and power of the Brahmins. For the most part, however, Hindus from other parts of the country do not accept the Rajbanshis' claim and designate them instead as Scheduled Castes or tribal people (Basu 1995, Chatterjee 2008, Hazarika 2004). Nevertheless the Hindus of Chuchuli wear the sacred *lugun*, follow Hindu precepts, and claim the caste title of Barman – a title derived from the dynasty of early kings of Pragjyotisha. Harikishore Adhikari, who wrote the 1<sup>st</sup> history of the Rajbanshi in Bengali in 1907 (cited in Basu 1995), supports Rajbanshi claims of direct descent from King Bhaskar Barman, the last and reputedly most powerful of the Barman kings of Kamarupa (594-650 AD). As indicated in the introduction, the Rajbanshi of Chuchuli do not claim the "*rajbanshi*" descriptor outright as a general rule, although the term is appropriate and is used by outsiders to describe them. It was only after considerable discussion that the claim was made by my landlord: then immediately was discounted by my friend and research companion, who in claiming "*poliya*" to be a more appropriate term raised another interesting correspondence. Since the word *poliya* derives from the verb "*paliya jan*", meaning "to run away" or "to throw off", the reference to the Kshatriya of the Parasurama myth who ran away from persecution seems evident.<sup>10</sup>

A number of indigenous Rajbanshi scholars (cf. Adhikari 1907, cited in Basu 1995, see also Barman 1928, Roy 1902) have asserted distinct cultural and status differences between the Koch and Rajbanshi groups based on reinterpretations of the same "racial" and scriptural evidence used by colonial scholars (Basu 1995, 48). Roy (1902) argues for a long-standing distinction between Rajbanshi and Koch people in Rangpur district of Bangladesh; based on the claim that the Rajbanshi are not Hinduized or "converted" Koch but rather a separate and

<sup>10</sup> I did not make this connection until after I had left Bangladesh and was able to research this connection in the literature (see Basu 1995, Chatterjee 2008, Dalton 1872, Gruning 1912, Mukherjee 1994, Risley 1891)

distinct group of long duration (cited in Basu 1995). Adhikari (1907 cited in Basu 1995) similarly claims that Rajbanshi Hindus claiming Kshatriya status long before the Sanskritization of Viswa Singha were recognized as *Bhanga Kshatriyas* (see also Barman 1941, Karlsson 1997). Basu (1995, 60-61) citing Roy-Barma (1988) claims the Rajbanshi as a branch of the Kamboj royal dynasty who originated in north-western Kashmir and established themselves as rulers in north Bengal in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. Similarly, popular belief in north Bengal holds the Rajbanshi to be descendents of the Cooch Behar royal family (Karlsson 1997). “The common thread that bind all of [these explanations] together,” claims Basu, “is the effort to create a convincing myth to prove the Kshatriya status of the Rajbanshis” – a mythical justification which Phule (1991), Ambedkar (1989) and Kumar (1999) would argue (if for different reasons) is unjustified and unnecessary.

According to Jaffrelot (2000, 3), Phule (1991) created a “pre-Aryan pedigree for the Shudras” based on historical accounts of protest against the Brahman caste. His aim was to engender unity among lower ranked castes by rejecting the caste system altogether, along with Brahmans as role models. In this way, the vain struggle for acceptance implicit in the Sanskritization process is evaded (Jaffrelot 2003, 14). Similarly, Ambedkar (1989) writing specifically about Dalit groups rejected “racialized” myths that justify the caste system, arguing instead that indigenous (i.e. Buddhist) kings had been subjugated by Aryan invaders. Ambedkar’s appeal intent was for Dalit people to develop a strong ideological basis for questioning their subordinate rank and for them to opt out by (re)embracing the egalitarian doctrines of Buddhism (Jaffrelot 2000, 3). Kumar (1999, 9), by contrast, places the responsibility for caste prejudice firmly, if more recently, at the door of the British colonial administration, their inability to comprehend the intricacies of the system and their willingness to capitalize on the inherently hierarchical social structure.

In the end regardless of how one explains the situation, the message from all of these scholars remains the same: Adivasi, Dalit and lower caste communities are descended from the original inhabitants of India. As such, they should be free to reject racist interpretations of caste as “alien” to South Asia, a system imposed by force by outsiders. Accordingly, there is no justification for elite emulation or continuing to negotiate for a higher position within the system. Rather, opting for a more egalitarian alternative provides the only viable course of action.

### Conclusion

Hinduization and Sanskritization are processes that characterize the Rajbanshi movement and from a purely theoretical perspective, these processes should confer higher status and all of the benefits that accompany this. Nevertheless, the Rajbanshi in Bangladesh continue to live in poverty, unemployment and underemployment, landlessness and political marginalization (Hazarika 2004). Accordingly, the strategies of conversion to Hinduism and elite emulation have not benefited the Rajbanshi in terms of social, economic and political advancement. Indeed, it would seem that these strategies only reinforce pre-existing social, political and economic structures and prejudices. Today there are no kings and Sanskritization among the Rajbanshi of Bangladesh has proven to be an interesting, albeit not particularly successful, study in indigenous development.

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# Work Satisfaction and Employee Turnover Intentions: An Empirical Study

Dr. Mohd H. R. Joarder\*  
Mohammad A. Ashraf\*\*

## ABSTRACT

There has been a theoretical presumption in HRM that job satisfaction and employee turnover intention are negatively correlated. Based on this premise of argument, business leaders aspire to ensure optimal job satisfaction which is a key to the success of any business that relies on a variety of organizational and psycho-economic factors. This study was conducted in the fast-growing Grameenphone (GP) limited, which is the largest mobile phone company in Bangladesh. The factors i.e. independent variables are compensation package, supervision, career growth, training and development, working atmosphere, company loyalty and performance appraisal. The result shows that training and performance appraisal, work atmosphere, compensation package, supervision, and company loyalty are the key factors that positively influence job satisfaction which in turn reduce employees' turnover. The study also finds that the employees of this company possess the above at the moderate level and positive attitude towards work satisfaction which causes lower turnover incidence.

**Keywords:** Mobilephone company, Job satisfaction, Employee turnover intentions.

## Introduction

There are very few organizations today that may not agree with the premise that human resources are the most important assets of any organization which ensures significant competitive advantage for the organizations (Szamosi, 2006). In line with this, other scholars emphasized the importance of human resources as

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\* Assistant Professor, School of Business & Economics, United International University, Dhaka

\*\* *Ph.D.* students in the College of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

employees are extremely crucial to the organization and the value they produce is essentially intangible which is not easily replicated (Sloven & Bontis, 2002). Therefore, retention of productive workforce is one of the top most priorities for organizational success in today's competitive business environment. The study of employee's job satisfaction and its effects on their intentions to leave the organization has been of concern and of interest to organizational managers and researchers since Hoppock's first study of the topic in 1935. Studies have unearthed that the lack of satisfaction can have severe consequences. One is the intent to turnover (Porter & Steers, 1973), which can pave the way to the second, the actual turnover event (Lambert et al., 2001). This implies that turnover intention may have a domino effect on other human resource concerns including quality of service, productivity and ultimately overall organizational success (Test et al., 2003). These consequences may lead to costly training and recruitment issues and in addition may aggravate service delivery and productivity (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Since job satisfaction and turnover are key factors in organizational effectiveness (Sowa et al., 2004), understanding how to prevent these incidents is why organizational leaders and researchers vie for knowing more about the constructs of job satisfaction and turnover intention and their potential relationship

Participation of workforce in corporate sector of Bangladesh has been growing since early 1990s (Islam et al., 2000). Open market policies of the government and the huge market volume have eased to attract international giants in telecommunication industry to invest in Bangladesh. Particularly the recent growth of the mobile phone sector is astounding. Since the last half the 1990s Bangladesh, one of the most densely populated countries of the world, has become a fertile land of momentous growth of mobile telecommunication organizations. A country with a population of 150 million inhabitants (World Fact Book, 2008), and continued economic growth, appears to be a highly lucrative market, both for the mobile phone operators and network system manufacturers. A recent market survey conducted by a Swedish research institute reveals Bangladesh to be the biggest potential telecom market in Asia after China and India (see Hasan, 2008). In 2004 and 2005 the cellular phone business grew in Bangladesh at the rate of 100 percent and 137 percent respectively (Ahmed, 2006). Be that as it may, corporate cultural environment as well as keen labor market competitiveness has been forging its seminal shape in Bangladesh that creates huge work scope for educated young people having degree in business administration together with Information

Technology (IT) literacy. This competition has paved the smooth niche for the employees to switch the job in order to hunt for better opportunities in other similar companies. Employment turnover and job satisfaction appraisals are, thus, at the hub of the corporate policy concerns in Bangladesh today.

The prime thrust of this paper is, therefore, to identify the factors responsible for turnover intentions of the employees of a mobile phone company in Bangladesh. This objective has been achieved by employing a mediator variable of job satisfaction which subsequently impacts on the turnover intention of the employees of the multinational mobile phone corporation of Grameenphone, which was surveyed during the month of June to December in 2008.

### **Literature Review**

Job satisfaction refers to an individual's general attitudes towards her/his employment (Huang, 1999; Ostroff, 1992). Locke (1976) is also succinct in this regard as employees' work satisfaction consists of a pleasurable or positive psychological state resulting from the appraisal of one's work and work experience. However, when people speak of employee attitudes, they often mean employees' work satisfaction (Robbins, 1993). This attitude is, in fact, formed over a period of time as employees acquire in-depth information about the workplace.

A study of employee job satisfaction and its consequential effects on the turnover intentions is not rigorously done in the corporate sectors in Bangladesh. Yet few attempts are worth noting. Islam and Saha (2001) have evaluated job satisfaction of bank officers in Bangladesh. They focus on the relative importance of the factors determining job satisfaction and their impact on the overall job satisfaction. The result shows that salary, efficiency in work, fringe supervision and co-worker relation are the most important factors contributing job satisfaction. However, they do not focus on whether those factors are responsible for employees to leave the organization. Huang (1999) analyzes the job rotation practice that affects employees' attitude towards their work. Using data obtained from twenty-one Taiwan's large companies, the author highlights the significant effect of job rotation on employees' work satisfaction and training evaluation. There has been an ample empirical evidence of the proven links between aggregate work satisfaction and organizational productivity. Shipton et al. (2004) investigate the nexus between aggregate work satisfaction and organizational

innovation. Based on a sample of manufacturing companies in the UK, the results reveal that aggregate work satisfaction is a significant predictor of subsequent organizational innovation and profitability.

Employee turnover has received a vast amount of attention from both academics and organizational managers (Ton & Huckman, 2008), and it is mainly a concern to the professionals of human resource department to develop human expertise (Peterson, 2004). However the literal meaning of the term ‘turnover’ is defined as the ratio of the number of organizational members who have left during the period being considered divided by the average number of people in that organization during that specific period (Ton & Huckman, 2008; Price, 1977). However the widely accepted definition of employee turnover is the employees willingly terminate the relationship with the organization for the benefits offered by other organization. According to the definition of Abbasi and Hollman (2000), turnover is the “rotation of workers around the labor markets between firms, jobs and occupations, and between the states of employment and unemployment”. They focus on the employee’s movement from one firm to another, from one occupation to another or sometimes they move out without any job. However, the basic definition of turnover is given by Price (1977) i.e. the movement of members across the boundary of an organization.

Turnover intention is defined as employee’s voluntary cessation of membership of an organization (Morrell et al., 2001), and it’s their freedom that they can leave the organization for any reasons such as work environmental factors, career issues or may be influenced by the external opportunities. In the turnover literature, turnover intention has been cited as the degree of extent that an employee intends to terminate his or her employment relationship with the current organization (Kim, Price, Mueller, & Watson, 1996). In other words, researchers explained turnover intention as an individual’s own estimated probability that they are permanently leaving the organization at some point in the near future (Vandenberg & Nelson, 1999). Many scholars viewed employee turnover intention as the best predictor of the actual leaving or turnover behavior (Bluedorn, 1982; Steel & Ovalle, 1984; Griffeth & Hom, 1988; Tett & Meyer, 1993), and in order to reduce the actual turnover, the identification of the associated factors with the turnover intentions, is however indispensable (Maertz & Campion, 1998). In this study, however, the employee job satisfaction has been used as the moderating variable which directly affects the employee decision to leave the organization.

For the past century, employee turnover has been of keen interest for both managers and researchers (Lambert et al., 2001) who focus on the effect of employee work satisfaction on turnover intent in American organizations. The results indicate that the work environment is more important in shaping workers' overall satisfaction than are demographic characteristics and the work satisfaction is a highly salient antecedent of turnover intent. Similar empirical investigation has been carried out by Abraham (1999) who examines the relationship between differential inequity, work satisfaction and intention to turnover and of self-esteem in the United States. Significant relationships between age inequity and employee satisfaction and between company inequity and to turnover are found. Sims and Galen (1994) inspect the influence of ethical fit on employee attitudes, work satisfaction and intentions to turnover. Ethical fit is found to be significantly related to turnover intentions and commitment, but not to employee work satisfaction. Another study has been done by Porter et al. (1974) that enquires about organizational commitment, work satisfaction of the employees and turnover among psychiatric technicians. Results indicate that significant relationships exist between attitudes and turnover. Tett and Meyer (1993) analyze the relationship between the satisfaction of the employees, commitment and turnover intention. Findings reveal that satisfaction and commitment each contribute independently to the prediction intention and intentions are predicted more strongly by satisfaction than by commitment.

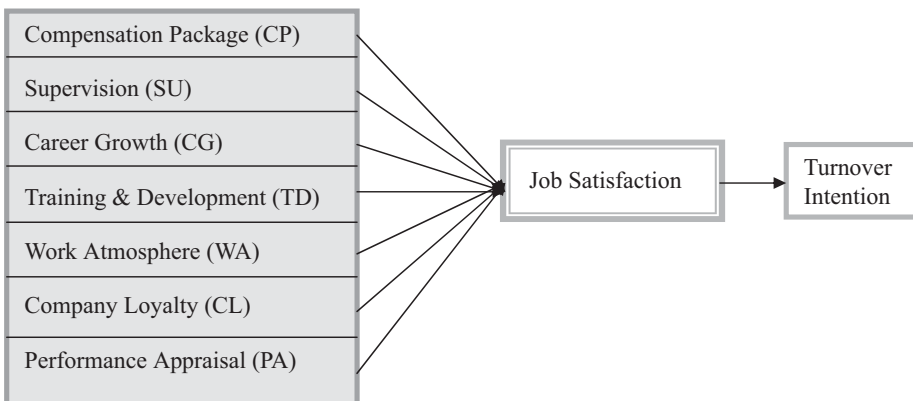
Satisfaction is multidimensional (Locke, 1976) and work satisfaction concerns the moderating effects of facet importance (Rice et al., 1991). Work is also correlated with meta-analysis of life satisfaction and correlation is more in the case of female workers (Tait et al., 1989). Nevertheless, environment and genetic components cause variation of work satisfaction. Many empirical researches (Arvey et al., 1989) reveal that in the study area of Minneapolis, USA, about 30 percent of the observed variance in general work satisfaction is due to genetic factors. The study is done on 34 monozygotic twin pairs who had been reared apart. The prime thrust for this present study is to investigate factors influencing the corporate work satisfaction which can subsequently impact on employee turnover intention among employees in a mobile phone company in Bangladesh.

## Methodology

### Conceptual Framework

This study investigated the factors affecting corporate employee work satisfaction of the measured variables and the cause and effect relationship between work satisfaction and employee turnover intention. Altogether seven independent determinants related to both human resource and organizational factors have been identified that are likely to affect the employees' work satisfaction, which focuses on employees' perception of how their work gives something important as an expression of satisfactory feeling (Narimawati, 2007). Researchers (Gibson et al. 1994) have identified five dimensions of work satisfaction that includes salary or compensation package, supervision, work atmosphere, promotion or career growth and partner. In addition to those (except partner), this study includes three more dimensions such as training and development, company loyalty and performance appraisal in order to determine the overall level of work satisfaction of the employees in a mobile phone company in Bangladesh.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Model for Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention of the Employees working at Grameenphone Bangladesh Limited.**



In the context of employee satisfaction and turnover, many studies (Griffeth et al., 2000; Mobley et al., 1979) find that salary or pay package has little impact on the satisfaction-turnover relationship, but compensation package is the most important motivational factors for the employees in the context of the United Kingdom's and Bangladeshi organizations (see e.g. Martin, 2003; Islam & Saha, 2001; Abbasi and Hollman, 2000; Firth et al., 2004; Mano-Negrin and Shey,

2004). Companies often provide various pay packages for their employees to stay in the organization (Idson & Feaster, 1990). These include special pay premiums, stock options or bonuses, incentives, profit sharing etc. Thus, it can be said that the compensation package has a strong influence on employee work satisfaction as well as turnover intention of the employee. Significant areas throughout the literature that are most often investigated regarding work satisfaction are rewards and salary or pay package (Boyer, 1990; Hagedorn, 1996; Matier, 1990).

Supervision is another factor that could induce lower work satisfaction which in turn affects intention to quit or finally turnover. Scholar's view is (Ongori, 2007) that poor personnel policies as well as poor supervisory practices may cause dissatisfaction in the workplace that lead to high labor turnover. Insufficient information on how to perform the job adequately, unclear expectations of peers and supervisors may cause less satisfaction with their career growth. Supervisors are the mentors who can direct the workers in the right direction. In this way, supervision enhances organizational commitment. Work satisfaction and organizational commitment are considered to be related but represent distinguishable attitudes (Elangovan, 2001; Lum et al., 1998). Thus, it appears that supervision has a positive influence on employee satisfaction and on turnover intention of the employees in the organization. Organizations today encourage team building and group oriented project that enhance chances for more socialization both on and off the job. Teamwork increases commitment to the work unit's efforts and provides integrated building block to the organization (Parker, 1996). Hence, healthy supervision can make the work place the most enjoyable sanctuary for the employees in an organization.

Creating a positive and upbeat work atmosphere that nurtures trust and imbues workers with a sense of common purpose is not easy (Carney, 1998). Among the organizational factors work atmosphere or working environment is the most important variable. People like a friendly place to work. The friendly-factor does not require a large investment and expense, but it does require time and thoughtful consideration. Evidence suggests that employees will be satisfied with a corporation that clearly considers and cares for their priorities and problems and give importance to their personal and family life. But in the absence of openness in sharing information, employee satisfaction and the chances of continuity of employees are minimal.

Career growth or promotion is, thus, considered to be one of the important reasons



for affecting emotional state (Locke, 1976; Porter et al., 1974; Williams & Hazer, 1986) of the corporate employees who frequently display a propensity to leave or stay in the organization (Tor & Owen, 1997). Career satisfaction in the projects and its results are important for a high performance job market milieu in which employees can achieve their personal goals in career development.

Reasonably enough, training and development is another dimension that the employees care for considering to be dynamic and to be competent in the job market for which work satisfaction for the corporate employees could be affected. Hence, more training and developmental tasks stimulate satisfaction of the employees and motivate the employees to stay for longer in the company (Chang, 1999).

Managerial background may affect the company loyalty of the corporate employees, because manager's myopic vision often experiences excessive churning, which may end up with an insufficient number of qualified people (Solomon, 1993). As a result, the concept of employee loyalty appears to be changed forever (Abbasi and Hollman, 1998). Abbasi and Hollman (2000) are succinct to say about these people who may not be able to get most out of those who say they do not feel valued. For this reason subordinates may be disloyal and this disloyalty may show signs of diminished employee work satisfaction and poor performance (Koss-Feder, 1998). Consequently, it causes workers to reduce their commitment to the organization and to disagree with company work rules, create tension and cause general frustration and dissatisfaction among the employees of the organization that hampers productivity and performance (Hollman and Abbasi, 1987).

Sharing of information should be made at all levels of management. This accessibility of information would lead to strong performance from the employees (Slovel and Bontis, 2002). The smartest and most talented employees are the most mobile and the ones who are disproportionately more likely to leave (Weis and Lincoln, 1998). Performance appraisal is a key to provide incentive to the talented employees to be satisfied with the company. Otherwise, the loss of key employees may negatively impact the quality and innovation of services delivered. Attractive performance appraisal policy of the corporation attracts employees more to come and to join the company. This outcome stems from the result of satisfaction of the employees of the company, which reduces in effect the employee turnover (Hacker, 1996).

### **Data Sources and Analytical Measures**

The prime thrust of the study is to identify the key factors that are responsible to determine the overall employee work satisfaction and its impact on turnover intention of the employees of a mobile phone company in Bangladesh. The phone company, which is explored here in the study, is Grameenphone (GP) Bangladesh Limited. The factors included in the investigation as independent variables are compensation package, supervision, career growth, training and development, performance appraisal, working atmosphere, company loyalty. The total numbers of questions selected in the questionnaire were 37. The employees under this investigation are meant to range from the lowest level of junior executives to the top management position of the companies and they were not differentiated on gender basis. In order to achieve this objective, judgment sampling technique, which is perfectly acceptable for exploratory research was adopted (Hill, 1996). Altogether 96 persons responded to the survey questionnaire. The data were collected from June to December 2008. A structured questionnaire in a 7-point scale was used in the survey. In the measurement, scale 1 indicates strongly disagree and scale 7 indicates strongly agree. The reliability test has been performed to verify the internal consistency of the variables obtained in the sample. The overall Cronbach's alpha value is found 0.8864, which is substantially higher than minimum acceptable level (.50) suggested by Nunnally (1978). Several analytical techniques such as Factor Analyses, Multiple Regression Analyses, ANOVA have been used to measure the level of work satisfaction of the selected mobile phone company in Bangladesh.

### **Data Analyses and Interpretations**

A principal component factor analysis was conducted on the 32 items related to corporate employee work satisfaction, which formed seven main factor components with eigenvalues greater than one. Each of the numbers in the third column of the table is a factor loading and can have a value of between +1 and -1. A value close to +1 indicates that the variable has a strong positive loading (influence) on that factor and a value close to -1 indicates a strong negative loading. Whilst there is no definitive rule about the cut-off value for considering a variable, this study uses +/- 0.60 factor loading values in each case.

The six identified factors account for about 82% of the variance in the data on attitudes towards job satisfaction of the employees working in the mobile phone

corporate namely Grameenphone (GP) in Bangladesh. This implies about 18% variations could be explained by other factors, which are not included in the model of analyses of this study. The study shows that Training and Performance Appraisal, Working Atmosphere Compensation Package, Supervision, Company Loyalty and Career Growth are the key factors that determine the overall employee work satisfaction in this phone company.

**Table 1: Factor Analysis: Job Satisfaction of the Employees in Grameenphone Bangladesh Limited**

Factor Name*	Variables	Factor Loading	% of Variance Explained (Cumulative)	Cronbach's Reliability Coefficient
Training & Performance Appraisal (7.579)	Appropriate training	.823	23.683 (23.683)	.9282
	In-house managerial training	.758		
	Evaluation of work related skills	.823		
	Transparent performance evaluation	.653		
	Periodical review of performance	.600		
	Performance reward	.748		
	Reward provided immediately	.787		
Work Atmosphere (5.510)	Casual dress is allowed in work place	.807	17.265 (40.948)	.8637
	Work place is spacious	.600		
	Office-look is excellent	.630		
	Cross functional team work	.975		
	Neat and clean work environment	.978		
Compensation Package (4.594)	Vacation and leave policy	.829	14.451 (55.399)	.8069
	Family members' incidental fees	.626		
	Welfare facilities	.654		
	Festival bonus is competitive	.664		
	Overtime payment is reasonable	.796		
Supervision (4.571)	Co-operative supervisor	.850	14.284 (69.683)	.8928
	Supervisor's attention to employee suggestions	.868		
	Supervisor provides suggestions for improvement	.838		
	Duties assigned by supervisor are fair	.791		
Company Loyalty (2.137)	Loves to come to office	.808	6.679 (76.362)	.8475
	Feels homely in the company	.750		
	Promotes social responsibility	.751		
Career Growth (2.070)	Company evaluates job efforts	.694	5.749 (82.111)	.8992
	Company provides in-time promotion	.880		
	Have job freedom	.694		
	Have equal chance of promotion to top levels	.823		

\* Numbers in the parentheses in the first column represent eigenvalues of the corresponding factors.

The first factor, Training and Performance Appraisal, which accounts for the most variance (23.68%), consists of seven control variables. Eigenvalue for this factor is 7.579, which indicates that this factor contains more information than the other factors. This factor provides the maximum insights of work satisfaction of the mobile phone corporate officers in Bangladesh. It broadly includes the skills development by training and performance rewards. The seven variables contained in the key factor or control variable training and performance appraisal are: Appropriate training, In-house training, Work related skills evaluation, Performance evaluation, Periodic review of performance, Performance rewards and Rewards provided immediately. The mean values of these seven variables are 4.86, 4.92, 5.03, 4.98, 5.27, 4.97 and 4.77 respectively. The component mean value is 4.99. In the seven point scale, these mean values represent about simply positive level of employee work satisfaction. The factor loading points for these variables are considerably higher that range from .65 to .82. Hence, policy makers in the mobile phone company of Grameenphone should be more concerned with these variables to increase corporate work satisfaction of their employees.

The second most important factor is work atmosphere, which explains the variation of employee work satisfaction about 17.265. It includes the Provision of casual dress, Office space, Office look, Cross functional team work and Neat work environment variables. The mean values of these variables are 5.57, 5.72, 5.74, 5.48 and 5.88 respectively and the component mean value is 5.83 that represent moderate employee work satisfaction level. The eigenvalue for this key factor is 5.51, which signifies moderate level of insights as well. Thus, work atmosphere factor is in fact carrying heavy weight in terms of importance of explaining corporate work satisfaction.

The third most important factor is compensation package, which exhibits eigenvalues and percentage of variance shown as 4.594 and 14.451 respectively. Included variables in this component are Vacation and leave policy, Family members' incidental fees, Welfare facilities, Festival bonus and Overtime payment. The mean values of them are respectively 5.16, 5.05, 4.76, 4.99 and 4.82, and the component mean value is 4.95, which also shows the simply positive level of employee satisfaction.

The fourth most important factor is supervision that accounts for 14.284 of the variance and it broadly covers supervision and supportive supervisor. The variables specifically are: Co-operative supervisor, Supervisor's attention to employee suggestions, Supervisor provides suggestions for improvement and Duties assigned by

supervisor. It has an eigenvalues of 4.571. The mean values of these four variables are 5.90, 5.80, 5.95 and 5.70 respectively. The mean value of the component factor is 5.83 that characterizes close to moderately corporate employee work satisfaction level.

The factor of company loyalty is also an important factor which explains the variation of 6.679 per cent. Thus, the results show that the concerned phone companies should be more careful with those identified factors by which they can achieve higher work satisfaction for their employees and it, in effect, will help to push up the overall productivity of the company.

### Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analyses

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations and correlations between all the control variables in the study. On an average, study participants estimated their attitudes towards the corporate employee work satisfaction in positive sentiment that ranges from moderate to simple agreement. All the mean values of the factors are in favor of that conclusion. Specifically, compensation package shows negative correlations with overall supervision of the company. It makes sense that compensation package and supportive supervision have a negative relation to each other. These negative relationships indicate that the respondents answered the questions consistently. The factor of career growth and training and development are in perfect correlation exposing the value of it as 1.00. For this reason, career growth has been excluded from the regression analyses. Most of the correlation coefficients are significant at 1 percent level except the correlation between work atmosphere and training & development, which is significant at 5 percent level.

**Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Coefficient**

Factors	Mean	Std. Dev.	CP	SU	CG	TD	WA	CL	PA
Compensation Package (CP)	4.96	1.18							
Supervision (SU)	5.84	1.00	-.065						
Career Growth (CG)	4.94	1.41	.630**	.155					
Training & Dev. (TD)	4.94	1.41	.630**	.155	1.00**				
Work Atmosphere(WA)	5.83	2.27	.141	.319**	.319**	.202*			
Company Loyalty (CL)	5.41	1.04	.403**	.445**	.500**	.500**	.389**		
Performance Appraisal (PA)	4.99	1.25	.629**	.308**	.308**	.789**	.303**	.661**	
Work Satisfaction (WS)	5.31	1.11	.603**	.288**	.724**	.724**	.250**	.682**	.749**

\*P<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001 N=96

Besides, most of the correlation values appear to show positive and strong associations among the control variables. Overall, the study uncovers the fact that the employees of Grameenphone are satisfied with the practicing corporate culture of the company under this study. Nevertheless, there must have been some other factors unfolding here that have not been included in this study.

### Multiple Regression Analyses

In the analysis, step-wise regression technique was used. Overall corporate job satisfaction and 7 orthogonal component factors were taken as dependent and independent variables respectively. Results are shown in Table 3. In the table all variables are shown with their respective regression coefficients ( $\beta$ s) and computed student's  $t$  statistics along with their respective significance level. Results of the regression analyses revealed that out of seven control variables, three such as compensation package, training & development and company loyalty had a statistically significant effect on the rating of attitude towards work satisfaction of the employees of the concerned corporate entity of this study. These results are also consistent with the results found in the factor analyses. The findings also show that the factor such as work atmosphere is exhibiting negative relationship with the overall satisfaction level, which is quite reasonable.

**Table 3: Results of Multiple Regression Analyses**

Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	F	Beta	t
Control Variables:	.693	.672	33.407***		
Compensation Package				.182	2.174*
Supervision				.067	.944
Training & Development				.320	3.199**
Work Atmosphere				-.037	-.576
Company Loyalty				.333	3.893***
Performance Appraisal				.153	1.307

\*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The result in ANOVA indicates that 67.2 per cent of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by variations in the independent variables i.e. 32.8 per cent is due to 'something-else' not included in the model. The significance of  $F$  value indicates that there has been a zero per cent chance that the Adjusted  $R^2$  value is zero.

From the Table 2, it is evident that the mean value of overall work satisfaction is 5.31 which implies that the employees in the mentioned mobile phone company are above moderately satisfied. Based on the theoretical presumption of negative relationship between work satisfaction and turnover intention, the result of this study implies that the incidents of turnover will considerably be lower. The regression outputs in Table 3 also support this similar outcome, because company loyalty (mean value of which is 5.41) is found to be statistically significant which can influence the employees to remain longer in the organization. The other outcomes such as compensation package and training and development are also found to be significant to positively influence the job satisfaction that evidently and effectively reduce the turnover intention of the employees in this mobile phone company. Hence, overall finding of the study is that moderately high work satisfaction in Grameenphone will significantly reduce the turnover events.

### **Conclusions**

This study finds that the overall corporate job satisfaction of the employees in the mobile phone conglomerate such as Grameenphone is somewhat above the moderate level of 5.31. However, the work satisfaction of the employees of this study is found to be significantly dependent upon company loyalty, training and development and compensation package which highlight the fact that the intent to turnover will be considerably lower. The remaining factors do not have significant statistical evidence to improve the work satisfaction of the employees in this study.

Admittedly, there had been a horrendous non-cooperation from the management levels of this mobile phone company in providing data that compelled the investigators to complete the study with a limited sample of 96 respondents. Had there been an ample opportunity to get a better result, the sample size could be increased. Thus, there is a plenty of scope to further the study with a lot larger sample base.

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# Super-Measure Management (SMM) and Customer Satisfaction: Investigating the Relationship

A.K.M. Mominul Haque Talukder \*  
Md. Saifur Rahman Talukder \*\*

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed at exploring various determinants of Super-Measure Management (SMM) namely, service guarantee, customer relationship, managing customers, strategic alignment and leadership on customer satisfaction and performance of the firm. Data were collected by using well-defined closed ended questionnaire. The study used reliability test and Pearson's correlation to analyze data. The result indicated that customer satisfaction and organizational performance are significantly positively related with service guarantee, customer relationship, way to manage customers, strategic alignment, and leadership style and practices of the employees. The findings suggest that incorporating these dimensions may provide service organization with the potential to improve performance and satisfy customers significantly.

**Keywords:** Super-measure Management, Customer Satisfaction, Performance, & Leadership

## Introduction

“Super Measure” (SM) are of great relevance in modern management as it is a single measure that has great relevance up, down and across an organization (Morgan and Rao, 2002). It can be applied to align the behaviors and actions of the organization and its value proposition and customer needs. Companies like EMC, Nordstrom and Fairfield Inn have reaped over the years the benefits of usage of SM that provides a powerful thrust to a firm's direction. Most managers shun performance reviews due to its complicated nature, failure to see evidence of its affect on performance and fear of legal challenges if employees tie negative review to missed promotion or denied pay raise (Grensing-Pophal, 2001). A

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\* Senior Lecturer, School of Business, North South University, Dhaka

\*\* Adjunct Faculty, School of Business, Independent University, Chittagong

“Super-Measure” (SM) is a single measure that has great relevance up, down, and across the organization and to its customer base. This can be used to align the behaviors and actions of the various parts of a firm with the firm’s value proposition or customers’ needs. An SM is one on which all eyes within the firm are firmly fixed and which can be used to propel the firm in a unified fashion in its chosen direction (Morgan and Rao, 2002).

The onset of the 21st century has not diminished the challenges facing business enterprises. They are like ships navigating in uncharted seas, with major obstacles lurking below tranquil water, and storms sometimes come unexpectedly with great ferocity (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992). Consequently, all connected to enterprise—from frontline workers through to presidents, shareholders, customers and suppliers—must align themselves continuously to the firm’s strategy and execute it.

Yet, despite the theoretical significance and potentially considerable impact of SMM, to date few studies, if any, have focused on understanding the role of the top management in enhancing the aforementioned processes and outcomes. The goal of the present study was to address this important yet relatively unstudied issue. The model proposed here focused on antecedents of key factors exercising an intervening impact on employee performance and satisfaction of customers.

### **Literature Review**

Though an SM may be easily understood, its connection to the overall strategy of the firm or the connection of any one person to the SM may be far from simple. It may not be obvious to personnel in airline food preparation or baggage handling how their efforts can affect an airline’s on-time performance. And it may not be clear to “back-room” service personnel in a hotel such as cleaners that their performance can significantly affect a guest’s satisfaction. The eyes of the firm are on the SM. Though the improvement in the SM may benefit everybody, all employees must understand how they can affect the SM in order to release its full power. And they must understand the connection between the SM and strategy. Creating these connections requires a system for educating company members and communications links between members to identify opportunities from which they can benefit.

The ultimate goal of any organization is to maximize the value created and captured by human resources. To do so, the organization must engage in means by which superior performance and self-satisfaction can be obtained. Super-Measure

(SM) is one such means by which this can be attained. Morgan and Rao (2002) describe SM as a single measure that is relevant up, down and across an organization and to its customer base. They further stated that SM propels the firm in a unified fashion in its chosen direction. Determining the right aspect in order to gauge SM is a very crucial step because it leads to satisfaction and performance of the company.

Many experts believe that one means for a firm to achieve superior service quality is to offer a service guarantee (Wirtz, 1996). A service guarantee can communicate to employees the level of management commitment to customer satisfaction (Wirtz, 1998) and can provide a difficult goal for employees to strive toward. A service guarantee can empower employees to satisfy customers and, therefore, eliminate some of the constraints on achieving that goal. Better service guarantee leads to positive and higher performance and satisfaction for the company. Cahill and Warshawky (1995) reported that service guarantee could provide vision and value-congruence by communicating to employees the level of service that the firm intends to offer to its customers. A service guarantee provides tangible evidence to all employees of the importance of service quality to the firm by 'pushing' the firm for service quality lapses. The recovery side of the service guarantees can empower employees to satisfy customers.

The climate of concern for customers refers to employees' shared perception of the policies, practices, and procedures regarding service quality provided to the customers in the focal unit (Schneider, White and Paul 1998). Improved customer relationship has positive impact on performance and satisfaction of the company.

Bowen and Ostroff (2004) view HR practices as communication from the management to the employees that directly shapes how the employees interpret the strategic focus of the organization. Strategic alignment has a positive impact on performance and satisfaction for the company. Luo and Park (2001) suggested that the environment-strategy co-alignment leads to superior competitive advantage and financial performance. Financial performance is a determinant of success and hence, satisfaction. Strong and effective leadership leads to high performance and satisfaction levels in the company. Huang, Liu and Gong (2009) stated that the cause of citizenship behaviors is the motivational model, which is implemented by effective leadership. Huang et al. (2009) also argued that it is plausible that participative leadership behaviors may induce feelings of meaningfulness, as well as the sense of ownership and responsibility for work

outcomes; as a result, employees will be willing to do whatever it takes to make the organization successful.

For a service guarantee to be effective, it is important that there be a visible cost to the firm to recover from a service failure, the thinking being that these failure costs will encourage alignment of the firm's internal behaviors with its external market demands. In a time of increasing competition and more demanding consumers, superior service quality is becoming a key determinant of a firm's success (Jochen & Prem, 1994). Furthermore, the firm has an opportunity to recover the service and/or pay out the guaranteed compensation when dissatisfied customers complain. Satisfaction and customer retention are further increased when the complaints are resolved through service recovery or guarantee payouts (Hart, 1988).

A dynamic environment requires considerable work to ensure the strategic alignment of any measurement system. The difficulty in constructing effective SMs may make changes difficult, though benefits from the ease of communication, monitoring, and understanding should offset this difficulty considerably. In short, like many other ideas, the SM approach needs to be managed (Morgan & Rao, 2002). Customer relationship enhances the satisfaction of the customers substantially. One of the notable examples is Nordstrom, which is an upscale department store known for its unparalleled focus on customer service. Nordstrom viewed its floor staff as "individual entrepreneurs" and encouraged them to nurture long-term personal relationships with shoppers (Morgan & Rao, 2002). So based on above discussion following hypothesis can be deducted.

***Hypothesis 1:*** Customer satisfaction is positively related with service guarantee, customer relations, managing customers, strategic alignment, and leadership

***Hypothesis 2:*** Organizational performance is positively related with service guarantee, customer relations, managing customers, strategic alignment, and leadership

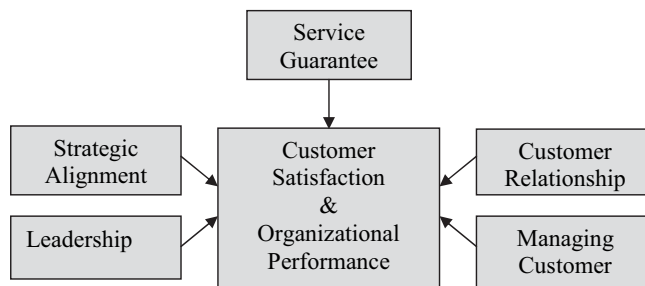
### **Conceptual Model**

Most research studies have an explicit or implicit theory, which describes, explains, predicts or controls the phenomenon under study. Theories are linked to conceptual models and frameworks; whereas a conceptual model is more abstract



than a theory and a theory may be derived from a model, the framework is derived deductively from the theory (Burns & Groves 2001). A model is tested that derived from a review of the literature by integrating theory and research relating to antecedents of super measure management (SMM) such as service guarantee, customer relationship, strategic alignment, leadership and managing customer and their relationship with organizational performance and customer satisfaction (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Research Framework**



### Method

The study prosecuted convenience sampling approach to collect data from a large bank. The name however, was promised not to be disclosed due to ethical obligations. Some days were spared randomly to get a whole picture of the organization. Both front and mid managers were approached and sample size was 100. Super Measure Management (SMM) concept was spelled out before getting started with data collection. Fixed alternative with Likert 5 scale (e.g., 1=highly disagree, 2=moderately disagree, 3=neutral, 4=moderately agree, and 5= highly agree) was deployed, which otherwise falls under the itemized rating scale. The questionnaire was administered by a group of three members with physical presence in the organization. The study took a number of variables into account like customer satisfaction, service guarantee, customer relations, managing customers, strategic alignment, and leadership, customer satisfaction and company performance.

### Results and Discussion

Table 1 below represents reliability coefficient (alpha) that ranges from 0.5 to 0.8. This was essential to know internal consistency of items among the variables

considered in the study. Since the sample size is smaller so is the coefficient value. Hypothesis 1 predicted that customer satisfaction is positively related with service guarantee, customer relations, managing customers, strategic alignment, and leadership. As shown in Table 1, customer satisfaction is significantly positively related with service guarantee, customer relations, managing customers, strategic alignment, and leadership. Morgan and Rao (2002) also reported that customer evaluates the firm's performance against this guarantee.

**Table 1: Mean Standard Deviation, Reliabilities and Correlations of Variables**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. Customer Satisfaction	3.61	.82	<b>.8</b>						
2. Organizational Performance	3.58	.74	.86**	<b>.7</b>					
3. Service Guarantee	3.47	.71	.65**	.78**	<b>.6</b>				
4. Customer Relationship	3.49	.59	.72**	.53**	.66**	<b>.5</b>			
5. Managing Customers	3.65	.62	.51**	.45**	.64**	.85**	<b>.65</b>		
6. Strategic Alignment	3.68	.64	.53**	.34**	.62**	.61**	.82**	<b>.7</b>	
7. Leadership	3.67	.71	.54**	.34**	.42**	.6**	.62**	.66**	<b>.7</b>

*N=100, \*\* $p < .01$ , all items measured in 5 point scale; Reliability values alpha in diagonal & bolded*

Several authors have found a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and managing customers. Numerous studies in the service sector have also empirically validated the link between satisfaction and behavioral intentions such as customer retention and word of mouth (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Bolton & Drew, 1991). The research has found out that there is a very significant relationship between customer satisfaction and strategic alignment. Thus strategic alignment of business processes enhances the satisfaction of the customers. Global competition has forced firms to rethink their approach to providing products and services to their customer base. Business process reengineering has been adopted by many firms in an effort to improve their competitive position and enhance their ability to provide customer satisfaction and delight (Archie & Wilburn, 1997).

In Hypothesis 2, we predicted that company performance is positively related with service guarantee, customer relations, managing customers, strategic alignment, and leadership. As displays in Table 1, organizational performance is significantly positively related with customer relationship. Morgan and Rao (2002) reported that leadership abilities enhance the satisfaction of the customers. Choosing the strategy and developing the SM and its reward system is the first phase of SM management that falls to a firm's leadership. The research has found out that there is a very significant relationship between company performance and managing customers. Business people intuitively know that managing customers well leads to improved business performance. Even Analysts, Economists and Stockbrokers are starting to take customer management seriously, believing it to be a very important "intangible that determines sustainable long-term company performance."

The study has found out that there is a very significant relationship between company performance and leadership. A particular challenge for leadership may be the need for firms to have the flexibility to communicate easily across levels and departments, and take actions accordingly. A rigid organization is unlikely to be able to align the forces necessary for the impact we look for here. We recognize the difficulties associated with changing such an organization and culture. This challenge may deter some leaders from SM use (Morgan & Rao, 2002).

### **Conclusion**

Finally, it may be possible to keep modifying and replacing SMs to create a longer-term management system. A dynamic environment requires considerable work to ensure the strategic alignment of any measurement system. The difficulty in constructing effective SMs may make changes difficult, though benefits from the ease of communication, monitoring, and understanding should offset this difficulty considerably. In short, like many ideas, the SM approach needs to be managed. For the given organization, the study found a very significant relationship in certain areas while others not. In order to sustain customer satisfaction and performance of the employees, the organizations should underscore internal variables like leadership, strategic alignment, service guarantee, customer relationship and management of customers. Super measure management should be a very effective tool by linking up all these variables in all directions in the given organization.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Our sample size was not large. There are two concerns with a small sample size. First, small sample sizes generate low statistical power, meaning that one is more likely to conclude (falsely) that no relationship exists when, in fact, one truly does. This issue is of no particular concern here because nearly all of the statistical tests were based on within-individual relationships, where the number of observations ( $N=100$ ) was not more than adequate. The other concern with a small sample size is generalizability. Results from small samples are less likely to replicate because of second-order sample error (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004). Given that we focused on work-related variables associated with super measure management, we are unable to rule out the possibility that home-related factors influenced our results. We do not imagine it is feasible to increase the temporal length of the study, particularly in field settings where gaining access to an organization for extended periods of time is difficult. However, if it were feasible, it might be interesting to study impact of super measure management over a prolonged time in the work place.

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# A Comparative Study of the Cost of Higher Education in Private and Public Universities in Bangladesh

Dr. Basanta Kumar Barmon\*

Imrana Sharmin\*\*

Debashish Dey\*\*\*

## ABSTRACT

The present study aims to attempt a comparative study of the reasons for enrolment in private universities and to estimate the cost of education for higher education in both private and public universities in Bangladesh. Primary and secondary data are used in this study. The findings of the study indicated that the monthly average cost of education of a student in a private university is significantly higher than in a public university. The main reasons are that the students of private universities spend more money on tuition fees, accommodation costs and better living expenses than those of public universities, and the costs also largely vary (in both private and public universities) among the students within the same university. On an average, the parents' monthly income of students who are enrolled in private universities is significantly higher than that of public university and most of the parents are engaged in business or good government services. The cost of education also depends on parents' income, family size, and the number of students in the same family. The study also indicates that on an average, monthly expenditures of male students are significantly higher than those of female students.

**Keywords:** Cost, Higher Education, Private and Public University, Bangladesh

## Introduction

Education is the backbone of a nation. Bangladesh is a developing country and our standard of living is relatively low. To improve our present situation and convert Bangladesh into a developed country, proper higher education and the efficiency

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\* Associate Professor, Department of Economics, East West University, Dhaka

\*\* Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics, East West University, Dhaka

\*\*\* Former Student, Department of Economics, East West University, Dhaka

of its citizens is much needed. In our country we have only twenty-five public universities (divided into many sectors) whereas there are about fifty-four private universities and two International universities (up to 2010, source: UGC). These private universities add more value to the citizens of our country by providing better higher education to them. This comparative study will assist students to make proper decisions about when to step forward into the future to receive their higher education. Before enrolling into any university the student should be able to organize information regarding, 'what these private or public universities will provide', 'what they are capable of' and 'what are their future goals'. According to the guardians of students, few sectors on which comparative study of enrolment decision rely are, quality of education, environment of the institution, availability of faculty members, availability of courses as preferred by the students and the society, cost of education, family earnings, presence of more technical instruments and support to enhance technological knowledge, better reputation worldwide, better career counseling, practical and research based teaching system, favorable library facilities, less crowded class rooms, no political interferences, advantageous accommodation facilities, low living costs and finally the most important thing is career development activities. The universities that can provide the above mentioned facilities proficiently can be considered as better universities compared to others. Along with these relative sectors, our present education system also has a great influence over enrolment decisions of students and guardians and in the establishment of new universities within the country.

### **Review of Literatures**

There are a large number of research studies, reports and theoretical works based on the quality of higher education and its determinant factors (Jacobs, 1996; Stella, 2002; Varghese, 2004; Luxton, 2005 and Perry, 1994), causes of the establishment of private universities (Beck, 1990; Bray, 1988; Dube, 1995; Breslen, 1999; Geiger, 1986, Geiger, 1988; Lee, 1998; and Ransom, et.al, 1993), movement of growth rate of higher education in private universities (Quddus and Rashid, 2000) and history and reason for the establishment of private universities in Bangladesh (Hopper, 1998; Quddus and Monir, 1992; and World Bank, 1994). Alam et. al., (2007) has argued that private universities are creating quality students, and they have significant positive impacts on employment sector which is increasing very sharply compared to the impact that public universities have in Bangladesh. In addition, public universities have more political influences,



secession delays, and political violence compared to private universities in Bangladesh.

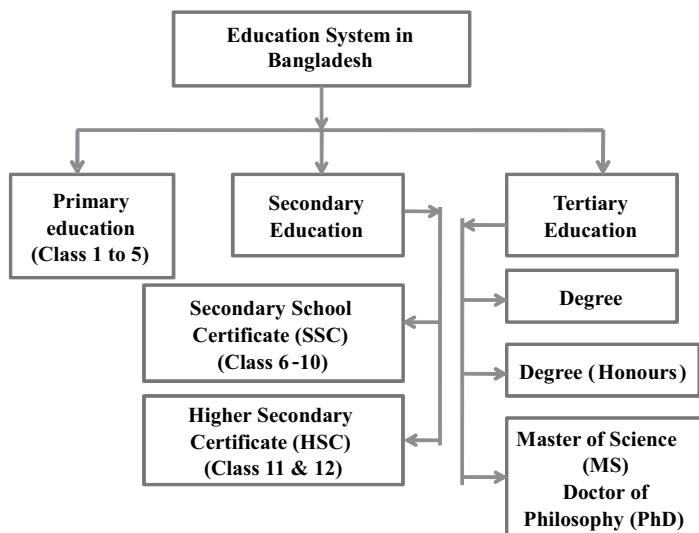
Sabur (2004) has conducted a research on quality of students in terms of education in private and public universities in Bangladesh and concluded that the students of public universities possess greater quality than private university students and they have better possibility in the job markets compared to private university students.

Lamanga (2002) has highlighted three different aspects which include measuring the quality of education, teaching and research, and demand for labor in job markets of Bangladesh and he concluded that the students of public universities are more qualified, their teaching environment is better and most of the teachers engage in research activities rather than in private activities compared to the private universities in Bangladesh.

Masum (2008) and Aminuzzaman (2007) have also conducted similar types of research activities on quality of education in private and public universities in Bangladesh. They have discussed the method of teaching and learning, assessment methods and examination quality, direct facilities, indirect facilities, political climate, updating and upgrading of professional knowledge and skills and improvement of broader educational knowledge, administrative and resource environments and they have found ambiguous results. However, comparative study of the cost of higher education in private and public universities in Bangladesh has not been analyzed explicitly. Therefore, the present study analyzes the comparison in the cost of higher education in public and private universities in Bangladesh.

### **Present Education Systems in Bangladesh**

The present education system in Bangladesh is characterized by the co-existence of three major stages - primary stage, secondary stage, and tertiary stage of education. The present structure of education systems in Bangladesh is presented by Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Education System in Bangladesh**

### Primary Education/Stage

The first stage of education is called primary education and its length is 5 years' formal schooling (class/grade I-V). At this stage education formally commences 5+ years of age group up to 11 years. Primary education is mainly imparted by the government and non-government primary schools under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME). The economically better-off families send their children to private English Medium schools for education and it is very expensive. The primary education in government primary school is totally free of cost and the government provides all text books for free. The primary education is compulsory for all children in Bangladesh. Now-a-days, most of the parents send their children to private schools/ kindergartens for one to two years as pre-primary education.

### Secondary Education/Stage

After completion of primary education, students (11+ years) enroll in secondary high school. The secondary stage is again comprised of three phases: (i) First phase (ii) Second phase (iii) Third (final phase).

**(i) First Phase:** The length of the first phase of secondary education spans over 3 years of schooling for education (class/grade VI-IV).

**(ii) Secondary Phase:** At the end of the first phase, some students (mainly financially not solvent and not meritorious students) switch over to join the vocational stream, offered by Vocational Training Institutes (VIT) and Technical Training Centers (TTC) managed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor and Employment, respectively. However, the students in the mainstream continue in the government and non-government secondary schools for 2 years of schooling in their respective areas of specialization i.e., science, humanities, commerce, etc. At the end of the 10th class, the students sit for their first public examination called Secondary School Certificate (SSC) under the supervision of seven education boards of Bangladesh.

The students of religious education and English medium streams also sit for their respective examination which are called 'Dakhil' and 'O' level run by the Madrasha Education board and Edexcel/ Cambridge board, London, respectively.

**(iii) Third / Final Phase:** After completion of 10 years of schooling (primary and secondary), students (16+ years) who succeed in passing the Secondary School Certificate (SSC/ Dhakil / 'O' level) examination have the opportunity to get admitted in college for 2 years' Higher Secondary Education in their respective areas of specialization (science, commerce and humanities), or enroll in technical/polytechnical institutes for technical education. At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> class, the students sit for their second public examination called Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) under the supervision of boards.

The students of religious education and English medium streams also sit for their respective examination which are called 'Alim' and 'A' level run by the Madrasha Education board and Edexcel/ Cambridge board, London, respectively.

### **Higher Education/Tertiary Stage**

After successful completion of higher secondary certificate (HSC) examination, the students (18+) have an opportunity to enroll in public and private universities/ degree colleges/ technical colleges/ specialized institutions for higher education. There are two types of major higher education institutions in Bangladesh which are conducted by the government and the non-government bodies. The major higher education institutions in Bangladesh which are conducted by government include: degree-level liberal arts colleges affiliated by the Bangladesh National University, Bangladesh Open University, University of Engineering and

Technology, Agricultural University, medical colleges, dental colleges, teacher's training colleges, colleges of physical education, college of textile technology, college of leather technology. Each of the universities and colleges conduct its own examinations, while the Bangladesh National University is responsible for conducting bachelor's and master's examinations of the affiliated degree college throughout the country. Bangladesh Open University (BOU) conducts non-campus distance education programs especially in the field of teacher education and offers Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) and Master of Education (M. Ed) degrees. BOU conducts 18 formal courses and 19 non-formal courses.

There are 52 private universities and many private medical and dental colleges in Bangladesh and they were established under the Non-government Universities Act (Act 34 of 1992) and all the universities are independent to conduct examinations like public university in Bangladesh.

### **Trend of Higher Education in Bangladesh**

After the independence of Bangladesh, all governments considered educational development as one of the prime sectors and spent huge amount of money (highest portion of national budget) for the development of education sectors. The trend of institutions for higher education such as number of colleges and universities are presented in Table 1 and 2 and numbers of students in public and private universities are presented in Table 3 and 4.

**Table 1: Trend of Number of Colleges and Students from 1970 to 2008**

Year	No. of College			No. of Students		
	Public	Private	Total	Total	Male	Female
1970	32	362	394	300,047	271,213	28,834
1980	74	525	599	333,580	269,232	64,348
1990	198	650	848	824,112	621,790	202,322
2000	251	2,176	2,427	1,725,601	1,039,462	686,139
2008	252	3,025	3,277	1,855,633	1,034,823	820,810

Source: BBS, 1979, 1990, 1999, and 2009.

The Tables 1 and 2 show that from 1970 to 2008 the number of colleges increased sharply and compared to that number of students' enrolment increased substantially. It shows a huge influence on higher education in the University

level. However, the number of colleges increased more rapidly from 1990 to 2008 mainly because of the increased awareness of the people in Bangladesh. As a result, the number of student enrollment has also increased in the same manner.

**Table 2: Trend of Number of Universities and Students from 1970 to 2008**

Year	No. of Universities			No. of Students		
	Public	Private	Total	Male	Female	Total
1970	6	-	6	21,942	4,448	26,390
1975	6	-	6	22,850	4,703	27,553
1980	6	-	6	29,572	6,958	36,530
1985	6	-	6	34,486	7,294	41,780
1990	7	-	7	41,108	10,672	51,780
1995	11	16	27	56,010	16,862	72,872
2000	13	19	32	83,219	27,437	110,656
2005	21	53	74	157,710	49,867	207,577
2008	31	51	82	293,795	93,638	387,433

Source: BBS, 1979, 1990, 1999, and 2009.

The trends of number of universities and the number of students enrolled in universities of Bangladesh are shown in Table 3 and 4. The tables show that from the year 1970 to 2008 there was a significant increase in number of universities and students showing that the demand of university education greatly increased from that period onwards.

**Table 3: Trends of Universities in Bangladesh from 1970 to 2008**

Year	No. of universities		
	Public	Private	Total
1970	6	-	6
1975	6	-	6
1980	6	-	6
1985	6	-	6
1990	7	-	7
1995	11	16	27
2000	13	19	32
2005	21	53	74
2008	31	51	82

Source: BBS, 1979, 1990, 1999, and 2009.

**Table 4: Trend of Enrolment of Students in Private and Public Universities, Bangladesh**

Year	University		Total	% of private students to total students
	Publi	Private		
2000	81,066	13,192	94,258	14
2001	86,219	35,968	122,187	29
2002	92,562	28,125	120,687	23
2003	99,474	32,927	132,401	25
2004	104,350	44,224	148,574	30
2005	104,350	44,224	148,574	30
2006	105,467	44,697	150,164	30

Source. Bangladesh Arthonoitik Somikkha 2006, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh, pp.226.

After 1990, our education sector improved by large number of enrolments and growth in quality and quantity of the public and private universities. From that period onwards the private sector received much boost in comparison with the public sector which has been statistically proved and now both the sectors challenge each other. So, before taking the enrolment decision, we should be more concerned about the comparative performance of our private and public universities.

### Methodology of the Study

#### Source of Data

Based on the objectives of the study, primary and secondary data were used in this study. Primary data were collected through comprehensive questionnaire that included both public and private university students. A total of 49 samples were randomly selected from four private universities and 31 samples were collected from 3 public universities in Bangladesh. Secondary data were collected from the report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Ministry of education of Bangladesh and from the report of University Grants Commission (UGC). Tabular and statistical analyses were used in this study.

### **Analytical Technique**

To compare the total expenditure of a student of private and public universities, the following multiple regression was estimated using ordinary least square (OLS) method.

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4D_1 + b_5D_2 + b_6D_3 + b_7D_4 + b_8D_5 + e_i$$

Where,

#### ***Dependent variable:***

Y = Total expenditure of a student (Taka/month)

a = Constant term

$b_i$  = Regression coefficients to be estimated ( $i = 1, 2, \dots, 8$ )

#### ***Independent variables:***

$X_1$  = Family income (Taka/month)

$X_2$  = Family size (Number)

$X_3$  = Number of student of respondent family

#### ***Dummy variables:***

$D_1$  = Gender (male = 1 and female = 0)

$D_2$  = Institution/university (private university = 1 and public = 0)

$D_3$  = Home district of the students (Dhaka = 1 and other district = 0)

$D_4$  = Residence of the students (With family = 1 and without family = 0)

$D_5$  = Job of the guardians (Service = 1 and others = 0)

$e_i$  = Random error (normally distributed with mean  $\mu$  and  $\sigma^2$ )

In addition to this, student t-test and tabular forms are used in this study.

## Results and Discussions

### Definition of Variables and Expected Sign

Based on the objectives of the study, per month expenditure (Y) of a student as a dependent variable and per month income of parents of student (X1), family size (X2), number of students of sampled family (X3), dummy variables gender (D1: male =1 and female =0), university (D2: private =1, and public =0), home district (D3: Dhaka =1, and others = 0), residence (D4: own family = 1, hired house = 0), and job status of parents (D5: service = 1 and other = 0) are used as independent variables in the regression model. The definitions of the variables used in the regression model are presented in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Definition of the Variables used in the Regression Equation**

Variables	Definitions
<b>Dependent variable:</b>	
Total expenditure (Y)	: Total monthly expenditure on education(tuition fees) and living expenses (taka)
<b>Independent variables:</b>	
Income of parents (X1)	: Total monthly family income earned by all the family members (taka)
Family size (X2)	: Number of family members
No of student of respondents' family (X3)	: Total number of students in the family
<b>Dummy variables:</b>	
Gender (D1)	: Male = 1 and female = 0
University (D2)	: Private university = 1 and public university = 0
Home district (D3)	: Dhaka = 1 and other district = 0
Residence (D4)	: Own family = 1 and hired house = 0
Job of parents (D5)	: Service = 1, business or others = 0

Source: Field survey, 2010.

### *Income of Parents (X1)*

Per month expenditure of students (tuition fees and daily expenses) mainly depends on the parents' income (X1). As usual, the student has a tendency to use more money as expenditure if his/her parents provide a large amount of money and this money mainly depends on the income of parents. Therefore, the coefficient of parents' income in the regression model is expected to be positive.



***Family Size (X2)***

Family size (X2) is considered in the regression model as a number of family members. If the family size is large, then the large portion of parents' income is used as daily food expenditure and for other purposes. As a result, the parents send comparatively less amount of money to their son/daughter for monthly expenditure. Thus, the coefficient of family size in the regression model is expected to be negative.

***Number of Students in the Family (X3)***

The number of students in the family has also significant impact on the per month expenditure of students that the parents send to their sons/daughters. A part of the parents' income is also used as the expenditure of the other children's education. Therefore, the coefficient of number of students in the family is expected to be negative.

**Dummy Variables (D)*****Gender (D1)***

The coefficient of dummy variable gender (D1: male =1 and female =0) in a regression is expected to be positive or negative. Considering the socio-economic text of our country, mainly the male students use more money in smoking and other activities. Consequently, the coefficient of gender in the mentioned regression model is expected to be negative.

***University (D2)***

Tuition fees are a large part of per month expenditure of a student. In Bangladesh, the students who study in private universities use comparatively large amount of money as tuition fees compared to those of public universities. Therefore, the coefficient of university (D2: private university =1 and public university =0) in the regression model is expected to be positive.

***Home District (D3)***

The coefficient of home district (D3: Dhaka city = 1 and other city = 0) in the regression model can be expected to be positive or negative. Usually most of the private universities are located in Dhaka city and the students coming from outside

the Dhaka city live in hired houses around the university campuses. The students of Dhaka city come to their universities from their own houses using various modes of transports. Thus, in this case the coefficient of home district (D3) in the regression model is expected to be negative.

#### ***Residence (D4)***

The coefficient of residence (D4: reside with family =1 and reside without family =0) in the regression model can be expected to be positive or negative. The students who do not live with family comparatively spend more money on daily meals than students who live with their family. Therefore, the coefficient of residence in the regression model is expected to be negative.

#### ***Job of Parents (D5)***

The coefficient of jobs of parent's (D5: Service =1 and business or others =0) in the regression model is expected to be positive or negative.

### **Analysis of Descriptive Statistics**

The descriptive summary of statistics of the dependent and independent variables used in the regression model are presented in Table 3.2. The table shows that the mean of monthly expenditure of the sampled students (both private and public universities) is taka 13,256, which varies from taka 1,540 to taka 36,000 with a standard deviation of taka 8,067. Most of the students of private universities expend more money on tuition fees, hired houses and better living condition than students of public universities. Most of the students of public universities live in government allocated residence halls and their monthly tuition fees are very low.

The mean per month income of parents of the sampled students is about taka 87,804 with a range between taka 12,000 and taka 546,000 and with a standard deviation of taka 86,585. Monthly income level widely varies from parents to parents mainly because of different professions. The mean of the sampled family size is 4.9 which vary from 2 to 10 members and the standard deviation is 1.59. The sampled family size represents the mean family size of Bangladesh (BBS, 2009).

**Table 3.2: Summary Statistics of the Variables in the Regression Model**

Variables	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Standard deviation
<b>Dependent variable:</b>				
Total expenditure	13,256	36,000	1,540	8,067
<b>Independent variables:</b>				
Income of parents	87,804	546,000	12,000	86,585
Family size	4.9	10.0	2.0	1.588
No of students of respondents' family	0.775	3.0	0.0	0.8565
<b>Dummy variables:</b>				
Gender	0.3500	1.0000	0.0000	0.4800
Institution	0.6125	1.0000	0.0000	0.4903
Home district	0.6625	1.0000	0.0000	0.4954
Residence	0.4125	1.0000	0.0000	0.4954
Job of parents	0.5000	1.0000	0.0000	0.5032

Source: Authors' calculation.

Note: Total sample size is 80 of which 49 are private universities and 31 are public universities.

Some dummy variables are introduced in the regression model. As dummy holds two values 0 and 1, some the maximum value is 1 and minimum value is 0. The mean of gender variable is 0.35 with a standard deviation of 0.48, whereas, the mean of dummy variable university (institution) is 0.6125 with a standard deviation of 0.4903. The average of the dummy variables in home district, residence of student and jobs of parents is 0.6625, 0.4125 and 0.50, respectively, with their corresponding standard deviations of, 0.4954, 0.4954 and 0.5032 respectively.

### Analysis of the Regression Model

The analyses of the regression model are briefly discussed in Table 3.3. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is about 83%, indicating that the dependent variable per month expenditure of student (Y) is explained or accounted for by about 83% by the independent variables that include income of parents (X1), family size (X2), number of students in family (X3), gender (D1), types of university (D2), home district (D3), residence (D4) and types of jobs of parents (D5).

**Table 3.3: Estimates of the Regression Model**

Variables	Coefficients	t-statistic
Constant	7443*** (1818)	4.09
Income of parents (X1)	0.01147** (0.0053)	2.15
Family size (X2)	-491.2** (258.53)	-1.90
No. of student in family (X3)	-864.2 (533.46)	1.62
Dummy variables:		
Gender (D1)	-1447.8* (883.2)	1.69
Institution (D2)	14712.8*** (992.8)	14.82
Home district (D3)	-1363.9 (967.4)	-1.41
Residence (D4)	-2341** (1037)	-2.26
Job of parents (D5)	-189.9 (923.5)	-0.21
$R^2$	0.83	

Source: Authors' calculation.

Notes: (i) \*\*\*, \*\* and \* indicate 1%, 5% and 10% significance level, respectively.

(ii) The figures in parentheses indicate standard error.

The coefficient of the parents' income (X1) is statistically significant at 5% level, indicating that the parents' income has significant impact on the monthly expenditure of students. In other words, monthly expenditure of a student mainly depends on the parents' income. If parents' income increases then the parents comparatively allocate a large amount of money to their sons/daughters for their monthly expenditure. The coefficient of family size (X2) is also statistically significant at 5% level, which indicates that if the family size increases, then the parents allocate comparatively less amount of money to their sons/daughters for daily expenses. In order words, an

inverse relationship exists between family size and monthly expenditure of a student. The main reason is that the parents with a comparatively large family size use a large portion of their monthly income on daily food.

The coefficient of number of students in a sampled family (X3) has a negative (not statistically significant) impact on the amount of the monthly expenditure on a sampled student. This indicates that the parents also use a part of their family income on other children's education; as a result, monthly expenditure is decreased.

The coefficient of the dummy variable gender (D1) in the regression model is statistically significant at 1% level, indicating that monthly expenditure for male students is significantly higher than their counterpart female students. The main reason for this is that most of the male students expend money on smoking, traveling and hanging out whereas female students have no smoking expenses and they spend less on traveling and hangouts expenses.

The coefficient of university (D2) in the regression model is statistically at 1% significant level, which indicates that the tuition fee of private universities is higher than that of public universities. Moreover, most of the students of the private universities live in hired houses; on the other hand, the students of public universities live in government allocated residence (halls) and the rent of such halls is very cheap.

The coefficient of home district (D3) in the regression equation is negative and not statistically significant but the coefficient of residence (D4) is statistically significant at 5% level and the expected sign is negative. This indicates that students who come to university outside from Dhaka are residing in hired houses which are around the university areas. The students who are living with their family use various transporting modes for coming to university and need additional money that is not required for the students who live in hired houses. Moreover, the students who live with their family have less meal charge than the students who live in hired houses.

The coefficient of job of parents (D5) is not statistically significant but the sign is negative, indicating that the parents who engage in business send larger amounts of money to their children than parents who are service holders. As a result, monthly expenditure of a son/daughter of parents who engage in business is higher than the parents who engage in service.

### Global Test: Testing the Multiple Regression Model

The global test is mainly used to test the ability of the independent variables (income of parents (X1), family size (X2), number of students in family (X3), gender (D1), types of university (D2), home district (D3), residence (D4) and types of jobs of parents (D5) ) to explain the behavior of dependent variable (monthly expenditure of student (Y) ). To test the ability of the independent variables, state the null and alternative hypotheses.

Null hypothesis,  $H_0: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4 = \beta_5 = \beta_6 = \beta_7 = \beta_8 = 0$

Alternative hypothesis,  $H_1$ : Not all the  $\beta_i$ 's are 0.

**Table 3.4: Testing of Multiple Regression Model**

Sources	df	SS	MS	F	Probability
Regression	8	4266510318	533313790	43.33	0.00
Error	71	873947032	12309113		
Total	79	5140457350			

Source: Authors' calculation.

The result of the global test is presented in Table 3.4. The table shows that the value of F-statistic is very high which indicates that it is statistically significant at 1% level and the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that all coefficients in the regression model are not the same and the regression is well explained by the independent variables.

### Comparison in Monthly Expenditure (Private versus Public University)

Student t-statistic is applied to test the variation of monthly expenditure among the students of private and public universities. Monthly expenditure of a student (both private and public universities) largely varies from students within the same institution mainly because of parents' income, own attitude, style of daily life etc. The descriptive statistics of the monthly expenditure of the students of private and public universities are presented in table 3.5 and table 3.7. The average monthly expenditure of a student of private universities is taka 18,831 with a wide range between taka 11,000 and taka 36,000 and with a standard deviation of taka 4,923, whereas, the mean monthly expenditure of a student of public university is only taka 4,443 which varies from taka 1,540 to taka 8,040 and has a standard deviation

of taka 1,248. Both the means are statistically significant at 1% level. This indicates that monthly expenditure of a student varies widely within the same institution (university). Moreover, the mean monthly expenditure of a student of private university is higher than that of a public university. The main reason is that the students of private universities bear the huge tuition fees and rent for hired houses.

**Table 3.5: Comparison of Per Month Mean Expenditure of a Student of Private and Public Universities**

Variable	University			
	Private	t-statistic	Public	t-statistic
Mean	18,831***	26.77	4,443***	19.82
Minimum	11,000		1,540	
Maximum	36,000		8,040	
SD	4,923		1,248	

Source: Author's calculation.

Notes: (i) \*\*\* indicates statistically significant at 1% level.

(ii) Sample size of private and public university are 49 and 31, respectively.

(iii) Field survey, 2010.

### **Comparison in Parents' Income (Private and Public University)**

The summary statistics and t-statistics of monthly income of parents of students of both private and public universities are shown in Table 3.6. It is observed that most of the parents of the students of private universities are engaged in businesses rather than services. The figures in Table 3.6 show that the average monthly income of parents of private universities is taka 99,061 which is widely varied from taka 25,000 to taka 546,000 and with a large standard deviation of taka 89,403. The value of the t-statistics of the parents of private universities is statistically significant at 1% level, indicating that monthly income widely varies within the same groups in the parents of the students of private universities. On the other hand, the average monthly income of parents of the students of public university is taka 70,010, ranges from taka 12,000 to 350,000 and with large standard deviation of taka 80,121. The value of t-statistic is also statistically significant at 1% level (Table 3.6). This means that the income widely varies within parents of the students who study in public universities.

**Table 3.6: Comparison of Per Month Mean Income (taka) of Parents' of a Student of Private and Public Universities**

Variable	University			
	Private	t-statistic	Public	t-statistic
Mean	99,061***	7.76	70,010***	4.87
Minimum	25,000		12,000	
Maximum	546,000		350,000	
Standard Dev.	89,403		80,121	

Source: Author's calculation.

Notes: (i) \*\*\* indicates statistically significant at 1% level.

(ii) Sample size of private and public university are 49 and 31, respectively.

(iii) Field survey, 2010.

The comparison in monthly expenditure of the students of private and public universities is presented in Table 3.7. It appears from the table that the mean income of the parents of private universities is higher than that of their counterparts in public universities and it is statistically significant at 1% level.

**Table 3.7: Comparison of Per Month Mean Expenditure and Income of Parents of a Student in Private and Public Universities**

Variable	University	Mean	Standard dev.	t-statistic
Expenditure (Tk)***	Private	18,831	4,923	19.49
	Public	4,443	1,248	
Income (Tk)*	Private	99,061	89,403	1.72
	Public	70,010	80,121	

Source: Author's calculation.

Notes: (i) \*\*\* and \* indicate statistically significant at 1% and 10% level, respectively.

(ii) Sample size of private and public university are 49 and 31, respectively.

(iii) Field survey, 2010.



### **Conclusions**

The demand for higher education in Bangladesh is increasing. Since independence, every government that came to power has taken many initiatives to improve and expand education from the primary level education to the higher level education in Bangladesh. In this regard, the government has allowed the operating of private universities to support the government initiatives as well as to reduce the pressure on the number of enrolments in the public universities. The present study attempts to estimate the comparative cost of higher education in public and in private universities in Bangladesh. The study has explored financial and social status of parents, educational background of parents, and the causes of enrolment in public and private universities in Bangladesh. Statistical and descriptive analyses were used in this study. The findings of the study indicated that the enrolment process varies from public to private universities mainly because of the accommodation facilities, social security, guardians' financial ability, educational background of the students and parents, students' own perspectives and many other related factors. The cost of education in private universities is significantly higher than that of the public universities mainly because of the huge tuition fees charged and the cost of dormitory/hall. Moreover, most of the students of the private universities live in hired houses. On the other hand, the students of public universities live in government allocated residence – halls /dormitories, which is very cheap. The students of private universities mostly come from families that are very much financially solvent whereas the students of public universities come from all types of income groups. On an average, monthly income of the parents of a student in private university is significantly (statistically significant at 1% level) higher than that of public university. The cost of education also depends on the family size, number of students in the same family, and source of income and types of jobs. The study also indicates that on an average monthly expenditure of a male student is significantly higher than their counterpart female students. The main reason for this is that most of the male students expend more money on smoking, traveling and hanging out compared to the female students. The students those who live with their families use various transporting modes for going to university from home and need additional money but this expenditure is not required for the students who live in university dormitories/halls. Moreover, the students who live with their families have to pay less charge for daily meals compared to the students who live in university dormitories/halls. All these together have illustrated that the enrolment process varies from public to private universities and the cost of education in private universities is significantly higher compared to the public universities.

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# Quality of Customer Service in the Banking Sector of Bangladesh: An Explorative Study

Tasneema Afrin\*

## ABSTRACT

After careful evaluation of the customer service quality provided by the private commercial banks of Bangladesh, following major recommendations are suggested in this article:

1. Recognizing 'quality' problem – identifying the problem area for the banks
2. Selling the idea of 'quality' to the internal audience (staff)
3. Creating a 'Customer focus and care' culture
4. Developing customer-oriented measures to improve quality
5. Improving the physical evidence

Supporting these recommendations are the following findings and conclusions drawn from an observation of 100 random customers selected from 5 major commercial banks in Bangladesh using the SERVQUAL method.

The survey revealed that customers prioritized 'Responsiveness' as the most important dimension of service quality. The tangible stood second in priority followed by Reliability, Assurance and Empathy respectively. Empathy towards customers is not a widely practiced phenomenon as it was the lowest of the five dimensions with a score of 6.15. Customers ranked HSBC as the best among the selected banks with an overall service quality score of 7.4 while EBL was rated worst with an overall service quality score of 6.25.

**Keywords:** Customer service quality, SERVQUAL, Reliability, Assurance, Empathy, Responsiveness, Tangible

## Introduction

The banking industry has become increasingly integrated in recent years. Liberalization and deregulation of the financial sector, coupled with rapid

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\* Lecturer, BRAC Business School (BBS), BRAC University, Dhaka

technological advancement and improved communication systems, have contributed to the integration process. As a result, banks are now faced with very high and intense competition. In today's fast-paced and increasingly competitive market, the bottom line of a firm's marketing strategies and tactics is to make profits and contribute to the growth of the company. Customer satisfaction, quality and retention are global issues that affect all organizations, be it large or small, profit or non-profit, global or local. Many companies are interested in studying, evaluating and implementing marketing strategies that aim at improving customer satisfaction and maximizing share of customers in view of the beneficial effects on the financial performance for the firm. There has been a high correlation between customer satisfaction and profitability in a range of industries. However, the fragmentation of media choices and the dynamic nature of the market, coupled with an increased number of more demanding and affluent consumers, brought greater challenges to marketing practitioners in retaining their customers.

Customer satisfaction is a measure of how products and services supplied by a company can meet the customer's expectations. Customer satisfaction is still one of the single strongest predictors of customer retention. It's considerably more expensive to attract new customers than it is to keep old ones happy. In a climate of decreasing brand loyalties, understanding customer service and measuring customer satisfaction are very crucial. There is obviously a strong link between customer satisfaction and customer retention.

Customers' perception of Service and Quality of a product will determine the success of the product or service in the market. With better understanding of customers' perceptions, companies can determine the actions required to meet the customers' needs. They can identify their own strengths and weaknesses, where they stand in comparison to their competitors, chart out path, future progress and improvement.

Customer satisfaction measurement helps to promote an increased focus on customer outcomes and stimulate improvements in the work practices and processes used within the company. Customer expectations are the customer-defined attributes the product or service company must meet or exceed to achieve customer satisfaction. There are many reasons why customer expectations are likely to change over time. Process improvements, advent of new technology, changes in customers' priorities, improved quality of service provided by competitors are just a few examples.

### **Objectives**

- To address the importance of improving service quality in the banking industry.
- To identify the customer attitude towards the present customer service quality of the banking sector.
- To determine the influential factors that define the quality of customer service based on customer research.
- To make a comparison of the quality of customer service among the selected banks.

### **Scope**

- Service quality perceived by the customers of 5 banks has been evaluated
- Current quality of service has been considered
- A service quality framework called 'SERVQUAL' has been used to assess and explore customers' service experiences

### **Scope for Future Research**

- This study can be carried out in other developing and developed economies since customer perceptions may differ in multiple cultures.
- This study can be conducted in other service sectors (by modifying the phrases in the survey instrument) to find out the implications of the study in different industrial settings.

### **Limitations**

- Perception based data may not follow the assumptions of Classical Linear Regression Model (CLRM). In that case, using the linear model generates biased estimates.
- People's perception about qualitative data may vary widely depending on their cultural background.
- Samples were selected according to convenience.
- People's response was on a casual note on several occasions.

### **Literature Review**

Service quality is how well the service provided is meeting the expectation of the customer who perceived it. That is, providing high-quality service is how excellently customers were constantly satisfied with the services provided by the service suppliers (James et al. qtd in Yoon and Suh 342). Also, Gronroos defined service quality as a perceived judgement, resulting from an evaluation process where customers compared their expectations with the service they received (Gronroos qtd in Yoon and Suh 342).

Cronin and Taylor supported the theory that service quality is an antecedent of customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction exerts a stronger influence on future purchase intentions than does service quality. Customers do not necessarily purchase the highest quality service; they may also weigh convenience, price, and availability factors (Cronin and Taylor qtd in Najjar and Bishu 35). The customer's personal experience with the service provider (that is, courtesy, waiting time, empathy, responsiveness, and so on) also impacts customer satisfaction.

The quality of goods is tangible and can be measured by objective indicators like performance, features, and durability. Service quality, however, is intangible. Hence, the service quality literature defines service quality in terms of subjectivity, attitude, and perception. Zeithaml explains: "Service quality is the consumer's judgment about an entity's overall excellence or superiority. It is a form of attitude, and results from a comparison of expectations to perceptions of performance received." Lewis and Booms' definition clearly states: "Service is a measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer expectations. Delivering quality service means conforming to customer expectation on a consistent basis (Najjar and Bishu 35)."

However, according to Parasuraman, due to the unique features of service such as performance-oriented, intangible, heterogeneous, inseparable, and perishable, it is difficult not only to measure service quality, but also to provide the same quality of services to all customers. Therefore, there has been no accurate indicator for measuring this service quality (Parasuraman et al. 13).

Two schools of views dictate the scholarly work on the field of service quality. One is the Nordic school of thought based on Christian Gronroos's two-dimensional model and the other is the five dimensional SERVQUAL method

proposed by the North American scholars Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry. In view of other significant conceptual and empirical works in the area, it appears that service quality includes:

1. Customers' experiences with the tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy aspects of the services delivered by a firm (proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry)
2. Technical and functional quality (proposed by Gronroos)
3. Service product, service environment, and service delivery (proposed by Rust and Oliver)
4. Interaction quality, physical environment quality, and outcome quality (proposed by Brady and Cronin)

Gronroos postulated that estimating service quality has 3 phases:

1. Building up a conceptual foundation for understanding service quality in specific area
2. Designing models to measure service quality
3. Refining the measurement methods developed in the 2nd phase, and moving from a static model to a dynamic model of service quality (Gronroos qtd in Yoon and Suh 342).

Analysis of the literatures on customer service quality reviewed points out two major limitations. First, as noted by Babakus and Boller, there is a need to develop industry-specific measures of customer service quality. This is particularly important from a managerial perspective since many of the questions in existing instruments (notably SERVQUAL) intended to be applied across situations or services just do not apply in a specific context and force researchers to drastically alter the items. Shemwell and Yavas coherently argue that the more specific the scale items are in a service quality instrument and the more applicable they are to a manager's own contextual circumstance, the better one will be able to use the information. Thus, according to this school of thoughts, instead of taking an existing instrument and trying to fit it to the context, a better approach is to develop an instrument specifically for the focal service (Babakus and Boller; Shemwell and Yavas; McAlexander et al. qtd in Karatepe, Yavas and Babakus 374).



While many studies in banking measure service quality by replicating or adopting Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry's SERVQUAL model, a few studies address this weakness and present new models or approaches to the measurement of service quality in general and in banking in particular. For instance, Mersha and Adlaka applied the 'Delphi' technique to a sample of MBA students to generate attributes of poor and good service quality. Then they converted the 12 attributes of 'Delphi' technique into scales and analyzed students' perceptions of service quality in five services, one of which was retail banking. The authors concluded that the list of attributes they generated was similar to the five dimensions of SERVQUAL. In another study, Avkiran developed a multi-dimensional instrument for measuring customer-perceived quality in retail branch banking. Using SERVQUAL as a starting point and then adding items that he extracted from a qualitative study to form a new quality of service standards, Avkiran followed an iterative process and identified staff conducts, credibility, communication and access to banker services as the final dimensions of service quality. Bahia and Nantel on the other hand developed a scale based on expert opinions, revealed six dimensions of service quality. These were termed: effectiveness and assurance, access, price, tangibles, service portfolio, and reliability. More recently, Aldlaigan and Buttle, based on the technical and functional service quality scheme proposed by Gronroos, planed a scale to measure service quality perceptions of bank customers. Their study resulted in SYSTRA-SQ, which consists of service system quality, behavioral service quality, service transactional accuracy and machine service quality (Mersha and Adlaka; Avkiran; Bahia and Nantel; Aldlaigan and Buttle; Gronroos qtd in Karatepe, Yavas and Babakus 374) .

Yet another approach is to signify the importance of cultural context. Mattila argues that the definition of service quality depends on consumers' cultural heritage, particularly on variations along power distance and communication context. Malhotra shared this view and speculated that the cultural differences (e.g., individualism/collectivism, power distance) between countries are likely to have varying effects on the definition of service quality. This is shown to be true in a research by Winsted who compared Japanese and US consumers. Focusing on provider behaviors as indicators of service encounter quality, Winsted not only identified new quality dimensions that had not been a part of service quality concept until then, but also demonstrated that the number and meanings of service quality dimensions varied between US and Japanese consumers. For instance, the 'authenticity' dimension, which refers to genuineness of service providers'

behaviors, was an important component of service quality for Japanese consumers while this dimension did not surface in the case of the US consumers. Despite some cross-cultural commonalities (Espinoza), the weight of evidence suggests that culture plays a significant role on the definition of the service quality construct (Kettinger). In recognition of this, calls are made to develop culture-specific measures of service quality (Winsted). Indeed, it is recently stated that managers should avoid employing the SERVQUAL scale globally and instead they should develop “a new, culturally bounded measure of service quality” (Mattila; Malhotra; Winsted; Espinoza; Kettinger qtd in Karatepe, Yavas and Babakus 375 ).

By employing a multi-stage, multi-phase and multi-sample approach, Osman M. Karatepe and associates reports on the construction of a service quality scale. Customers' perception of service quality of retail banks in Northern Cyprus serves as the study setting. This study developed a 20-item survey instrument to measure bank customers' perception of service quality in Northern Cyprus. The results showed that service quality could be conceptualized and measured as a four-dimensional construct consisting of service environment, interaction quality, empathy, and reliability. The scale exhibited high internal consistency, reliability and met rigorous conceptual and empirical criteria to construct validity. The study showed that interaction quality is the most important dimension of service quality followed by empathy, reliability, and service environment (Karatepe, Yavas and Babakus 380).

Another study conducted by Okan Veli Safakali on banking service shows those diverse cultural values that shape perceptions of quality, and can lead to diversification of the original SERVQUAL dimensions. This study has put forward the SERVQUAL dimensions different from those in the original model. A new dimension of 'Customer Orientation' has been added to the SERVQUAL model while two of the original dimensions, 'assurance' and 'responsiveness', have been extracted. Therefore the new SERVQUAL model has been reduced to four dimensions rather than five. Two interesting findings were that age group of “46 and above” indicated a higher SERVQUAL score for the reliability dimension than the age group “between 36 and 45” and married respondents provided a greater SERVQUAL score for the tangibles dimension than non-married (Safakali194).

In this new age of information, commercial banks must provide online services to

their customers. SERVQUAL methodology is widely used in measuring online service quality. Vasya Kenova and Patrik Jonasson developed a model for measuring quality of online banking services that includes four quality dimensions (Service Performance, Website Characteristics, Communication and Efficiency) with a total of 17 questions (Kenova and Jonasson 46). Banks might use the seventeen items described in this work to measure the quality of their online services along the four different dimensions of service quality presented in the study.

The personnel of the banks are also sometimes regarded as important insiders to the service quality. Andreas Soteriou and Stavros A. Zenios implemented the quality efficiency model SQ as perceived by the personnel of the branch. The perceptions from external customers are not always available, and collection of such information requires major market surveys and is expensive. SQ perceptions by the personnel of the bank are easier to measure as opposed to perceptions by external customers. Hence, internal customer perceptions of service quality can be used as proxy for the—more informative but difficult to obtain—customer perceptions (Soteriou and Zenios 19).

Sudhahar, Israel and Selvam, depicted a perceptual map on a set of retail banks in India, through a sophisticated multivariate non-parametric technique called Correspondence Analysis (based on SERVQUAL). The findings of customer service quality of selected public and private sector banks revealed that much was needed to be done for public sector banks in improving their performance by revamping the service marketing strategies. While the public sector bank SBI (State Bank of India) was closely related to security, reliability and credibility, still it needed to improve on aspects such as tangibility, fairness, and treatment and more importantly on accessibility and courteous behavior of employees towards the customers. At the same time, the correspondence analysis pointed out the need on the part of private sector banks for focusing on reliability, credibility and security aspects in delivering service to their customers (Sudhahar, Israel and Selvam 2383).

The original SERVQUAL scale contains several items measuring some of the more tangible aspects of the service provision (i.e., modern-looking equipment, appealing physical facilities, appealing printed materials, and neat-appearing employees), but it does not adequately capture other dimensions of the physical surroundings that have been outlined in the environmental psychology literature.

Several researchers (e.g., Baker, Grewal, & Parasuraman; Bitner; Wakefield & Blodgett) have recently brought more attention to the importance of the physical environment on customers' perceptions and emotional responses. Aspects of the design and decor of the physical facilities as well as ambient factors are likely to influence customer perceptions and feelings, but have not been incorporated in service-quality research (Wakefield and Blodgett 53).

### **Methodology**

The objective of this study is to determine the customers' satisfaction level at five Banks:



BRAC



Dutch Bangla Bank Limited



Eastern Bank Limited



Hong-Kong Shanghai Bank Corporation



Standard Chartered Bank

In order to conduct this study report both primary & secondary data have been utilized. The secondary data have been collected from published literature, journals, web links and other related sources. The primary data have been obtained through interviewing 100 account holders of five banks, 20 for each bank. Interviewing has been conducted using a structured questionnaire containing 16 questions representing the five dimensions of customer satisfaction measurement. The time period of the study lies between April, 2009 and May, 2009.

### **Survey Instrument**

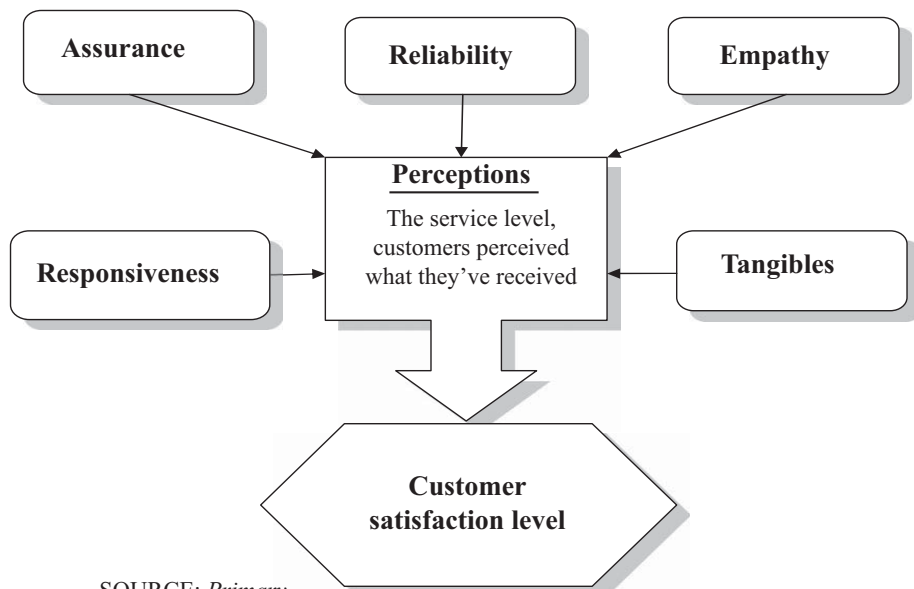
SERVQUAL was originally used for assessing customer perceptions of service quality in service and retailing organizations.

The SERVQUAL instrument has been the predominant method used to measure consumers' perceptions of service quality. It has five generic dimensions or factors that are stated as follows:

- (1) **Tangibles:** Physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel;
- (2) **Reliability:** Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately;
- (3) **Responsiveness:** Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service;
- (4) **Assurance (including competence, courtesy, credibility and security):** Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence;
- (5) **Empathy (including access, communication, understanding the customer):** Caring and Individualized attention that the firm provides to its customers;

These five determinants' impact on Customer Satisfaction level is given below in figure 1:

**Figure 1: Service Determinants' Impact on Customer Satisfaction Level**



SOURCE: *Primary*

For this research, a non-difference score measure was used and the score for each dimension of service quality was computed by taking the average score in items making up the dimension, in this case three items per dimension.

The method we used to calculate un-weighted SERVQUAL score is given below in Table 1:

**Table 1: Calculations to Obtain Un-weighted SERVQUAL Score**

Average <b>Tangible</b> SERVQUAL score	
Average <b>Reliability</b> SERVQUAL score	
Average <b>Responsiveness</b> SERVQUAL score	
Average <b>Assurance</b> SERVQUAL score	
Average <b>Empathy</b> SERVQUAL score	
TOTAL	
<b>AVERAGE (= Total / 5) UNWEIGHTED SERVQUAL SCORE</b>	

SOURCE: *Chase, Aquilano, and Jacobs, 2001*

### Questionnaire

The service quality questionnaire was obtained from SERVQUAL's question list. It had been used several times in the past and was developed by academic experts. The questionnaire was developed to identify underlying dimensions of bank quality and to assess consumers' perceptions of the importance of each of these dimensions. The questionnaire covered the five dimensions of service quality, including the overall service quality of the bank. Each question was rated using a Likert-type scale of 0 (poor) to 10 (excellent). The service quality questionnaire is shown in the Appendix A.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Five banks were selected for data collection and the service quality questionnaires were distributed to 100 randomly chosen customers taking 20 from each bank.

**Descriptive statistics:** Descriptive statistics were used to compare among the banks. Mean and standard deviation of the dimension indices were used to conclude about the overall service quality of the selected banks.

**Regression Analysis:** Multivariate and Bi-variant Regression analysis were performed to understand about the overall service quality of the selected banks. All the regressions were linear in parameter. Overall service quality was used as the dependent variable although the article while independent variables were Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and Tangible.

**Hypotheses testing:** Two hypotheses have been tested one is null hypotheses (H<sub>0</sub>) and another is alternative hypotheses (H<sub>1</sub>).

- **Null hypotheses, H<sub>0</sub>**= Overall service quality does not depend on Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy.
- **Alternative hypotheses, H<sub>1</sub>**= Overall service e quality depends on at least one of the following mentioned variables- Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy.

### **Minitab**

Minitab is one of the most popular statistics package for data analysis in the sector of social science. It is extensively used both in the research work and also in the professional field. It is regarded by many as the most user friendly tool to use in statistical study. Minitab is used for:

- Statistical analysis including descriptive statistics, tests of association, tests of difference, control charts, tables etc.
- Result plotting such as histograms, box plots, regression plots, scatter grams, bar charts etc.
- Introductory Data Analysis.

### Statistical Analysis

6 models have been used to estimate the overall service quality and to illustrate the relation between overall service quality with all the dimensions- Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy. A multiple linear regression and 5 single variable linear regressions have been used. Each of the single variable models is actually a nested model of the multiple-regression model. According to our assumption, overall service quality depends only on these five dimensions. So, the multiple-regression provides us with unbiased estimates. Because of the linear correlation among the independent variables, the estimated coefficients from the single variable regression give a biased estimate. The multi variable regression allows us to infer ceteris paribus relation between the independent and dependent variables. Comparison among the banks was done using some common descriptive statistics.

**Null hypotheses,  $H_0$** = Overall service quality does not depend on Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy.

**Alternative hypotheses,  $H_1$** = Overall service quality depends on at least one of the following mentioned variables- Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy.

**Table 2: List of Regression Equations**

Description	Regression Equation	Regression type
Overall Service Quality(Dependent) Reliability(independent/Predictor)	Overall Service Quality = 2.68 + 0.613 Reliability	linear
Overall Service Quality(Dependent) Responsiveness (independent/Predictor)	Overall Service Quality = 2.90 + 0.633 Responsiveness	linear
Overall Service Quality(Dependent) Assurance(independent/Predictor)	Overall Service Quality = 3.95 + 0.462 Assurance	linear
Overall Service Quality(Dependent) Empathy(independent/Predictor)	Overall Service Quality = 4.74 + 0.378 Empathy	linear



Overall Service Quality(Dependent) Tangible (independent/Predictor)	Overall Service Quality = 4.93 + 0.291 Tangible	Linear
Overall Service Quality(Dependent) Responsiveness(independent/Predictor) Tangible(independent/Predictor) Empathy(independent/Predictor) Assurance(independent/Predictor) Reliability (independent/Predictor)	Overall Service Quality = 1.66 + 0.179 Responsiveness +0.0580 Tangible + 0.253 Empathy + 0.383 Reliability - 0.074 Assurance	Multiple

Source: *Primary*

### Regression Analysis

The multiple regression equation is-

$$\text{Overall service quality} = 1.66 + 0.179 \text{ Responsiveness} + 0.0580 \text{ Tangible} + 0.253 \text{ Empathy} + 0.383 \text{ Reliability} - 0.074 \text{ Assurance}$$

- √ In this equation coefficient of Responsiveness is 0.179 which indicates that Responsiveness & overall service quality have a positive relation and if the score of Responsiveness increases by 1 point, the score of overall service quality increases by .179 points provided the other dimensions remain unchanged.
- √ Coefficient of Tangible is 0.0580 which indicates that if the score of Tangible increases by 1 point, the score of overall service quality increases by 0.0580 points provided Responsiveness, Empathy, Reliability and Assurance remain unchanged. The regression function shows a positive relation between Tangible and overall service quality.
- √ Coefficient of Empathy is 0.253 which indicates that if the score of Empathy increases by 1 point, the score of overall service quality increases by 0.253 points assuming that the other factors remain constant.
- √ Coefficient of Reliability variable is 0.383 which indicates that if the score of Reliability increases by 1 point then the score of overall service quality increases by 0.383 points provided Responsiveness, Tangible, Empathy and Assurance remain unchanged.

- √ Assurance has a coefficient of -0.074 which indicates that if the score of Assurance increases by 1 point, the score of overall service quality decreases by 0.0580 points provided Responsiveness, Tangible, Empathy and Reliability remain unchanged.

### ***Test of Significance of Coefficients of Regression Equation***

To be significant, Coefficient of predictor variables in the regression equation must have an estimated “PE” value equal or less than the given “P” value of 0.05. Table 3 contains coefficient of predictor variables and estimated PE value of coefficients. Based on these parameters, significance test of coefficients of predictor variables will be conducted. Here-

- √ PE value of Responsiveness is 0.156 which is greater than 5%. So, the coefficient of responsiveness is not statistically significant.
- √ PE value of Tangible is 0.389 which is greater than 5%. So, the coefficient of Tangible is not statistically significant.
- √ PE value of Empathy is 0.000 which is less than 5%. So, the coefficient of Empathy is statistically significant.
- √ PE value of Reliability is 0.001 which is less than 5%. So, the coefficient of Reliability is statistically significant.
- √ PE value of Assurance is 0.488 which is greater than 5%. So, the coefficient of Assurance is not statistically significant.

**Table 3: Coefficients and their P-values**

Predictor	Coefficient	PE	Remark
Responsiveness	0.1792	0.156	Insignificant
Tangible	0.05799	0.389	Insignificant
Empathy	0.25270	0.000	Significant
Reliability	0.3835	0.001	Significant
Assurance	-0.0739	0.488	Insignificant

SOURCE: *Primary*

### ***The relationship among the independent variables in relative term***

The relationship among the independent variables in relative term can be assessed with the help of multiple correlative.

$$R = 0.719$$

It indicates that there exists a high degree of positive relationship among Reliability, Responsiveness, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy. This high degree of positive relationship among the independent variables is interpreted based on a “Table of interpretation for correlation” which is given in the appendix B.

### ***The explanatory power of the independent variables***

The explanatory power of the independent variables can be assessed with the coefficient of multiple determinations. Here multiple regression yields coefficient of multiple determinations,  $R^2 = 0.518$ .

This indicates that 51.8% of the variation in overall service quality can be explained by the combined variation of Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy.

### ***Relative importance of independent variables***

The relative importance of the independent variables (Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy) can be indicated with the help of beta coefficient and to do so a normalized regression equation has been calculated. The regression equation is-

$$\text{Overall Service quality} = 0.0000 + 0.201 \text{ Reliability}_1 + 0.485 \text{ Responsiveness}_1 - 0.171 \text{ Assurance}_1 - 0.0339 \text{ Empathy}_1 + 0.321 \text{ Tangible}_1$$

**Table 4: Beta Coefficient of Predictor Variables**

Predictor	Beta Coefficient
Constant	0.0000
Reliability	0.2011
Responsiveness	0.4854***
Assurance	-0.17096
Empathy	-0.03392
Tangible	0.32061

SOURCE: *Primary*

Beta coefficient of Responsiveness is 0.4854 which is the highest beta coefficient. Tangible has the second highest beta coefficient. Beta coefficient of Reliability, Assurance and Empathy follows respectively. We can conclude that responsiveness exerts more influence on overall service quality than on any other variables. Empathy is the least influential variable.

**Correlation Matrix: Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy, Tangible, Overall Service Quality**

Table 5 shows correlation between each and every variable in the Matrix form. Correlations in the Table 5 are interpreted based on a “Table of interpretation for correlation” which is given in the appendix.

**Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix**

	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy	Tangible
Responsiveness	0.627				
Assurance	0.690	0.716			
Empathy	0.396	0.507	0.587		
Tangible	0.213	0.318	0.302	0.442	
Overall service quality	0.574	0.548	0.534	0.609	0.350

SOURCE: *Primary*

Based on Table 5, following conclusions can be drawn-

***Correlation between-***

- Reliability and responsiveness is moderate (0.627).
- Reliability and assurance is moderate (0.690).
- Reliability and empathy is low (0.396).
- Reliability and Tangible is very low moderate (0.213).
- Reliability and overall service quality is moderate (0.574).
- Responsiveness and assurance is high (0.716).

- Responsiveness and empathy is moderate (0.507).
- Responsiveness and tangible is low (0.318).
- Responsiveness and overall service quality is moderate (0.548).
- Assurance and empathy is moderate (0.587).
- Assurance and tangible is low (0.302).
- Assurance and overall service quality is moderate (0.534).
- Empathy and tangible is low (0.442).
- Empathy and overall service quality is moderate (0.609).
- Tangible and overall service quality is low (0.350).

### Test of Hypotheses

Here two hypotheses have been tested, one is null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) and another is alternative hypotheses ( $H_1$ ).

- **Null hypotheses,  $H_0$** = Overall service quality does not depend on Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy.
- **Alternative hypotheses,  $H_1$** = Overall service e quality depends on at least one of the following mentioned variables- Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy.

To conduct test of hypotheses, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is used. According to Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), if estimated “F” is greater than Critical or table value of “F” then null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) will be rejected which means alternative hypotheses ( $H_1$ ) will be accepted. For Analysis of Variance, selected significance level is 5%.

**Table 6: Analysis of Variance**

Source	DF	SS	MS	$F_E$	P
Regression	5	49.5766	9.9153	20.23	0.000
Residual Error	94	46.0.634	0.4900		
Total	99	95.6400			

Source: *Primary*

Here Estimated value of  $F_E=20.23 >$  Table value of  $F_T=2.31$ , which means null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypotheses ( $H_1$ ) that Overall service quality depends on at least one of the following mentioned variables-Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy is accepted.

### Perception of Customers Regarding the Service Quality of Banking Sector

Overall perception of customers regarding the service quality of the banking sector has been assessed in terms of derived mean score of respective service quality dimensions and dimensions are- Responsiveness, Reliability, Tangible, Assurance and Empathy and Overall service quality. The following Table 7 contains mean of scores obtained from the survey and also remarks on the customer service quality of the banking sector of Bangladesh.

**Table 7: Mean of Scores Obtained in the Survey and Remarks**

Factor	Mean	Remark
Reliability	7.157	Satisfactory
Responsiveness	6.560	Moderate
Assurance	6.727	Moderate
Empathy	6.153	Not Satisfactory
Tangible	7.293	Satisfactory
Overall service Quality	7.060	Satisfactory

**\*\*\*7 or above: satisfactory, 6.5-7: Moderate, below 6.5: Not satisfactory**

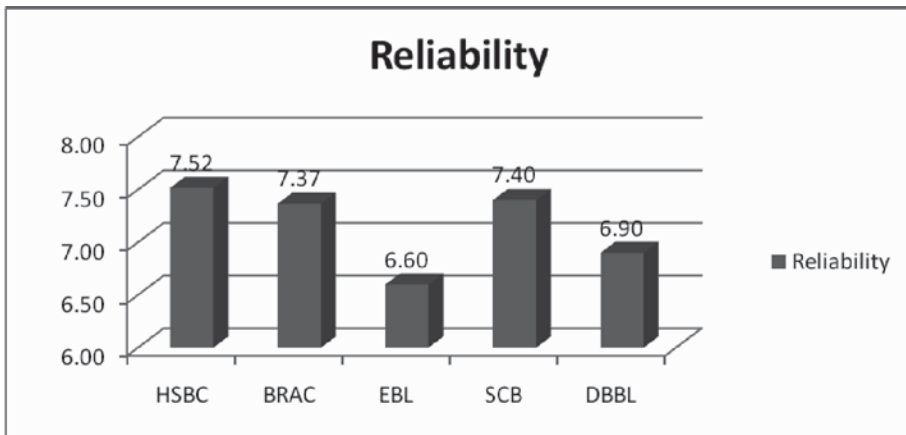
Source: *primary*

### Comparison of Customer Service Quality among Banks

#### Reliability

From the figure 2 it can be concluded that HSBC has the highest Reliability score which is 7.5167. EBL has the lowest Reliability score which is 6.6. Reliability score of SCB=7.4 > Reliability score of BRAC=7.367 > Reliability score of DBBL=6.9.

**Figure 2: Score-wise Ranking of Banks with Respect to Reliability**



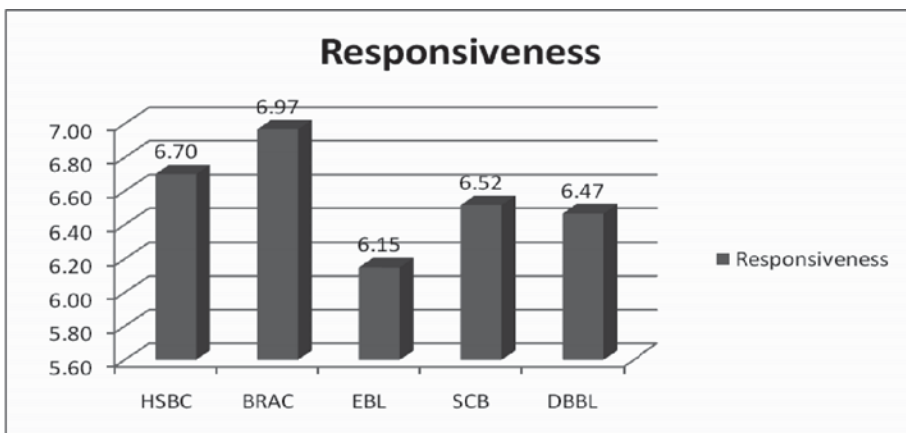
Source: *Primary*

It may be said that HSBC, BRAC, SCB are more or less efficient in serving their customers quickly and efficiently, handling transactions accurately and are dependable. But DBBL and EBL are seriously lacking in serving their customers quickly and efficiently, accurate transaction handling and their customers do not consider them as dependable.

**Responsiveness**

BRAC has the highest responsiveness score of 6.96. EBL has the lowest responsiveness score of 6.15. Responsiveness score of HSBC = 6.7 > Responsiveness score of SCB = 6.5167 > Responsiveness score of DBBL = 6.467.

**Figure 3: Score-wise Ranking of Banks with Respect to Responsiveness**



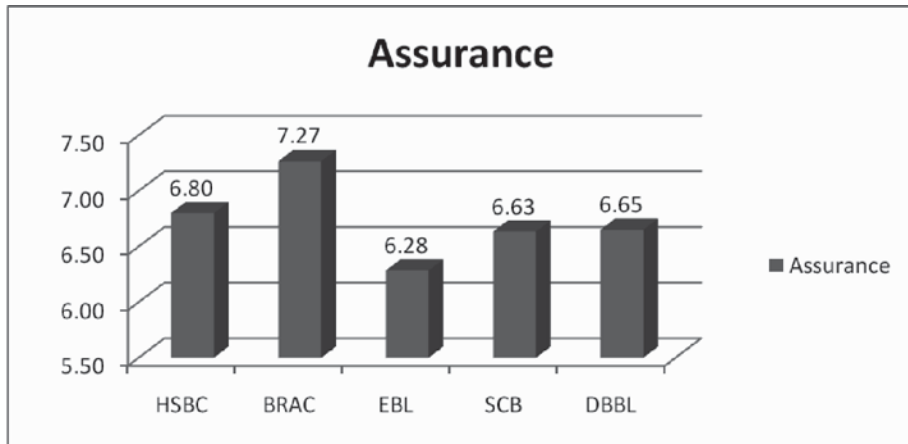
Source: *Primary*

So, it can be easily said from the above interpretation that BRAC and HSBC provide clear explanations of services to their customers, solve problems better and understand the banking needs better. But SCB and DBBL need to excel in these departments. EBL needs to concentrate on these departments as this bank is seriously lacking in these sectors.

### Assurance

From the graph below it can be concluded that BRAC has the highest Assurance score which is 7.267. EBL has the lowest Assurance score which is 6.283. Assurance score of HSBC=6.8 > Assurance score of SCB and DBBL

**Figure 4: Score-wise Ranking of Banks with Respect to Assurance**



Source: *Primary*

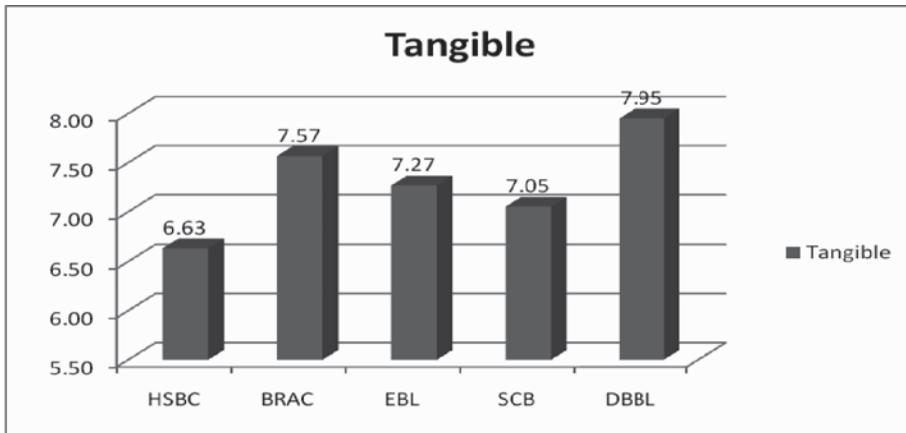
It may be concluded from the above interpretation that BRAC and HSBC thank their customers for doing business with them; customers feel secure banking with them and these banks make business easy for their customers while DBBL, SCB and especially EBL really need to give a serious look in these sectors.

### Tangible

Here DBBL has the highest Tangible score of 7.95. HSBC has the lowest Tangible score of 6.63. Tangible score of BRAC = 7.56 > Tangible score of EBL = 7.26 > Tangible score of SCB = 7.05.



**Figure 5: Score-wise Ranking of Banks with Respect to Tangible**



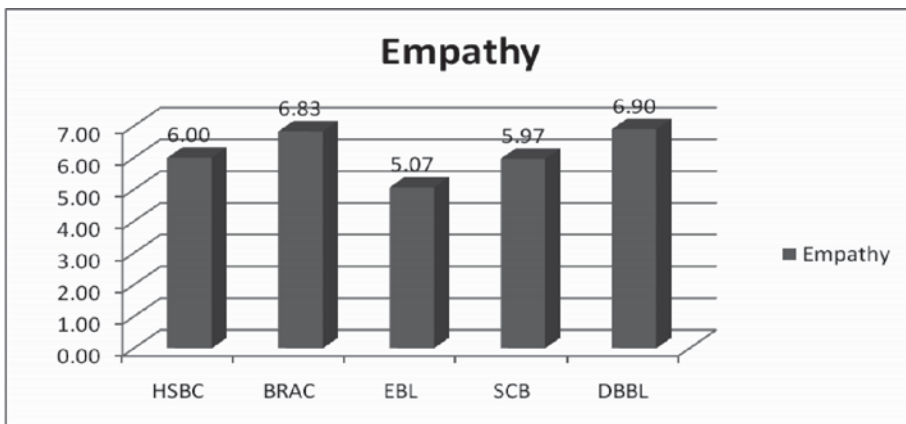
Source: *Primary*

It may be interpreted that most of the respondents responded that the location of DBBL is the most convenient for them; DBBL has the most up-to-date equipment and strong accessibility to ATM. HSBC is seriously lacking in these sectors and BRAC, EBL and SCB are performing moderately in these departments.

**Empathy**

From the figure 6 it can be concluded that DBBL and BRAC have the highest Empathy score which are 6.9 and 6.83 respectively. EBL has the lowest Empathy score which is 5.06.

**Figure 6: Score-wise Ranking of Banks with Respect to Empathy**



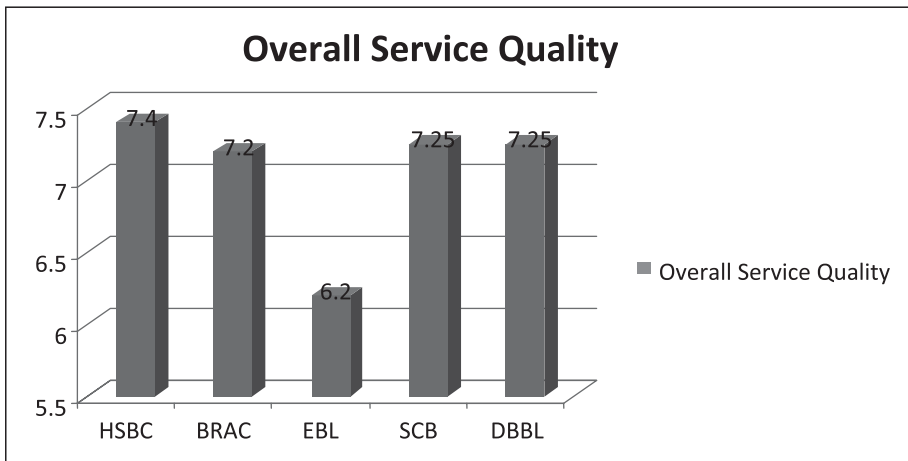
Source: *Primary*

So it may be concluded that EBL needs to greet and acknowledge their customers promptly, address their customers by name and provide friendly and caring service. DBBL and BRAC have excelled in these departments.

### Overall Service Quality

The following graph suggests that HSBC has the best overall service quality. The service quality of SCB and DBBL is the same.

**Figure 7: Score-wise Ranking of Banks with Respect to Overall Service Quality**



Source: *Primary*

The overall service quality of BRAC is 7.2 which is the fourth best among the five selected banks. EBL really needs to concentrate hard on each and every sector of their customer service.

### Conclusion & Recommendation

In banking firms the practitioners are interested to know the customer perceptions of service quality for identifying shortfalls and improving service delivery. The article sheds light on the customer service quality in the selected banks. One can get an idea of the customer service quality in the banking industry as well. The major insight gained from the study is to identify those areas where improvement could be made and resources could be allocated. For instance, by knowing the level of service quality in their banks, managers can use such information to make bank wide improvement in quality performance. It can also be used as a

benchmark to compare the performances of other banks that adopt quality program.

Customers identified responsiveness as the most important dimension of service quality. Tangible comes next, followed by Reliability, Assurance and Empathy respectively. The score of empathy was lowest indicating that the practice of paying extra attention to the customers is mostly absent from the banking industry of Bangladesh. Customers ranked HSBC the best among the selected banks considering overall service quality while EBL were rated worst considering overall service quality.

As each of the dimensions was equally weighted, to improve the service quality score, it is recommended to pay attention to improve all these dimensions as much as possible. Special attention is needed for the empathy dimension. Customers' perception about the empathy from their banks can be improved by providing caring and individual attention to the customers. High importance of Tangible dimension indicates that customers' priority is highly influenced by Banks' location, ATM facilities etc.

**A '12 step' approach is suggested to improve the quality of service in banking:**

1. Recognizing 'quality' problem – identifying the problem area for the banks.
2. Determining the target groups' expectations
3. Developing appropriate service products
4. Selling the idea of 'quality' to the internal audience (staff)
5. Creating a 'Customer focus & care' culture
6. Developing customer-oriented measures to improve quality
7. Tangibles the service offered
8. Improving the physical evidence
9. Making the service easily understandable
10. Encouraging 'word of mouth' about quality with staff and users
11. Promising what can be delivered
12. Inviting complaints from dissatisfied customers

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### Appendix A

#### Sample Questionnaire:

#### *Details of the Interviewee:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Designation \_\_\_\_\_

Bank:       BRAC       DBBL       EBL       HSBC       SCB

Age Group:       18-30 years       31-45 years       above 45 years

Gender:       Male       Female

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Customer questionnaire</b>											
Please show the extent to which you think your bank offers the following services. On a scale of 0 to 10, please circle the appropriate rating.											
	Poor					Excellent					
1. Serving you quickly and efficiently	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2. Handling your transaction accurately	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3. Being dependable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4. Providing clear explanations of services	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5. Solving problems/troubleshooting	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. Understanding your banking needs	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7. Thanking you for your business	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8. Feeling secure doing business here	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9. Making it easy to do business here	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10. Greeting & acknowledging you promptly	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11. Addressing you by name	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
12. Providing friendly and caring service	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13. The location of our bank to you is	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14. Having up-to-date equipment	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
15. Accessibility to ATM	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
16. Overall service quality	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

## Appendix B

**Table B: Interpretation for Correlation**

Value	Degree of relationship
0	Absence of relationship
0.01-0.29	Very low
0.30-0.49	Low
0.50-0.69	Moderate
0.70-0.89	High
0.90-0.99	Very High
1	Perfect

# Impact of Queue on Customers: An Analysis of Some Retail Shops in Bangladesh

Mimnun Sultana\*  
M. M. Nazrul Islam\*\*

## ABSTRACT

Companies differentiate offerings with competitive advantage like product development but currently customer satisfaction is becoming a vital issue. Service organizations with inefficient waiting line management reduce competency. The objective of this study was to survey different retail shops of Bangladesh to observe waiting line management, factors for waiting & to propose approaches to mitigate waiting lines. The research progressed through conversation with 124 customers and depth interviews of professionals with an effective questionnaire. Analyses of those empirical and numerical data were done in different aspects applying SERVQUAL method and the information is presented as well. To deal with waiting line problems, selection of procedure or priority rule is important according to the type of service and long term perspective should be taken to get rid of queue.

**Keywords:** Customer's Satisfaction, SERVQUAL, Waiting line management

## Introduction

Queues are commonly found wherever customers arrive randomly for services. Some examples of waiting lines we encounter in our daily lives include the lines at supermarket checkouts, fast food shops, airport ticket counters, theaters, post offices and toll booths.

Designers must weigh the cost of providing a given level of service capacity against the potential (implicit) cost of having customers wait for service. In a service facility customers enter a waiting line of a service facility, receive service when their turn comes and then leave the system. The number of customers in the system (awaiting service) will vary randomly over time. Waiting line management can be directly

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\*Senior Lecturer, School of Business and Economics, United International University, Dhaka

\*\* Assistant General Manager, Apex Lingerie Limited

applied to a wide range of service operations, including call centers, banks, post offices, restaurants, theme parks, telecommunication systems and traffic management. Managers have a number of very good reasons to be concerned with waiting lines. Major reasons are as follows: the cost to provide waiting space, a possible loss of business if customers leave the line before served or refuse to wait, a possible loss of goodwill, a possible reduction in customer satisfaction, the resulting congestion that may disrupt other business operations or customers.

### **Background of the Research Problem**

Waiting lines abound in all sorts of service systems. And they are non value added occurrences. For customers, having to wait for service can range from being acceptable (usually short waits), to being annoying (longer waits) to being a matter of life and death (e.g., in emergencies). For businesses, the costs of waiting come from lower productivity and competitive disadvantage. For society, the costs are wasted resources (e.g., fuel consumption of cars stuck in traffic) and reduced quality of life. Customers may wait a certain amount of time and then leave. Others may refuse to enter the line at all and go somewhere else or plan to return later; still others may hire people to wait in line for them. Hence, it is important for system designers and managers of existing service systems to fully appreciate the impact of waiting lines. Management of consumer waiting experiences is critical for practitioners in that unpleasant waiting experiences may result in negative service evaluations

### **Problem Statement/ Objective**

The problems of long queues are common in Bangladesh; it appears anywhere where there is a waiting line system. People tend to be dissatisfied when they have to wait too long in lines. The objective of this research is to provide a comparative assessment of the quality of services received by the customers in Bangladesh in the lens of waiting line management. This research included quality service provided from staff, infrastructure and technologies used to manage waiting lines. The assessment may be used as a basis or benchmark for the future studies to track changes in the quality of services. Customer satisfaction and service quality were often treated together as functions of customers' perceptions and expectations. Research has shown that high service quality contributes significantly to customer satisfaction and customer delight. It should also sensitize service providers' planners to improve those areas of service that might be significantly improved. The expectation and perception level of customers have been studied by SERVQUAL method.



### **Literature Review**

Unlike a manufactured product, where quality can readily be assessed, service quality is an elusive and abstract concept that is difficult to define and measure (Markanday, 2011). Literature on queuing indicates that waiting in line or queue causes inconvenience in economic costs to individuals and organizations (Obamiro, 2010). The development of SERVQUAL was a significant contribution made towards the development of a quantitative yardstick for assessing the quality of a firm's service by measuring customers' perceptions of quality. SERVQUAL provides a means of measurement for researchers to determine how well service level is delivered and how it matches customer expectations on a consistent basis (Markanday, 2011). Schneider and Bowen (1985) and Tornow and Wiley (1991) found a positive correlation between the attitude of employees, the attitude of customers and employee and customer perceptions of service quality. According to Taylor (1994), waiting for service is "the time from which a customer is ready to receive the service until the time the service commences". Waiting time is often regarded as a waste of time (Leclerc, Schmitt, and Dube 1995) and has been described by researchers as boring, frustrating, and irritating (Hui and Tse 1996; Katz et al. 1991). Nonetheless, research has suggested that overall value of service may help alleviate the negative emotions of waiting (Katz et al. 1991; Maister 1985). From a practitioner's perspective, waiting lines can be damaging to businesses and have become an important marketing issue. Even though a growing number of companies have attempted to manage consumer waiting experiences through various strategies (e.g., increase of front-line employees, video displays with news updates as waiting time filler, or providing waiting time guarantees to their customers) (Kumar, Kalwani, and Dada 1997), consumer waits remain an unresolved issue. Consequently, more efforts need to be made to understand the waiting process and to reduce the potential negative impact of waits on consumers' evaluations (Kostecki 1996). From an academicians' viewpoint, various theories have been utilized to explain waiting phenomena and how waiting affects consumers' evaluations and satisfaction, including social justice (e.g., Larson 1987), attribution (Chebat, Filiatrault, Gelinas-Chebat, and Vaninsky 1995; Taylor 1994), field theory (Dube-Rioux, Schmitt, and Leclerc 1989; Hui, Thakor, and Gill 1998; Houston, Bettencourt, and Wenger 1998), and social comparison theories (e.g., Zhou and Soman 2003). Among these studies, consumers' affective responses to waiting and service evaluations have been frequently examined (e.g., Dube-Rioux et al. 1989; Houston et al. 1998; Hui and Tse 1996; Taylor 1994; Katz, Larson, and Larson 1991; Pruyn and Smidts 1998).

### **Sampling and Data**

The study was conducted within the Dhaka metropolitan area of Bangladesh. This research was part of a customer satisfaction survey of retail shops. To cover a variety of retail firms, a quota of 60 - 70 shoppers from each of four different retail store types was set. The three different types of stores were: (1) Stores like AGORA, Nandon etc., (2) Stores like Rahimafrooz Distribution centre and (3) Stores like Aarong. The final sample had 45 users of stores like Agora, 40 users of stores like Aarong and 39 users of stores like Rahimafrooz Distribution centre.

All the processes that the interview referred to occurred within 8 weeks before the interview. The average interview length was 7 minutes. 12 groups (6 members/group) of BRAC University Business School students were engaged for data collection. They were properly briefed about the objective of the study and the questionnaire. They were trained to collect unbiased and meaningful data. Permission letters were forwarded to the respective organizations to provide necessary help and to cooperate with the data collectors. Upon receipt of this list, the data collectors used random sampling procedure to select respondents and administer the questionnaire.

### **Assumptions of SERVQUAL Conditions**

The results of market survey were accurate. Customers' needs can be documented and captured and they remain stable during the whole research process. The stores have not only enlisted customers list with membership card but also customers who visit the stores without any membership card. But for this research randomly selected customers were surveyed. The service categories that were used in the development of SERVQUAL (appliance repair and maintenance, retail banking, long distance telephone, and credit cards) are very different from goods retailing. It may well be that consumers use different criteria to evaluate competing goods retailers than they use to evaluate retailers that are primarily or exclusively service firms.

### **The Instrumentation**

The questionnaire design partially followed the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, 1991) instrument (Factors are Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness) by using a 7-point Likert scale with "1" being "Strongly Disagree" and "7" being "Strongly Agree". For each dimension, all questions

measured the customer expectations and perceptions of the retail firms. Modifications to the SERVQUAL instrument presented by Parasuraman, et al. were made prior to the implementation of our survey. As suggested by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, it can be appropriate to modify the items of the SERVQUAL instrument to make the survey more relevant to the context of a particular service environment. Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml originally started with seven dimensions but these were later combined together to create the above five dimensions. Due to the similarities between factors and customer responses against the five factors, the five factors were downsized to only three factors. This is allowable due to the original combined factors done by Parasuarman, Berry, and Zeithaml. While it is useful to generalize about the characteristics of services and service businesses, it appears to be equally important to recognize that differences exist among various services and among the firms that market them.

**The three factors that were combined to provide better analysis were explained below:**

*Staff* – This contains the dimensions of Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. The staff dimension is concerned with customer service, the willingness to help and provide prompt services to customers, the knowledge and courtesy of staff, caring and individual attention provided to the customers and appearance of the employees. Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy are closely related and are all mainly concerned with the ability to provide customers with quality service, help, and attention; therefore, they were combined into one category and entitled Staff.

*Infrastructure, Tools and Technologies* – This area is concerned with the dimension of Tangibles. Tangibles refer to the Physical Facilities, Equipment, Software and Technologies.

*Queue Time* – This focuses on only one dimension, Reliability. This dimension is concerned with the ability of the service providers to provide reliable, dependable, and accurate services to its customers within an acceptable time frame.

## **SERVQUAL Factors along with Dimensions**

### ***Factor 1: Staff***

Dimension 1: The staff's readiness to listen to customers' needs

Dimension 2: The willingness to help customers

Dimension 3: The staff's ability to instill confidence in customers' psychology

Dimension 4: Staff's knowledge to answer customers' questions

Dimension 5: Staff's dealing with customers in a caring fashion

Dimension 6: Giving prompt respond to customers' problems and/or suggestions

### ***Factor 2: Infrastructure, tools & technologies***

Dimension 7: Providing affective infrastructural facility services

Dimension 8: Visibility of the service provided

Dimension 9: Staff members are dressed appropriately for their position

Dimension 10: Proper utilization of technologies (Software)

Dimension 11: Presence of state-of-the-art-Technologies

Dimension 12: Efficient Service capacity facility utilization

### ***Factor 3: Queue Time***

Dimension 13: Services provided at times listed

Dimension 14: Convenience to personal schedule

Dimension 15: Actual waiting time was satisfactory compared to the expected time

## **Analysis Plan**

For the analysis, the expectation score was subtracted from the perception (P-E) score for each item in the 15 dimensions. The average SERVQUAL scores for the dimensions pertaining to each of the 3 factors were totaled and then divided by the number of dimensions making up the factor. The scores obtained for the 3 factors represented the outweighed measure of service quality. The weighted score was the average SERVQUAL score multiplied by the importance weight for each dimension (total 100 points). A total of 100 points were allocated to these

dimensions as well as to rank their importance. The lower the weighted score, the lower is the perception level for the customers. This study aims to minimize and improve the perception gap in the recommendations.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Study**

The SERVQUAL stands alone as one of the truly excellent, empirically validated, comprehensive, and standardized measurement tools for service quality. As a measurement instrument, the SERVQUAL offers a measure of individual survey risks and assets across multiple dimensions, capturing environment, culture, and community contexts. This instrument seemed to be interesting because it offered a useful way to identify and measure customer satisfaction indexes or criterions. Validity and reliability studies on the SERVQUAL have repeatedly shown acceptable psychometric characteristics as both a research measure and as a developing management practice tool, but there has not been an easy way for practitioners to evaluate this information.

The survey method was well organized and provided basic validity and reliability assurance and limitations of the measure. The artificiality of the survey format puts a strain on validity. Since people's real feelings are hard to grasp in terms of such dichotomies as "agree/disagree," "support/oppose," "like/dislike," etc., these are only approximate indicators of what we have in mind when we create the questions. Reliability, on the other hand, is a clearer matter. Survey research presents all subjects with a standardized stimulus, and so goes a long way toward eliminating unreliability in the researcher's observations. Careful wording, format, content, etc. can reduce significantly the subject's own unreliability.

The reliability of the data was tested using Cronbachs' Alpha for each SERVQUAL-dimension, each factors, each dimensions. The alphas for the 15 dimensions varied between 0.63 and 0.95 with an average value of 0.79, which suggests a successful adaptation of the SERVQUAL approach. The validity was tested using the face validity concept. The face-validity was suggested by experts within the retail shops (management team)

### **Findings of the Study**

The results have been compared from different angles and perspectives. The research and analysis in this thesis is based on gaps in the SERVQUAL-model and the service quality is assessed by counting scores that are given by the SERVQUAL-model. The method is used for all 15 dimensions with the purpose of measuring different customer expectations and perceptions.

**Staff:** For the 6 dimensions under the category of staff, the perception level is the best in staff's ability to answer that means competency level (required skills and knowledge of workers) is good enough. But employees show negative attitude to readily answer the queries although they have the competency level.

**Infrastructure, tools & technologies:** Infrastructural facility has the highest perception level which implies that the retail stores have the infrastructures like building, furniture, space, internet etc. but the stores cannot make the situation and service properly visible to customers. In some situations organizations are not competent in proper utilization of the technologies and have less efficient service capacity facility utilization.

**Queue Time:** The service schedule is convenient but the retail stores spent long time in queue for the customers for which customer's perception as well as satisfaction level is not good regarding the waiting time.

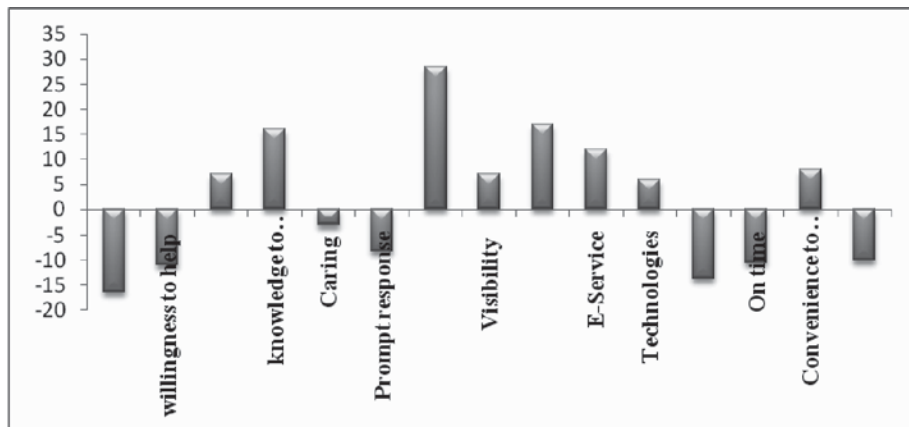
In summary, The mean weighted SERVQUAL score results showed that, the perception level was good at staff's knowledge to answer, infrastructural facility and employee's appearance. Perception gaps needed to be improved on readiness to respond and willingness to help staff attitude as well as customer waiting time needed to be minimized.

**Table 3.1: Mean Weighted SERVQUAL Score for Each Dimensions**

Dimension	Perception-Expectation	Mean Weighted SERVQUAL Score
Readiness to respond	-3	-30
willingness to help	-2	-20
Ability to instill confidence	1	6
knowledge to answer	2	16
Caring	-0.5	-4.5
Prompt response	-1.5	-8.25
Infrastructural facility	3	15
Visibility	1	7
Dressed employees	2	11
E-Service	2	8
Technologies	1	5
Capacity utilization	-2.5	-10
On time	-1.5	-9
Convenient schedule	1	8
Satisfactory waiting time	-2	-14

The graphical representation in Table 3.1 shows mean weighted SERVQUAL Score which worked as a benchmark in making decisions.

**Figure 3.1: Mean Weighted SERVQUAL Score for Each Dimension**



Customers' requirements weights have been calculated by taking mean weights against each dimension separately. Customers showed (Table 3.2) a high requirement on response time and helping attitude of service providers. They think that, service providers' caring attitude minimizes their psychological pressure of waiting. Readiness to respond is the willingness or positive attitude of employees to answer the queries of customers. Positive attitude of the employees creates a positive mindset to the customers ultimately which has impact on customer satisfaction. The customers don't want to wait for unproductive time which minimizes their level of satisfaction but other positive behavior and helpful attitude of employees lessens the stress of queue.

**Table 3.2: Weights Given to Customer Requirements**

Dimension	Mean Weight given by customers
Readiness to respond	10
Willingness to help	10
Ability to instill confidence	6
knowledge to answer	8
Caring	9
Prompt response	5.5
Infrastructural facility	5
Visibility	7
Dressed employees	5.5
E-Service	4
Technologies	5
Capacity utilization	4
On time	6
Convenience to schedule	8
Satisfactory waiting time	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

The overall satisfaction level (Table 3.3) showed that, nowadays retail firms improved their infrastructural layout or facility structure better than previous records. New tools and technologies like e shopping, home delivery, more outlets, and decorated stores attracted more customers to the retail stores than before but

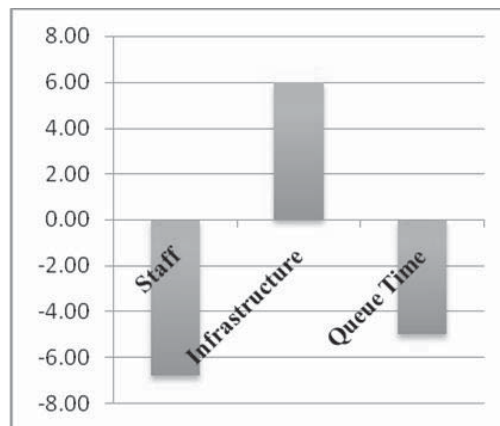


necessary and particular improvements are required at competency level of staff and better management concerns were needed to minimize waiting time. Staff training to improve the competency level and queue analysis with management concern can improve the customer satisfaction more.

**Table 3.3: Overall SERVQUAL Score**

Factor	Overall SERVQUAL Score
Staff	-6.79
Infrastructure	6
Queue Time	-5

**Figure 3.3: Overall SERVQUAL Score**



According to our analyses of the service gaps or perception gaps aiming to improve service quality, the recommendation section outlines some ways to improve performance level on these dimensions.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

In order to improve the perceived quality of the staff attitude and queue time minimization within the layout, a number of steps need to be implemented. With regards to the layout, the current setups of the layouts give sufficient number of service facility counters which are not to increase queue time. On the other hand, most of the counters remain closed due to lack of employee monitoring system. In order for business patrons to be assured of the competency of staff, they must

display basic knowledge of the staff they represent. Training should be conducted to a standard so that any employee could give customers guidance for general questions, such as to which floor or section of the shops specific products could be found. They should also keep an open and approachable counter, instead of commonly lingering further in the back of the office. Customers should have a pleasant encounter every time the services of the staff are required, and should leave with a feeling of confidence that they have been attended to sincerely. This will only be achieved when not only staff members have the knowledge required to answer general questions, but also have the consideration to express it with courtesy.

Confidence would be generated only if companies are quick to serve. Undue delay is an important reason for losing confidence. Customers are most appreciated on the premises. Each employee from sub staff to Chairman in the company can play a vital role in this regard. The customers at no cost should go back unattended. The sense of care is a vital element in achieving customer satisfaction. An unattended or frustrated visit could bring discord and a feeling of disgust. There should not be any display of complacency and lack of sensitivity in the employees toward customers. The customers need to be served promptly, efficiently and effectively.

Queues are not linear with regard to changes in arrival rates or service times. Generally, when there is variability in arrivals of customers and/or in service times, the average length of the queue and the average waiting time both grow exponentially when the utilization of the servers approaches full utilization. Therefore such queuing systems should not be planned for full utilization of the servers because queues and waiting times become very long. We can also look at the length of the queue (and the waiting time) from a different perspective. Doubling the service capacity of a system that has long queues will not cut the queues by half, but rather almost eliminate them. For example, if a super shop has a single cash counter for customers and the average waiting time of customers for cash payment is 20 minutes, and the utilization of the receiving point is 90%, adding a second counter operating in parallel will almost eliminate the waiting times (and not cut them in half), but the utilization of the counters will drop to 45%. In a period of major change in the business environment, enhancing satisfaction is becoming increasingly important because satisfaction is recognized as a measure of quality. Knowledge of the use of queuing model to determine system parameters is of value to service providers who seek to attract, keep and provide quality service and products to customers in the ever-competitive “marketplace”.

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East West University

Plot No-A/2, Main Road, Jahurul Islam City

Aftabnagar, Dhaka-1212

Phone : 9858261, 09666775577

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Globalization, Democracy and English Studies

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## **Editorial**

This is the third issue of the *East West Journal of Humanities*, a publication of EWU Center for Research and Training. The Center now publishes two journals: this one and the *East West Journal of the Social Sciences and Business*.

The Editorial Board of the current issue consists of the following members:

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We welcome your contributions and invite suggestions for future issues. We intend to make ours the leading journal on the liberal arts in this region and look forward to your participation in our venture.

I would like to conclude by thanking Dr. Rafiqul Huda Chowdhury, Chairperson, EWUCRT, for advice and guidance, my Teaching Assistant Asif Nawaz for his help, and Aynun Nahar, Research Officer, and Shahla Sharmin, Departmental Secretary of EWUCRT for their assistance.

**Fakrul Alam**

*Editor*

*East West Journal of Humanities*

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# Globalization, Democracy and English Studies

*Syed Manzoorul Islam*

University of Dhaka

1. Globalization has been seen by both its promoters and detractors primarily as an expansion of global capital and money and commodity markets across national and regional borders, driving both capitalized and capital poor economies towards consumer-oriented production whose backward and forward linkages are determined – indeed manipulated – by developed economies of the West. In the process, traditional modes of production of weaker economies are neglected, which, in the end, lose out to high value production processes and products backed up by sophisticated technology and financial instruments. The deceptive investment portfolios from the West, described rather quizzically as "footloose capital," gain control of weaker economies and threaten to withdraw in the event of a government taking measures to protect its domestic business. The promotion of supply side and transnational economies has the ultimate goal of a market-led integration of global society. As Jurgen Habermas points out, "a state enmeshed in the transnational economic system would abandon its citizens to the legally secured negative freedoms of global competition, while essentially confining itself to providing, in business-like fashion, infrastructures that promote entrepreneurial activity and make national economic conditions attractive from the point of view of profitability" (78,79-80). Those opposed to globalization see in the power of the runaway markets -- and the involvement of the United States in World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations with governments to pursue

market-friendly policies – the inevitability of the loss of autonomy of national states, and an erosion of their decision-making abilities. Indeed globalization's war cry now is "more market, less state interventions;" its aim is to see a free market society along with a minimal state. In countries that are variously described as third world, less developed or of weak economies, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and their less well-off but equally high-handed cousin, the Asian Development Bank, work as allies of the forces of hegemonic globalization.

The word hegemony brings us to a consideration of how globalization impacts on a broad range of areas on a daily basis, such as migration and travel, the media, information technology, education, culture and lifestyle, and cultural economy. Education for example, is increasingly valued in a global context, to the extent that individual states, either by force of necessity or by the lure of finding a place in the global system, now pursue American models in their higher education. Private universities in Bangladesh, for example, have a Fall semester conducted during a season when leaves turn a bit brownish at best, but don't fall en masse. Call it a name game, but it speaks volumes of the kind of US educational hegemony we are witnessing around the globe. This errant example apart, however, one has to recognize the dominance of US-led educational enterprises in setting qualifying standards for English language proficiency (TOEFL, for example), designing models of tertiary level curricula, making available doctoral and post-doctoral studies and research opportunities, and even authenticating style manuals for research for a global constituency. As in the economic and technological aspects of globalization, this dominance is leading to homogenization and marginalization – homogenization of local educational practices into a global model, and where local practices are resistant, their marginalization and disempowerment. According to Arjun Appadurai, "globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization (armaments, advertising technologies, language hegemonies, clothing styles and the like) which are absorbed in local political and cultural economies" (303). Appadurai, however, maintains that "globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization," (303) and offers to read globalization's complex interface with local cultures in terms of a tension that releases different "scapes" – ethnoscape, mediascape, etc – that continuously add variety within and outside national boundaries. It is difficult, however, to see such scapes interacting outside of their usual binary constraints (for example, US vs. Bangladeshi mediascapes, or, the first world vs. third world ethnoscapes where the first party of the binary is always privileged).

Appadurai's mention of language hegemony will be relevant to my discussion of the state of English Studies in the post 9/11 world. But before going into that, I'd like to look at a related issue that is providing globalization a new momentum: the New World Order (NWO) and the various configurations of power relations that it has put into place. An understanding of these configurations will also help us locate the nexus between power and knowledge that increasingly defines NWO and add to changes and transformations in cultural and academic discourses including English Studies. In this paper, I'll consider NWO in geo-political and economic terms, avoiding the conspiracy theories such as the one put forward by Takis Fotopoulos who, in his essay, "'Democracy' in the New World Order" maintains that the transnational elite – the *Illuminanti* of the conspiracy theorists – are trying to "implant western models of democracy in vulnerable countries against resistance solely for their own gain" (5). This elite group, he believes, has both power and control over the instruments of international trade and capital, multinational corporations, digital and information technology, various international organizations and even some UN agencies. These are strongly supported by the military-industrial complexes of stronger nations and blocks (G8, for example) and are constantly redefining not only systems of governance e.g., democracy, but also economy, and the market (e.g., unbridled consumerism) culture (the influx of western visual culture and the dominance of western media) and education in countries that are now under their sway. Fotopoulos believes that "the transnational elite does not hesitate now to proceed to the next step: to rewrite History and, in the process, to condemn (and tomorrow to penalize) every anti-systemic ideology." (5)

Ever since the term New World Order became a geopolitical reality after the cessation of cold war and the rise of the US-centric unipolar world, it has also become a part of US political rhetoric. Starting with the senior George Bush, political leaders, political analysts and media pundits – all have had their own take on NWO that has ranged from idealism to opportunism to caution. What has been commonly recognized though, is the unipolar nature of NWO, and, along with it, new realities such as the birth of new nation states (after the breakdown of the Soviet Republic and Yugoslavia); ethnic conflicts and the emergence of new flashpoints in the world; the rise of religious fundamentalism and, of course, the threat of what Habermas describes as "spontaneous border crossings" (for example, security risks connected with sophisticated and large-scale technologies, organized crime, arms trafficking etc.) (77). On the economic front, footloose capital rushed to fill the void left by the expiring centrally planned economies in the erstwhile Soviet Russia, and also sought newer grounds, such as

China and India which promised ample return. Broadly speaking, some of the issues that underpin any discussion of globalization and democracy today are: the dominance of market philosophy and an ever increasing global capital flow influencing a whole range of things – from national economic decisions and monetary policies to lifestyle; a proliferation of visual culture and the increasing impact of the media, accelerated migration from Asia and Eastern Europe to USA, UK and the European Union countries, and a mobile positioning of the various diasporas, a local/global interface that has created grounds for newer hybridization of culture and lifestyle, a reconfiguration of some older binaries such as metropolis/periphery, north/south, accompanied by both a strengthening of privileged parties of the binaries, as well as the phenomenon of striking back by the disprivileged parties that also calls for resistance to globalization's homogenizing logic.

Although the economic aspect of globalization and NWO has been much commented upon there have also been strong misgivings amongst multiculturalists about their totalizing and homogenizing logic. George Bush's "Us vs. them" stand after 9/11 seems to have put all ethnic, racial, class and cultural differences into a largely US (and by association, Euro) ethnoracial mix which on the one hand, would fuse all differences for a happy Americanism, and on the other, create spurious multiulturism along paradigm maps charted by power agencies (state cultural bodies, the media and academia). In a bid to give such fake multiculturalism a politically correct stand, supporters of NWO began to call it "globally local multiculturalism" or "strategic multiculturalism." Multiculturalists battling the demons of monoculturism consider this new multiculturalism oppressive and warn against the many faces such oppression can take. Indeed, resistance against such oppression in the heyday of globalization is seen not just in the so-called third world countries, but in the big powers' home territories as well. This is amply demonstrated in massive, and often violent, protests every time the WTO (which now appears to be the flagship of new international monetary and trade order) meets, and, in more recent "Occupy Wall Street" and "Occupy Everything" movements. Americans also had to lose or compromise on many of their civil rights after Bush's war against terror took a decisive turn in the aftermath of the US invasion of Iraq. The media, particularly newspapers and TV channels pursuing the kind of embedded journalism CNN practiced during the Iraq war, have been persuaded to play the patriotic card in reporting on the war, and on terrorism in general. This is continuing even today, with little substantive change during a supposedly more benign Obama administration.



Resistance in cultural fields however, is less spectacular than in areas of political activism; it is also, to some extent, uncertain. Such resistance has taken the form of avoidance (of things that clash with local culture), revivalism (of traditional cultural forms to counter cross-border "sub-cultural" production) or restitution (an increasing interest in mother languages, local literatures and forms of culture as a way of recovering the ground lost to dominant global literatures and cultures). But the important thing is, such resistance continues even as opposition from the establishment mounts.

The confrontation-resistance debate centering on globalization has spilled into many areas, such as culture, where the fear of a strong visual culture emanating from the west cannibalizing global diversity remains a persistent fear. In English Studies, too, the confrontation-resistance dialectic has added new dimensions to its already mutating landscape. But before I take a close look at the landscape, it remains for me to cover the one remaining concept - democracy - forming the discursive frame of the paper. Democracy, by the very definitional parameters attached to it, is essentially pluralistic, liberal, non-coercive, accountable and hence transparent, secular, and oriented towards public good. Advocates of democracy such as Jermy Bentham (1748-1832) and James Mill (1773-1836) considered liberal democracy "nothing but a logical requirement for the governance of a society, freed from absolute power and tradition, in which individuals have endless desires..." (Held: 25). However, for democracy to function according to the ideals mentioned above, there are certain instrumental requirements that every democratic polity agrees upon. Habermas sets out four such instruments which he describes as "preconditions" for an "association of citizens ..... to regulate their coexistence democratically and to shape social conditions by political means:"

an "effective political apparatus" through which to implement binding decisions;"

"a clearly defined 'self' for 'political self-determination and self transformation...."

A willing citizenry who "can be mobilized for participation in political opinion-formation and will-formation oriented to the common good," and

"an economic and social milieu" for a "dramatically programmed administration" to organize itself and enhance its legitimacy. (76)

The reason I have picked up Habermas from among scores of commentators on democracy is that he takes a cautionary view of the modern state's capacity to sustain its three essential prerogatives – its capacity for control, its legitimacy and its organizational functions – in the face of global capitalism. The four preconditions that Habermas spells out for politics and society to coexist for an effective realization of democratic prerogatives are constantly under threat from forces of globalization. Such a situation problematizes the basic assumptions of democracy and raises a number of questions: How free is an individual in democracy? Do all citizens equally enjoy the broad cluster of rights a democratic society offers? How much freedom does an economically backward democratic country itself enjoy? Indeed, one may even posit that in many democracies, the state itself is responsible for producing and maintaining inequalities of everyday life. Democracy as a form of governance may be a logical choice, as Bentham and Mill maintained, but whether it delivers its promises depends a great deal on how it views itself, and what the dynamics are that provide its guiding force. Bentham and Mill themselves excluded women and the labouring class from democratic franchise, as did Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), although in his case it was the poor rather than the labouring class which got the axe. More recently, questions have been raised about the agency of state institutions and even citizens themselves in articulating and controlling outcomes towards public good: should there be limits on the power of the *demos* to change and alter political circumstance? Should the nature and scope of liberty of individuals and minorities be left to democratic decision?" (Held: 179) Just as globalization is seen to be creating new inequalities everywhere – as it also empowers certain new regions to emerge as subsidiary power blocks (Asia Pacific, for example)– democracy is also seen to be skewed more towards the rich and the powerful in formal governance and material and distributional matters (social justice, for example) than the poor. This, in turn, consolidates the power of the elite, and creates subsidiary power bases for a collective manipulation of policies and programmes. And again, like the forces of globalization, democracy both unites and divides the people by keeping them eternally within a conflictual mould. The multi-party system of democracy – considered one of its pillars – is a formal arrangement of such a conflictual ethics.

When a democracy – particularly liberal democracy – distributes its fruits unevenly among the people, it exposes its various biases. A democratic polity has a dominant male and class bias; it is aligned towards the market and capital, and, of course, power. Even a country like India, considered the largest democracy in the world, there are obvious linguistic and religious biases that no government has

been able, or tried, to hide. In most democracies, there is often an intolerance of free press and a desire to use force in silencing dissent. These biases usually dictate governments' approach to social justice, education, culture and their policy regarding gender and ethnicity.

2. I have briefly attended to the widely debated issues of globalization, and along with the complex and contested notion of democracy in the hope that these will form a conceptual and historical background against which a mapping of English Studies can be done. Such an exercise will be both meaningful and practical since the discipline of English studies now embraces an expanding number of interrelated subjects, such as Cultural, Media and Communication Studies, all of which relate closely to the changing landscapes of economy and culture – both local and global. As if the language-literature divide within English Studies were not contentious enough, the introduction of this broad range of studies has brought newer uncertainties about the continuation of literature studies – as the subject was known until even three decades ago. The questions that become inevitable now are: will literature be displaced by a plethora of new disciplines that have thrived after the introduction of theory, which itself has been necessitated by a shift towards deconstruction and away from the essentialism that marked the general mood of the intellectually rebellious 1960s and 1970s? Will English Studies subsume other subjects as it continues to give pride of place to literature? Will literature lead the way towards an expanding interdisciplinary study, broader than English Studies, incorporating newly emerging fields of culture and society? While there are no clear answers to these questions, some hints and clues can be deciphered in reviewing the changing nature of English studies over the decades, its embracing of cultural and media studies at a juncture of history which also saw the rise of globalization, the end of the cold war era, and the beginning of global transformation weakening nation states. It is important therefore to relate English studies to the tensions, confrontations and fissures, as well as energies, and dynamics that have characterized the global scene in the last four decades.

3. English Studies locates itself in this critical juncture as a ground where shocks from global transformations can be absorbed and new configurations of our experience can be articulated. It is also a ground that offers newer opportunities of assimilation, adjustment, innovation and change in keeping with emerging aspirations and needs. There was a time when English Studies was accused of complicity with colonial forces in their efforts to intellectually subjugate the colonized people. Such suspicion remained long after territorial decolonization was achieved. One remembers Ngugi wa Thiong'o's strong stand against English

and some European languages for destroying African linguistic traditions and his branding of English departments in the universities of his native Kenya, as in other decolonized countries, as colonial outposts. But there was also an equally passionate defense of English from a whole range of writers and scholars including Nirad C. Chaudhuri and Chinua Achebe. Negotiating these opposing stands is a middle view, which considers English and English studies as what they stand for, and the possibilities of communication and creative engagement they offer. Even before the rise of the new generation of Indo-Anglican writers led by Salman Rushdie who initiated a move for the Empire to write back to the Centre which, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, is "a process by which the language, with its power, and the writing, with its signification of authority, has been wrested far from the dominant European culture" (8), there were misgivings about the politics of English language and its colonial association. It is generally agreed that beginning in the 1960s, English was losing its institutional authority and power. As Rivkin and Ryan put it, English could no longer "present itself as a repository of good values or of appropriate style if those values were connected to ...Imperial violence" (852). However, they also maintain that, "Scholars began to take note of the fact that many great works of English literature promoted beliefs and assumptions regarding other geographic regions and ethnic groups" (852). Indeed, reading English Literature postcolonially has enabled many to discover in some classical writers and texts a pattern of questioning certain colonial ideologies, institutions and power relations. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is one such example where he even critiques the colonial episteme. Such postcolonial undertakings have opened up areas of intellectual debate, where questions of identify, marginality, hybridity, representation, race, domination and resistance – the substance of post colonial theory, in short – are discussed, and from where the Empire is also continuously writing back to the Centre in the very language of the Centre. Roberto Fernandez Retamar, a noted cultural activist of post-revolutionary Cuba maintains, in one of his passionate essays, that the Calibans the colonizers had left behind are now writing back to them in their own language in what appears to be an ironic inversion of canonical overtures by the colonizers. In an evocative passage of his essay, "Caliban: Notes towards a Discussion of Culture in Our Americas" Retamar writes: "Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors, enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to make himself understood. What else can Caliban do but use that same language – today he has no other – to curse him, to wish that the 'red plague' would fall on him?" (24). But Caliban's cursing today can take many shapes – it has indeed created a space for protest literatures of various kinds, but also a whole literature industry based on other Englishes. As other Englishes come to prominence in

different parts of the world, English as the language of the colonialists has to undergo profound changes, divesting itself of a large part of its colonial cultural luggage. English is also the language for many Asian and African diasporic writers which they use to articulate their experience of displacement, marginalization and their in-betweenness, although they have to deal with – and often use to their advantage – the general perception of foreignness of their English. Thus English Studies today is a location for transnational and transcultural dialogue, and is assuming an essentially multicultural and multiethnic character. Bob Pope in *The English Studies Book* lists a number of developments showing the difference between, what he calls 'traditional' and 'progressive' uses of the language. A few of the differences he mentions are:

'Traditional'	'Progressive'
English for employment Promotion of single standard language Emphasis on writing Canon of 'great works' Single dominant cultural	English for 'life' Recognition of varieties Emphasis on speech Open or no canon Multicultural differences (31).

In the 1960s English literature was still concerned primarily with canonical texts, and the dominant ideology it pursued was monocultural and Eurocentric, although it did have a radical vision influenced by leftist views of the time, and a Sartrean commitment to freedom. But soon, 'progressive' notions of literary studies began to replace older paradigms, due largely to the "'cannon debates' and 'culture wars'" (Pope 15), of 1970s and beyond, pressure from the market (which enlarged the English language teaching front) and the politics of English language which involved recasting of the Englishness of English studies "by economic, political, military and cultural deference to the United States" (Sinfield: 225). Another powerful agent of change was theory, and Alan Sinfield tells us how, as theory ruled, "Many prized texts, inspected in the earnest light of multiculturalism, feminism and gay liberation appeared racist, misogynist and homophobic. Furthermore, many texts were suddenly perceived as embedded in an essentialist, redemptionist vision, in which 'man' figured as a central but fixed entity" (xvii-xviii). The essentially deconstructive bent of theory was instrumental in encouraging a poststructuralist and, eventually, postmodern engagement with texts – both within and outside the canon. This also led to an interface between literature and culture that multiculturalists particularly welcomed. Although

supporters of the great canonical tradition still remain (Harold Bloom is a case in point), the general shift is noticeably towards an interdisciplinary approach within English studies. As Brian Doyle wrote in *English and Englishness* in 1989, "The study of English will...provide a creative base for active experiments with cultural production (verbal, visual and aural) which enhance, improve and diversify rather than narrow and homogenize our cultural life"(142).

My own experience of teaching, and designing syllabus for a number of public and private universities tells me that English Studies, without losing its central focus – which is English literature and language – is slowly but surely moving towards cultural and media studies, theory and post-theory – in the sense of theory in practice. The English department of Dhaka University introduced theory in the late 1980s and postmodern literature only about ten years ago. Brac University, where I have taught postmodern American, Latin American and French literature (in translation) courses at the Masters level, also offers courses on Visual Culture, World Englishes and Feminism. Undergraduate students there have a choice between literature, culture and media studies and linguistics. But despite the variety and wide range of courses at Brac University, and to some extent in Dhaka University, classics haven't yet lost out to texts that one or the other contemporary theory prefers or which have a contemporary appeal. Whether this preference for classics remains in the future depends on a number of factors: how other universities here and abroad fare in their curriculum design; how the marketplace values the current courses; or the state of intellectual and creative impulses that shape our choices and our priorities.

4. It now remains for me to discuss the importance English language studies and linguistics have assumed in the last few decades. When the department of English of Dhaka University was launched in 1921, it was customary to see literature and language as complementary and mutually supportive branches of the same discipline. It was generally agreed that learning literature was only meaningful when one had a grasp of language, and, similarly, learning language was only meaningful when one had a grasp of literature. The interdependence of literature and language was seen necessary for a balanced learning and teaching programme, but in reality, literature remained the dominant subject, with language playing a supportive role. It was only in the mid-1980s that Linguistics was introduced as a separate subject with ELT forming an important part. The progress of ELT in particular and Linguistics in general since then has been phenomenal, although English Literature has shown a decline. In Dhaka University, students can opt for literature or linguistics at the 4th year of undergraduate studies, and most go for

linguistics – that is, ELT. And after the private university boom began in the 1990s, which saw a preference for market-savvy subjects such as business and computer rather than a liberal education framework, English language also became a must-read subject. All private universities have English language as part of their undergraduate curriculum, but few offer literature courses. And literature courses, to be 'viable,' have been geared toward the market which means introducing a mix of subjects, including linguistics and business English, and excluding authors presumed to be 'difficult' or 'uninteresting.' Such load-shedding has seen the end of many canonical authors such as Spenser, Milton and Byron in private university curriculum, but in public universities too, they now exist in much truncated form. And with the introduction of semester system, which deals with literature in piecemeal fashion (four to five texts by four to five authors, or in rare cases, such as Shakespeare, four to five texts by one author), public universities might replicate private university philosophy, although without the danger of English literature being altogether taken off the academic packages they offer. The existing strength of English literature programmes, and an increasing demand for raising the number of seats in all the departments of all public universities will probably stave off such a move.

5. ELT, and, along with it, linguistics, will see further expansion as a huge market exists for it which is expanding phenomenally around the globe. A recent study points out to the emergence of new geolinguistic regions, in addition to the existic ones, where English enjoys the status of a privileged media and cultural language. The homogeneity in terms of English language use is bound to expand rather phenomenally, the study maintains, expanding the size of the English language market. (Sinclair, Jacka, Cunningham, 1996). Besides USA, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia, India is an expanding geolinguistic region where English is a strong second language, while China and Japan are fast becoming major markets for English language. Besides, economies of scale and scope will always create newer demands, and some of these are already being met even in Bangladesh: a private university has started offering undergraduate degree in Business English (which also contains a course on Hospitality English), and courses on Call Centre English are being offered by many private language training centers. ELT enjoys hefty support from the British Council – which itself offers "English for Life" courses that are, by Bangladeshi standard, quite expensive. The British Overseas Development Agency, DFID, has also come up with a well funded programme to promote ELT and the "English for Life" concept in Bangladesh. I am sure ELT curriculum and teaching methodology will undergo significant changes in keeping with emerging demands. But so far, the

standard in both cases appear to have set by British and American Universities, and if there have been changes in the last few years, these have been mediated or supported by the British Council. ELT and linguistics curricula and teaching methodology will need some fundamental changes in view of the educational, and more particularly English language teaching realities, of Bangladesh, some of which the discipline will also share with literature. The English language proficiency of the entry level students in public universities is generally poor to dismal. My own assessment over the last few years is that as many as 8 out of 10-12 students I meet in my first year tutorials cannot write a paragraph without one or more mistakes in every sentence. Most of them cannot carry out a meaningful conversation in English, let alone give their opinions on an issue. They improve somewhat over the years, but not significantly. What, may I ask, is the use of teaching them discourse analysis when they cannot even come up with an elementary discourse in the language, even on a perfectly ordinary matter? Or, what, for that matter, is the use of teaching them Shakespeare, when most of his plays have to be understood via Cliff notes or Indian bazaar notes? But since ELT is basically about teaching (and learning English), the burden falls on ELT practitioners to come up with some research (not following American or British models, but those set by our own researchers based on ground realities here) to find out where the problems lie, and once these have been identified, to design a new curriculum effectively addressing them. In my opinion, we need to concentrate on writing – composition – reading and speaking. Reading books from beginning to end – not scanning and skimming should be taught patiently and over time. I believe scanning and skimming are meant for societies having an advanced reading culture, but not certainly for one like ours which is increasingly shying away from reading. And, above all, something should be done to avoid encouraging rote learning. Also, contact with students' own mother language – overwhelmingly Bangla here but also others that exist – should be encouraged. One good thing that has happened in English Studies over the last few years has been a re-evaluation of local languages in terms of their ability to develop linguistic and cultural instincts of the users which they can transfer to a second language situation and learn that language more effectively. I hope that English departments here take up the challenge. Some years ago, I read Mary Louise Pratt's "Linguistic Utopias," where she describes the attempt by Black English Vernacular to create "a speech community along...utopian lines," and by "some early feminist work in linguistics" seeking to "lay out an entity called 'women's language.'" And, after describing the work of critical linguists such as Roger Fowler as "extraordinarily empowering," Pratt writes that such work "indeed does challenge the normative force of standard grammar, insisting on heterogeneity, on



the existence and legitimacy of lifeways other than those of dominant groups" (56). I believe such work can be done here too, and in keeping with local sensibilities and realities. ELT has a huge potential, but to fully develop that the English departments here have to reorganize priorities and develop an application based-methodology.

The same also applies to English literature studies. When theory was introduced in the curriculum, it did help in the interpretation of literary texts, and expanded the boundaries of literature across cultures. But now that the days of high theory are over, more application-based theoretical approaches should be developed. Students have easily related to postcolonialism, feminism and postmodernism because there is an empirical ground that the students can locate from their own experience. Similarly, the need to include media studies and some emerging areas such as visual culture and communication may be adjusted without sacrificing too much of the canon. I for one do not want to see classics giving way to video texts, no matter what the imperatives of visual culture are. Video texts, if and when they become part of English Studies syllabus, may exist side by side with classics. There is no harm in that. And finally, literature courses should reintroduce the accent on composition that characterized the syllabus in the early years of the English department of Dhaka University.

6. As English Studies adjusts to the needs of the changing times, there may be criticism of its openness to everything. As Peter Widdowson once ruefully remarked, "Clearly the proper study of literature is – everything else" (Coyle *et al*, 1228), too much openness would rid the discipline of its focus – its proper study. It is important to realize that the structure of English has always been open, and as Derrida maintains, "always already in process" (quoted by Pope 26). There will be border crossings – and border disputes (e.g. should visual culture be considered an English studies subject?), but in the end, changes and adjustments have to be made without fundamentally disturbing the discipline's central focus if it has to be a prominent discourse of our time, exploring and giving voice to a whole range of human experience.

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# Capitalism, "Hybrid Wars" and Confiscated Narratives: The Classico-Postmodernist Imperialism of Our Time

*Md. Manzur Alam*  
East West University

## Abstract

From the classical maxim that "empires are forged by war" to the notion of "hybrid wars", "aestheticization of war," exploitation of nation states, corporatization and commodification, imperialist powers with globalizing missions and *mission civilisatrice* have always resorted to means that the expansion of capital has sought. Though Hardt and Negri contend that "Empire", their terminology for global imperialism/capitalism, is a phantasmal, autonomous network of power where global flows of people, information, and wealth can hardly be monitored or controlled from a single metropolitan center, the reality is that the discourse and politics of neoliberal hegemony, coupled with unique exercise of power, allow the United States and its cohorts (a few powerful countries and multinational corporations) to dominate "Empire." This paper outlines the nature and *modus operandi* of this recent classico-postmodernist imperialist power project, one that combines tradition with novelty in its logic of rule, and argues that the "unholy trinity" of capital, US led imperialism and manipulated globalization has reached a climactic, volatile stage since the system it has created is undermining humanitarian values and justice. This paper also argues for a new collective mode of counter-hegemonic thinking needed to counter the kind of injustice and inhumanity spawned by late capitalism. Such resistance, the paper proposes, could be attempted through measures such as reawakening of humanitarian standards, "reinvent(ing) civil disobedience", globalizing labour movements and strengthening the structures of nation-states.

## I

As theoretical overtures, TV debates, discussions, talks and conferences proliferate over issues of how the world order has substantially changed over the centuries and what the new world order is and will be like in coming decades, and as the

elements, forces and powers of the world order continue to be named and renamed, the most obvious problems that persist and intensify humanitarian crises are often bypassed for less important concerns in discussions and summits of transnational bodies created with an aim to maintaining global peace and balance. Some of the most persistent problems of our world include the ever-widening gap between rich and poor, denial of human rights in many regions, atrocities committed in military and democratic-pseudo regimes backed by world's neo-imperial powers, deaths of innocent people in the Middle East and other parts of the world, and so on. More and more people are becoming unemployed. They have less access to basic human needs, or go to sleep on the streets of this metropolis, only able to cast a last, long-lasting blank look at a TV program visible through the transparent glass of a Sony showroom.

The roots to the above and many other instances of inopportune issues and phenomena is a new world order regulated by capital, imperialism and globalization – three "different but interlinked forms and forces of exploitation and oppression in the world today" (Hussain 9). As European imperialist countries were responsible for oppressing and exploiting peoples from different parts of the world in different eras of history, many critics attribute the responsibility of today's instances of exploitation and injustice on a global scale to the USA and its supporters. Since the emergence of USA as a global power in the early years of the 20th century to the country's present heyday of power, USA has always acted shrewdly, even violently at times, to secure and also further strengthen its economical and political power. Thus, though the USA has taken judicious steps in many spheres, the country has also been accused of causing violence in different parts of the world for its own, self-centered interests. Even the very recent incidents of the Arab Spring that shook most Muslim countries in Asia and Africa are said to have been orchestrated by the US and its allies for regime change in those countries. It is thus important to discuss the ideas and works by critics like David Harvey, Arundhati Roy, Christian Salmon etc. who have attempted not only to discuss imperialism and its evils but also to analyze America's unilateral interests as the causes of various problems of our world today.

Globalization seems to have licensed an ever-increasing flow of money, products, technology and people across borders, and this fact poses a challenge to most nation-states as they try to monitor or control this flow. According to Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, "the sovereign power that governs the world" or "regulates these global exchanges" is "Empire" – which, they maintain, is the "new global

form of sovereignty...composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule" (xii). Hardt and Negri differentiate Empire from "imperialism" based on the fact that unlike imperialism, "Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers" (xii). This Empire modifies the uncomplicated, spatial divisions of the three worlds by negating the rule of just one particular nation over the whole world, consolidating its own juridical, constitutional power, reducing the scope of ethics to its own usage, fighting "just wars" (10) around the globe, tending to encompass all time and history "within its ethical foundation" (11) and attempting to perpetuate its existence by suspending history.

All these aspects that form Hardt and Negri's Empire could, in most cases, be viewed as US imperialism's new order, a reconceptualization of the country's capitalist missions with its ever-changing politico-cultural global reach. The pattern of imperial rule has gone through so many stages of development and adjustment in relation to the changing history of the world (not to forget that imperialism, on the other hand, is largely responsible for changing the history of the world) that it has so far been called by many names, major and minor, starting from classical European empires that divided the world among themselves to Hardt and Negri's recent application of the upper-case term "Empire", a phenomenon of the postmodern period. Even though Hardt and Negri define Empire as a deterritorialized nexus of power, the fact that the US occupies the hot seat in it and dictates it is noteworthy when we consider that the country wields immense diplomatic and muscle power. The country has so far been instrumental in dominating global cultural, political and economical landscapes in recent times, with the help of its European allies, IMF, WTO and some corporate elites. The US as an imperialist power has both similarities with and differences from old European imperialist powers and operates through coercive strategies, manufactured consent, liquidation and cooperation. American power started to gain momentum in the aftermath of World War I, and since then the country has always found new ways of creating avenues for global supremacy and has opted to be pre-emptive to thwart potential challenges against its global domination. The classico-postmodernist tendencies of US imperialism today combine old strategies of rule such as coercion, invasion, mercantilism etc. motivated by ideas of "gold, god and glory" with an array of new strategies that leave its adversaries perplexed and guessing – strategies such as propagandas, spying, launching "holy" wars and creating and telling unique stories to justify and preserve its imperial missions.

Thus, the idea of today's imperialism that largely serves the unilateral interests of the US could be termed either as Empire, US empire or US imperialism. All these terms refer to the country's apparently imperial traits, its penchant for direct control over some countries through military bases, or its adaptation of a strategy combining coercion and consent, all of which is for capital accumulation. Ellen Meiksins Wood suggests that "one of the most important characteristics of capitalism is that the economic hegemony of capital can extend far beyond the limits of direct political domination". This characteristic, he contends, is true both in cases of relations between capital and labour and between imperial and subordinate states (128). And, the US, whose economic control of the globe exceeds its political control, surely excels in what it takes to be the major hegemon in today's capitalist world: "Money, productive capacity, and military might are the three legs upon which hegemony stands under capitalism" (Harvey 41). A sign of the US's military supremacy over the rest of the world is its military bases in about 150 countries of the world. Remaining as legacy of its engagements in warfare in the past and established in the name of peace-keeping missions, these panoptic bases actually help to secure markets, exert unhindered export of natural resources to the US and watch over signs of any potential threat to the country's elevated sense of security. Quoting from Richard Butler's Op-Ed piece in the *New York Times* (January 18, 2002), John Bellamy Foster notes how the war in Afghanistan helped the Californian oil company Unocal build a pipeline across Afghanistan and Pakistan. He observes that "...without a strong US military presence in the region, through the establishment of bases as a result of the war, the construction of such a pipeline would almost certainly have proven impracticable" (64). Ironically, although understandable since it is a part of its attempt to secure the political and capitalist interests, such bases around the world have apparently been used by the US to spark and then nurture sectarian violence in different countries and to maintain an aggressive posture for the US so that it can launch attacks on different regions of the world to further its varied interests.

One of America's major sources of strength is that it is perceived to be the leader of the capitalist countries of the world. Even though capitalism has always adjusted itself to the contemporary order, the fact that capitalism depreciates labour, impoverishes people, maximizes profit and exploits nation state has always remained ingrained in its operative schema. Although the nature of capitalism has not changed much over the centuries, the question that needs to be asked now is where capitalism is poised now, and what the coordinates and characteristics of capitalism are in the new millennium. Lenin in his *Imperialism, the Highest Stage*

*of Capitalism* (1916) indicated that capitalism had in his time evolved into a higher stage through its transition from free competition to monopoly. He declared, "...imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism" (105). To him capitalism and imperialism have become inseparable as they have joined hands to create monopolies that divide the world among themselves and regulate economic life. Lenin's idea of capitalism is still very much relevant today although the main control of global politics, resources and markets has shifted by now from Great Britain to the US. In his book *The Wor(l)d in Question*, Azfar Hussain repeatedly uses the term "late monopoly capital" (13) to recognize the endless complexity and flexibility he detects in the nature of capitalism today. Hussain borrows his term from Ernest Mendel's idea of "late capitalism" though Hussain appears repetitive in his attempts to tag the word "late" to capital's contemporary stage. The "lateness" he attaches to capitalism echoes Lenin's idea of monopoly capital though Hussain thinks that capital's capability to monopolize in recent times is unprecedented. However, Ray Kiely feels that Lenin's characterization of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism is somewhat 'unconvincing' because capital in Lenin's time actually flowed between imperialist countries whereas "there was actually limited capital accumulation in the colonies" (59). This assertion actually reveals a futuristic Lenin whose insight is more tenable now than when it was formulated. The world today has indeed been witnessing an uncontrollable flow of capital crisscrossing virtually the whole globe. In today's-'globalized' economy, the influence of capital is so diffuse that it can take every possible direction, even though the global market is yet far from being integrated.

Apart from the changes capitalism has brought to the nature of power or domination, US imperialism's distinctive nature lies in the lessons it has learned from history in promoting itself from a colony to an imperial power. With the final phase of decolonization in the wake of World War II, when there was rapid disintegration of the European empires, mostly in Africa and Asia, it soon became clear to analysts that the era of uncomplicated, direct conquest of a country and subjugation of its populace by setting up a colony was over. What was clear was that only a complex, capitalist exercise of power backed by support maneuvered from different powerful countries and supranational bodies and organisms could be sustained in the long run.

The way the US operates its imperial missions, or has so far operated them in the Middle East, is noteworthy. The mix of a complicated version of the old "divide and rule" policy, and the so-called "war on terror"—this is how the US operates now. There have been attempts to divide the populations of the Middle

East and Central Asia according to their ethnic, religious, sectarian, national, and political differentiations. Conflicts between Kurds and Arabs in Iraq and Shiite and Sunni Muslims throughout the Middle East are assumed to have been aggravated by the US and its allies. Besides, the war between Iran and Iraq, the Gulf War, "wars on terror" - all these suggest a common recipe: make an autocrat, have him knock down the other(s), and then remove the very despot himself when a regime change is imperative. This formula has been effective not only in securing the oil market for the US but also in maintaining political control over the Middle East while strengthening US military might in this region, through creation of new bases. John Bellamy Foster observes:

"In 1990, prior to the Gulf War, the United States had no bases in South Asia and only 10 percent as many in the Middle East/Africa as in 1947...The appearance of new bases in the Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America and Plan Colombia therefore can be seen as a reassertion of direct US military and imperial power in areas where this had to some extent eroded." (62-63)

## II

In addition to its unprecedented concentration of military and muscle power, US imperialism backs itself through its capacity for creating and telling stories - narratives that earn it support from transnational bodies and ex-imperial countries, keep a whole host of powerful countries in or out of its business, and attempt to silence voices of resistance at home and abroad. Through a synchronization of fiction with reality, US forces of power, which includes the Oval Office, Department of State, international proponents of the US cause and the corporate elites, manufacture stories to frame reality and expand its political and economic influence.

In his intriguing book *Storytelling: Bewitching the Modern Mind*, Christian Salmon thus discusses how technocapitalist US imperialism has adopted strategies of power to such an extent that the modern mind has been immersed in an illusory universe that maneuvers perceptions, frames feelings, behavior and ideas, and "...tacks artificial narratives on to reality" (10). Salmon opens his book by describing a video game used to train American troops fighting in Iraq. This game was developed by the Institute for Creative Technologies founded by the Pentagon in 1999. This research center at the University of Southern California makes use of Hollywood's creativity in creating stories to augment Pentagon's training methods. This novel role of stories in smartening up war tactics reflect



the fact that, as Salmon puts it, "The empire has confiscated narrative" (12). The US's use of extraordinary narratives ranges from domestic election campaigns to creating new political realities, creating fake terrorists and launching wars on countries labeled as "failed states" by US master storytellers.

From Agamemnon to Bush of America, the classical formula that "Empires are forged by war" (*Troy*, the movie) has not lost much of its application; it is only the tactics, *modus operandi* and methods of launching wars that have had to be so fine-tuned in successive imperial eras. In the post Cold-war age, the nature of modern warfare has evolved innovatively. It has now earned brand names such as 'hybrid war', 'postmodern war', 'aesthetic war' etc for itself. In his book *Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Frank Hoffman reviews the background and the changing temperament of warfare in our time. He uses the term "hybrid wars" to redefine modern day wars that incorporate different modes of warfare that include conventional and unconventional capabilities, tactics, propaganda activities, indiscriminate violence, coercion etc. The wars the US launched in the last few decades have employed combinations of different types of warfare that were unprecedented, and in effect, have been continuously evolving. Battlefields and the actual site of warfare have now been relocated and are in cyberspace, international forums and the media. These virtual wars are being fought in a new hybrid environment where along with old weapons, "...data, systems for decoding information, and storylines whose ultimate goal is not so much the annihilation of the enemy as the mythical construction of the enemy" have been employed to a great extent (Salmon 121). The US fights these postmodernist "hybrid wars" all over the globe. Hardt and Negri observes that "Empire is formed not on the basis of force itself but on the basis of the capacity to present force as being in the service of right and peace" (15). Wars are thus "aestheticized" by the US on a regular basis through a whole host of propaganda activities and advertising that go on prior to and during a war. Even some post-war justifications are smartly drawn into the act through supposedly humanitarian initiatives such as healthcare, rehabilitation etc. carried out on a small scale on a war- evacuated landscape.

The US led 'wars on terror' of recent decades surely exemplify all the above-mentioned brands of war, and a discussion on US motives behind Iraq war would illuminate why all these identical wars are fought in the first place. The actual reasons that the US went to war against Iraq deserve scrutiny, now that most of the truths are out. David Harvey explains why "there is indeed a long history of governments in trouble domestically seeking to solve their problems

either by foreign adventures or by manufacturing foreign threats to consolidate solidarities at home" (12). Harvey then provides accounts of how the country was in a more troubled situation in the year 2002 than its near past. Problems such as recession, unemployment, corporate scandals, messy healthcare, poor administration were threatening the stability of the US. However, those who opposed the war and doubted its necessity think that oil was the key motive behind the war as Iraq was a threat to the flow of oil to international markets. After all, "whoever controls the world's oil controls the world's markets," (Roy 37). That is why US's capitalist precautions sought to dismantle Iraq. It was reported after the war how the then Vice President Cheney's old company Halliburton won billion dollars of contract for oil services immediately after the war. Arundhati Roy, while quoting from Thomas L. Friedman's national bestseller *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, observes how imperialist power and corporate globalization have joined hands to secure markets. To quote from Friedman: "... McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the US Air Force F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps" (464). Another argument that might make it clear that Iraq war was no holy mission is the time chosen for and reasons offered behind this war. There was no proof that Saddam's Iraq had weapons for mass destruction. Besides, he was not attacked earlier when, backed by the US and its European allies, he was conducting his worst atrocities of killing hundreds of Kurdish people by using chemical weapons. He thus had to be removed when he became an obstacle pain for America's global interests and internal economy.

### III

The proponents of globalization hypothesize it as an effective apparatus for creating homogeneity among nation states, thereby reducing disparity among them. But in reality, globalization has inherently become an important tool for sustaining imperial interests that depend on a system built up by cross-communications and interactions of multiple countries behind which lies the logic of expansion of neoliberal capitalism limited to a great extent to the trajectory of few corporate elites. The monopoly power of advanced capitalist countries dominate trade, finance, production, services and flows through neoliberal free trade and open capital markets, and for that purpose they make use of transnational financial bodies and governments of different nation-states. The nation state is surely one such apparatus whose legal and political authority over its people is required to maintain the economic and operational stability of

the systems of capitalism. The state is used to keep a class from owning property so that these people can be exploited whenever required. They are not allowed to cross borders at their will, and are forced to fulfill capitalism's growing demand for labour by bringing out other family members who also join the labour force for survival. On the other hand, transnational financial bodies, dominated by the US, help the global network of capital to function smoothly. David Harvey observes: "The emergence of a 'Wall Street-Treasury' complex within the United States, able to control institutions such as the IMF and to project vast financial power across the world through a network of other financial and governmental institutions, has exercised massive influence over the dynamics of global capitalism in recent years." (134)

Although globalization has brought the world closer in many respects, its impact is not identical or symmetrical in all fields. As Eric Hobsbawm points out, "We can have a globalized economy, we can aspire to a globalized culture, we certainly have a globalized technology and a single global science, but politically speaking, we have a world that remains in reality pluralist and divided into territorial states" (43). Globalization, indeed, has widened the gap between the economic and political power of capital and has helped transnational capitalism, represented by Microsoft, McDonald's, Nike etc., extend its reach and systems beyond the grasp and boundaries of the nation state. One common trait that the transnational corporations or the TNCs share is their intent to maximize profit by exploiting the pools of cheap labour in the third world countries. The undaunted facility that they have in such countries is cheap labour coupled with necessary supports from the state to have the labour force in control; for example, Suharto's Indonesia in the mid-1960s experienced what amounted to almost a ban on trade union activities. The Bangladesh government's recent agreement with ConocoPhillips, an USA energy giant, for exploration in two deepwater gas blocks in the Bay of Bengal offshore reflects a similar condition where Bangladesh will get only 20% of the extracted gas and the rest, as the agreement goes, could be bought by Bangladesh. Studies reflect that most TNCs earn more revenues outside than in their countries of origin, and their global reach and profitability have also earned them a place amongst the world's biggest economic entities. According to data stated by D. Steven White, and released in July 2010 by *Fortune Magazine* and the World Bank, the world's largest 175 economic entities in terms of their revenue generation include 109 corporations (62.3%). Wal-Mart, Royal Dutch/Shell, Exxon Mobil, and British Petroleum rank among the top 40 entities in the world, far above countries such as Finland, Portugal, Ireland, Malaysia and New Zealand.

Corporate globalization claims increase in the world's total income though the computation leaves out the fact that the number of the poor across the world has increased accordingly. It also threatens democracy of poorer countries by impairing their legal functioning as they attempt to take necessary reforms for privatization devoid of necessary state intervention. This practice goes against the interest of the poor and forces them to buy those things as commodities that they once enjoyed without spending money. The term "globalization" should thus be seen as "corporate globalization", "globalization of capitalism" and so on, to highlight specific evils of the phenomena over the idea of righteousness that the generic use of the term suggests. In the Manifesto of the Communist Party, Marx and Engels too hint at the fact that the general idea of globalization is an outcome of the dynamics inherent in the very nature of capitalism that seeks to expand its dominion everywhere in the world: "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere" (5).

#### IV

Because of its preference for profit over people and its contradictory practices, capitalist empire is in itself an anarchist, contradictory system that always needs newer terrains and surplus labour at its disposal for exploitation. Capitalism reduces wages for labour but needs more consumption on part of even the labour force, which is one of its contradictory logics. The worst sufferers of the capitalist expansion are thus the labour force who are devalued constantly and are ultimately caught in a system that seems to dehumanize them eternally. As Marx points out in *Capital*: "Capital is dead labor, which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks" (342). The singular motto of endless capital accumulation in space and time also ceaselessly searches for profits indiscriminately, thus creating tensions, according to David Harvey, "...between competition and monopoly, between concentration and dispersal, between centralization and decentralization, between fixity and motion, between dynamism and inertia, between different scales of activity..."(101). These tensions lead to capitalism's creation of a geographical landscape to run its activities, only to exhaust it in the end and look for a new landscape. Again, capitalism thrives on competition but after a point it has to foil competition to survive, or look for new places to expand its horizon. Moreover, through necessary intervention of the nation state, capitalist globalization, to a large extent, prevents integration of markets universally to enhance the profitability of capital, maintaining an ironic balance between opening borders to global capital and dissuading the integration of markets.

As new inter-imperial rivalries seem improbable in present times, the vulnerability of US empire thus springs from its over-ambitious capitalism and inner contradictions. Aijaz Ahmad rules out the possibility of China becoming a possible threat to US ascendancy because, according to him, "China is extremely vulnerable to the United States, militarily and economically..." (60). Ahmad argues that the US is very much capable of creating internal conflicts and separatist movements in China. This longevity that Ahmad claims for US empire could be negated by the fact that the country's global, capitalist ambitions and international conflicts are too expensive and expansive to sustain in the long run. Citing the information that the United States spends billions of dollars every year on nuclear weapons, intelligence, modern warships and aircrafts, and sends out millions of soldiers to fight, Fidel Castro in one of his speeches delivered on 3 July 1998 envisaged that this thoughtless culture of the US's hunger for domination would one day make the country suffer a profound economic crisis, more so because of its unsustainable stock markets and inflation of value. Castro sounds quite prophetic when he says: "We maintain, based on mathematical facts, that such a neoliberal globalization is not sustainable; that the crisis is inevitable" (Speech delivered on 3 July 1998).

Though power relations in capitalist systems are often so diffuse that it is tough to find a target of resistance, if any exploitations are to be opposed in the first place, it has to be those done by the US's capitalist, tri-continental missions. There are countries such as Cuba and Venezuela that are continuously holding onto their ideologies against US aggression. Leaders around the world could use Latin America as a model where an ideological revival of the successes against Spanish imperialism in the past is now being assimilated and practiced by leaders and activists against present-day oppressive power. In recent times, the ideologies and praxis of the recently deceased Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, known as New Bolivarianism which "... combines continental nationalism and social-democratic reforms fuelled by oil revenues", have been posing a massive moral challenge to US expansionism (Ali, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Axis of Hope* 41). Having paid off his country's debts to the World Bank and the IMF, Chávez freed his country's economy from the clutches of such lending institutions that promote the priorities of the Washington Consensus. He, along with a few other Latin American leaders, has already set up a new financial institution called "Bank of the South" run by Latin American nations and has vowed to support it with Venezuela's thriving oil revenues.

Getting velocity around the world is also an increasing amount of public opinion, movements and labour organizations shaping against labour exploitation, corporatization and US aggression. Anti-imperial thinkers and

activists now need to form close ties among all these scattered initiatives and movements fighting against the same set of evils. Arundhati Roy offers the following guideline for confronting empire:

Our strategy should be not only to confront Empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness - and our ability to tell our stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe. (86)

Roy's passionate outcry should be mingled with the voices raised in organized movements to challenge the capitalist empire's exploitative authority that denies the rights of the vast majority. Roy also urges "reinvent(ing) civil disobedience in a million different ways" (85) to render the power structures of empire inactive. Inspiration can be found from 15 February 2003, days before the Iraq war when over eight million people converged on different streets of different continents to dissuade the US and its allies from attacking Iraq. Unsuccessful though it was, Tariq Ali still calls it, the "first truly global mobilization unprecedented in size, scope or scale..." (*Front Lines I*). Movements such as this and labour movements scattered here and there need to be truly globalized to face an adversary that is globalized in its extreme form.

The manipulation of governments of most nation states by financial institutions such as IMF and WTO to strengthen the capitalist empire is now globally recognized by experts as the major problem of political economy in most third world countries. To quote from Harvey again: "With the core of the political problem so clearly recognized, it should be possible to build outwards into a broader politics of creative destruction mobilized against the dominant regime of neo-liberal imperialism foisted upon the world by the hegemonic capitalist powers" (179-180). If a just world government is not established, or some supranational bodies like the UN are not strengthened to provide regulation to this capitalist global village, then this volatile situation might turn into an anarchist one, leading to regional power conflicts and in effect a more destabilized world. The immediate task at hand then is to strengthen the structures of nation-states and force the representatives of people to work for the cause of the masses, not for corporations. The situation is dire now, but things can get even worse unless we come up with the right measures so that the evils of Neoliberal hegemony and the stranglehold of military might incarnated in the shape of the "United States of North America" and its close associates do not reach the point of no return in its mission to exploit the rest of the world.

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# The Role of Sisterhood Penitentiaries in the Reclamation of Fallen Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain

*Ramit Samaddar*  
Jadavpur University

## Abstract

This article focuses on the role played by sisterhood penitentiaries in the rehabilitation of 'fallen women' in nineteenth-century Britain. Beginning with a brief outline of the disciplinary rules implemented by these remedial institutions, it moves on to investigate the backgrounds of the penitents, the relationship between the sisters and the penitentiary wardens, the 'advantages' reaped by the penitents during their penitentiary sojourn, the schemes of reformation followed by the sisters, their solidarity with the penitents across the conventions of class, sexuality and morality, and the criticism of the reclamation system by some leading female activists of the day. By probing into such issues, this paper offers fresh perspectives on the socio-cultural relevance of female-managed penitentiaries during the reign of Queen Victoria.

A confessional lyric about an unnamed speaker who recounts her life history to the priest attending her deathbed, Dora Greenwell's "Christina"<sup>1</sup> follows a highly conventional and clichéd narrative trajectory: orphaned, impoverished and naive, the speaker is seduced and abandoned, and turns to prostitution. She no longer contacts her childhood companion Christina, but retains an emotional bond with

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<sup>1</sup>Virtually unknown today, Dora Greenwell (1821-1882) was a household name in Victorian England, famous for her lyrical and religious verse. Her debut collection *Poems* (1848) was followed by a further seven volumes of poetry, including two largely devotional works, *Carmina Crucis* (1869) and *Camera Obscura* (1876). In her day, Greenwell was thought to belong to a trio of eminent poetesses, including Jean Ingelow and Christina Rossetti. The work of each poet reveals many shared interests. There is a possibility that "Christina", composed in 1851 but withheld from publication until 1869, may have had some influence on the poems about women and sexual temptation that Rossetti authored in the 1860s.

her: "Across the world-wide gulf betwixt us set/ My soul stretched out a bridge" (Greenwell, 1998, p. 442). However, when the two women meet accidentally over the grave of Christina's daughter, Christina implores her friend to return home with her to take the place of her dead child. But the speaker rejects this solution, offering no explanation for her decision. Instead, she leaves "the guilty city far behind" and enters a "goodly inn", where she carries out her penance under the benevolent guidance of some "gracious souls", who "loving their Lord" "could trace His image" "upon the . . . Long-lost, defaced and soiled" (Greenwell, 1998, p. 448). Although couched in a heavily figurative language, such an ending seems to insinuate that the speaker has taken up residence in one of those penitentiaries managed by Anglican sisters, where "fallen women" – a culturally approved euphemism for prostitutes, kept mistresses, female thieves and alcohol addicts – were given asylum in the reign of Queen Victoria.<sup>2</sup> These institutions were intended as rehabilitation centres, where such wayward and transgressive women could be changed into conscientious and diligent women, a transformation which involved both a spiritual metamorphosis from sinner to repentant, and a concomitant social shift from ostracised female to respectable woman. Funded by the Church of England, penitentiaries (also known as Houses of Mercy) were a part of a large-scale Christian reform movement which stretched all over Britain. In fact, by the middle decades of the nineteenth century every English town and metropolis had at least one conventual organisation devoted to the emancipation and edification of fallen women (Bartley, 2000, p. 25). The Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage and the Community of St. John Baptist were two of the earliest female-managed penitentiaries established exclusively to minister to this pressing social need.

All potential penitents were expected to remain in a House of Mercy for about eighteen months to two years to accomplish penitential assignments fruitfully, although cases were considered on an individual basis. The working patterns, leisure facilities and general lifestyle at these institutions were markedly alike; in a scribbled note found in the pages of the minutes of the Liverpool Penitentiary, a committee member scheduled the daily routine of the inmates as follows: "work (7.00am), breakfast (7.30am), work (8.00 - 10.30am), rest (10.30 - 10.45am), work (10.45 - 1.00pm), lunch (1.00 - 2.00pm), work (2.00 - 5.00pm), tea (5.00 - 5.30pm), work (5.30 - 8.00pm)" (cited in Bartley, 2000, p. 53). *Seeking and Saving*, the official bulletin of the Victorian reform movement,

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<sup>2</sup>The fact that Greenwell was personally involved in finding penitentiary homes for young prostitutes makes this interpretation even more plausible. See Maynard, C. (1926). *Dora Greenwell: A Prophet for Our Own Times on the Battleground of Our Faith*. London: H. R. Allenson.

suggested that there were four methods of disciplining penitents and keeping order in these institutions: (i) the military discipline "where everything was done to a signal"; (ii) the mute discipline "where all crept about silently"; (iii) the unrestrained discipline "where inmates laughed and talked about the sisterhood in perfect freedom"; and (iv) the "discipline of force" where inmates were administered coercively, if they refused to obey (cited in Bartley, 2000, p. 46). Some penitentiaries hung disciplinary rules on the walls as a constant reminder for all inmates of the need to behave properly. The Horbury Penitentiary kept a report book in which all breaches of rule were entered. Each Monday these report books were sent to the Sister Superior, who deducted a half-penny from weekly earnings of four pence for delinquency. All unpaid work, from scrubbing floors to cleaning windows, from making beds to sweeping carpets, from mending clothes to cooking food, was carried out by the penitents (Bartley, 2000, p. 50). The exhausting physical hustle involved in these activities meant that "the wild restlessness, the lawlessness, the animal passions, and excitement of the old life, were worked off by muscular exertion" (Hopkins, 1879, p. 15). Penitents were evaluated by the loss or gain of "marks": the accumulation of marks synchronized the speed with which a penitent would be promoted for release (Mumm, 1996, p. 536). However, to prevent monotony and spread of disgruntlement among penitents occasional excursions were arranged by many institutions. Usually this involved a tour of the surrounding countryside, a stroll in a park, boating on a lake or a walk by the seashore. Periodic invitations to the garden parties at the residences of local humanitarians were common. Special events were celebrated. For instance, at Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee the inmates of many penitentiaries were provided with tea and an afternoon out to watch the revelry taking place all over England (Bartley, 2000, p. 57).

One customary practice of every nineteenth-century penitentiary was the maintenance of a general memorandum on the familial backgrounds and occupational histories of the penitents. Three common denominators in these women's family backgrounds were financial bankruptcy, orphanhood and illiteracy. The predominance of the female relatives of gardeners, washer men, carpenters, shoemakers and tailors in the penitentiaries reinforces the malicious role destitution played in the creation of fallen women. Contemporary social activist, Anna Brownell Jameson (1859) observed: "We talk of 'fallen women'; but for the far greater number there is no fall. They are starving, and they sell themselves for food" (p. 39). Many applicants were parentless: they had been raised by foster relatives or had somehow survived as waifs and strays. "A good home till mother died" is the usual grievance made by the entrants in the

penitentiary roll books. Lack of education in families also contributed in these women's socio-economic vulnerability. The Thirtieth Annual Report of Lincolnshire Penitent Females' Home disclosed that of the thirteen penitents registered in 1878, five could read and write, six could do neither, and two could read but not write; parents of these girls were most likely illiterate (Mumm, 1996, p. 544). As time passed it became increasingly recognised by the sisters that the bulk of inmates were previously employed in various domestic professions. The Clewer House of Mercy traced the initial occupations of its plebeian penitents between 1866 and 1869. In these three years, fifty-nine servants, twenty-one housemaids, seven cooks, four nursemaids, three dressmakers, two barmaids, two factory labourers, one governess, one milliner, and one shop girl entered as prospective penitents (Mumm, 1996, p. 532).

Although a penitentiary was run exclusively by the deputed sisters working close at hand, there was a clerical warden always available to perform religious services and oversee pecuniary matters. Invested with ultimate sovereignty in the penitentiary, the warden was, however, not always personally engaged in its day-to-day operation. The function of the warden was thus a paradoxical one: the bureaucratic head of the ecclesiastical network administered the penitentiary; nevertheless, he had only minimal or highly ritualised interaction with the members of his institution. His curious status of absent-presence constituted a veiled patriarchy that tangentially dismantled the sororal paradigm espoused in the penitentiary movement's appeals for female volunteers. In other words, the unvarying triangulation of roles within the sister community forced women to define themselves and their relationships to each other in terms of an extra-sororal male presence, generally invoked as a last resort for consultation on matters affecting the penitentiary. Scott Rogers (2003) believes that the political resonance of the warden was "felt most powerfully in the hierarchical dispensation of authority within the sister relationship, and in the ways this affected the internal dynamics of the community of women" (p. 869). But to assume that Victorian wardens took zero interest in the daily functioning of their convents is to blinker our understanding of their significance in the penitentiary movement willingly. Certainly there were some exceptions. One such exception was the warden of the Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage, a well-beloved figure in the sisterhood circle, who in an 1881 symposium urged his putative audience not to separate penitents merely on class and moral grounds: "I have found that the great mass of the girls brought in are not at all worse in any manifest way than ordinary maid servants and with proper advantages they are not worse than many other girls" (cited in Mumm, 1996, p. 120).

That all nineteenth-century penitentiaries faced a routine oversupply of applicants requesting admission raises a question of incentive: why did women clamour to accommodate themselves in an institution for a twenty-four month course of penitence when they could attain respectability merely by starting life afresh? There are two possible explanations. First, Victorian lawmakers made the certified programme of formal penitence obligatory for all fallen women who desired to lead a reputable life in accordance to the set conventions of mainstream society. Second, women realised that they could reap multiple advantages and reorient their lives if they managed to gain access to a sisterhood penitentiary. Unquestionably, the second argument had more credence than the first; for these fallen women, the penitentiary was indeed a getaway from an infected environment and a sanctuary of opportunities which would enable them to get reabsorbed into the social fabric surreptitiously. Let us now examine some of these "advantages" of penitentiary life exploited by prostitutes, kept mistresses, female thieves and alcoholic women respectively.

Every penitentiary offered free accommodation, rations, clothing and medical treatment to its inmates. Consequently, many prostitutes who suffered steep decline in earning power owing to ill-health and senility requested admission to a House of Mercy with the expectation of spending their last days in peace and comfort. Some prostitutes who voluntarily abandoned the scene of their commercial activity out of feelings of personal culpability and self-mortification wanted to join a penitentiary to atone for their sins. The Community of St. John Baptist called such women consecrated 'Magdalens'; these should not be confused with ordinary penitents. But the general public seldom made this distinction and the two terms were often conflated. Surprisingly, the notorious Contagious Disease Acts of the 1860s also played a pivotal part in escalating the number of prostitutes in penitentiaries. The purveyors of these laws mandated compulsory genital inspection for venereal disease in suspected prostitutes and the detention of such women in penitentiaries. As a result, penitentiaries all over Britain became jam-packed with "unhealthy" prostitutes who were often discriminated against by other "healthy" penitents. One important feature of the rehabilitative penitentiaries was the vocational education imparted by nuns, sufficient to make penitents completely independent of the help of others. Apart from providing extensive tutoring in reading, writing and arithmetic, sisters emphasised that inmates should be trained for rudimentary domestic activities such as cleaning, washing, ironing, dairying, and needlework. In the 1870s penitents in at least one convent could earn sufficient spending money by undertaking these works during recreation times

(Mumm, 1996, p. 536). Such utilitarian facilities appealed to our second category of fallen woman: the kept mistress. In her influential study on the rhetoric of fallenness in Victorian culture, Deborah Logan (1998) has hinted at how kept mistresses in penitentiaries were coached to fill posts as household servants, generally specialist posts such as parlour-maid or nurse (64). Some of them received good references and assistance in finding jobs in what has been termed as "the great Victorian dustbin for the unwanted", the colonies (Hobsbawn, 1969, p. 84). However, it must not be assumed that all types of fallen women entered monastic penitentiaries in an earnest attempt to make a new beginning. Female thieves regarded these institutions as an expedient of bettering themselves and/or as a suitable bolt-hole to escape from the clutches of law. They would stay for as long as they fancied, usually during the bleak winter season or while recovering from illness. When the weather or their health improved they would leave, paying no attention to the solicitations of the nuns. Some of these pseudo-penitents absconded furtively at night, stealing whatever items of value they could carry with them. The rationale for the rising popularity of the penitentiaries among alcoholic women was the secular indoctrination given there as a part of the penitence curriculum. Coming invariably from a different social milieu, these hardcore alcoholics had no interest in learning about Christian rituals or about the sanctified lifestyle of the sisters. As a result, despite the unflinching religious constancy of the sisters themselves, many British penitentiaries allegedly tended to downplay the religious practice among inebriate penitents. One senior convent-manager counselled thus:

I believe there are many [addicts] who are repelled by the violent change from their free and easy life to the strict and severe system of a Penitentiary. Let them be admitted simply as inmates of a Home, requiring of them only quite behaviour, obedience, and work, and leaving them as perfectly free as regards religion. (cited in Mumm, 1996, p. 539)

Furthermore, penitentiary humanitarians made special remedial provision for alcoholics, after learning that these women's addiction problem rendered it difficult for them to stay abstemious and to retain decent jobs. In view of these facts, penitentiaries could be seen as therapeutic havens and the penitents as patients in treatment.

A major thrust area of the penitentiary programme was the wholesome reformation of the fallen women's bodies, minds and spirits. Both sisters and wardens strongly reckoned that strict implementation of this threefold reform

schema would be necessary for making these women physically as well as psychologically fit to re-enter mainstream society. The reformation of the body included proper acquisition of deferential and respectful demeanour. The fallen women wore a uniform dress, curtsied when passing seniors, observed regular hours of silence, entered others' room with permission, and refrained from mentioning their pasts. The reformation of the mind included adherence to bourgeois values, the ability to make the right decisions, and the capacity to work intelligently, and not like machines. The sisters' wish was to render the fallen women mentally unfit for their former lives; success was attained when previously acceptable manifestations of working-class idiom and conduct filled raised fallen women with revulsion. The reformation of the spirit included proper religious initiation under the tutelage of individual sisters; the ostensible aim was the hope that even if these fallen women reverted to their old lives they would ask for the privileges of the Church before they would die. It should be noted that these stringent corrective practices prescribed for fallen women were in many ways akin to those followed by the sisters themselves. This sameness of experience led the fallen women to see themselves as extended alter-egos of those who formulated and imposed the rules.

Significantly, many Anglican sisters perceived themselves as surrogate mothers of the penitents working under their supervision. These celibate nuns, who vehemently repudiated their myopic culture's strait-laced assumption that matrimony and maternity were the preferred goal and instinctive standard for all women, embraced the penitents as their spiritual, if not biological, daughters. Thomas T. Carter, Rector of the Clewer House of Mercy, was openly appreciative of such emotional mother-daughter bond shared by the sisters and their fallen yet willing-to-be-rescued penitents. Optimistically, he declared:

We are merely supplying . . . a home and mother's care. We are simply providing out of the bosom of the Church what nature had failed to give, and what the world cannot. This is the true way of viewing the case of these fallen women. (cited in Mumm, 1996, p. 538)

The life-cycle of every Victorian woman typically involved a movement from the father's family to the family of the husband. Prostitutes, kept mistresses, female thieves and alcohol addicts were expelled from both; the communities of the sisters with their egalitarian philosophy of mystical motherhood offered these unfortunate women a substitute congenial domestic space, the "home" of the penitentiary. Debunking the belief that fallenness was an outrageous offence against the ethical principles of the society, one that resulted in the incurable

deterioration of character, the sisters preached that the distinctions between penitents and other women were more of circumstance than of character. While the self-appointed guardians of morality passed the sentence of excommunication on the penitentiary inmates, the sisters did not; they were quick to break the barriers prohibiting their interaction with the inmates. Symbolically, the maternal compassion and camaraderie exhibited by these pious sisters upheld the penitentiary movement's insistence that "fallen women need some such sisters to be ever at their side, watching them in weak moments, encouraging them in seasons of overwhelming gloom, checking outbreaks of temper and light words, directing and controlling their conversations" (D'Amico, 1992, p. 72).

Intrinsically associated with the functioning of the conventual penitentiaries was the notion of mutual solidarity between sisters and penitents across the conventions of class difference, sexual myth and moral law. Although the general public was of the opinion that "good" women should maintain a sufficient distance from "bad" women<sup>3</sup>, the sisters thought otherwise and defiantly spearheaded the reformatory process to ensure unflinching support for the fallen women in their route to social reintegration. In so doing, they metaphorically lived out the biblical parables of Jesus Christ; like the shepherd looking for the lost sheep or the woman searching for the precious coin or the Good Samaritan attending the half-dead Jewish traveller, they made every possible effort to offer the penitents a sure means of escape from the quagmire of sin, money and flesh. Dissolution of class differences is indicated by the fact that sisters (usually upper-class in background) often received hundreds of correspondences from ex-penitents (belonging to the working-class): intimate bonds were formed when such "old girls" returned to visit the sisters during Christmas vacations or to make monetary contributions as a gesture of their active interest in the work of the community. Demystification of sexual myth is seen in the foundation of Magdalen orders by canonised sisterhoods where former penitents entered as nuns. This posed a radical challenge to the Victorian dualistic paradigm of femininity, a paradigm that promulgated an uncompromising segregation between two mutually exclusive categories of "pure" and "impure" woman. When a former penitent became a nun this not only signified that the sexual contamination of her character had been white-washed by expiation, but also situated her in a more elevated spiritual and social plane than she had been

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<sup>3</sup>An article titled 'Female Penitentiaries' in *The Quarterly Review* of 1848 gives expression to this blinkered public mentality. In general the reviewer lends his support to penitentiaries, but balks at the idea of "virtuous" nuns undertaking any practical running of them: "We may express a doubt whether it is advisable for pure-minded women to put themselves in the way of such knowledge of evil as must be learnt in dealing with the fallen members of their sex" (Armstrong, 1848, p. 375-6).



before her fall from virtue. Questioning of the moral law is evinced in the sisters' probing of the double standards and divided consciousness of the Victorian frame of mind. Sisters urged that the social stigma of moral contagion often levelled against women should be extended to men as well; they were convinced that men's ethical standards must be hoisted to those of women so that both sexes could become alert to their respective roles in soiling an otherwise unsoiled world.

Nonetheless, confidence in the power and viability of the penitentiary was questioned by many sceptical Victorians, who perceived it as a system of paternalistic regulation and severe religious observance, which the penitents, and even the sisters, found somewhat hard to bear. Activists such as Margaret Goodman, Penelope Holland and Felicia Skene<sup>4</sup> unequivocally focused on the flawed organisational methods governing these institutions in their writings on the "problems" inherent in female-managed communities. As Goodman (1862) recalled:

Led chiefly by the wish to minister to untended suffering, I joined the Sisters of Mercy at Davenport. As time went on, Miss Sellon thought fit to develop such conventual rules . . . that pressed too heavily upon me; and, therefore, after a sojourn of six years I returned to my former occupation. (p. 1)

Holland offered an analogous criticism of contemporary penitentiary life. In an editorial in *Macmillan's Magazine*, she asked acerbically "whether it be right for women who have reached the full maturity of their intellects to submit themselves to a system by which they are treated as we should scarcely treat an infant in these days, when fools' caps have gone out of fashion" (Holland, 1869, p. 536-7). Much in the same vein, the punitive reform policies implemented by the sisters were denounced sneeringly by Felicia Skene (1865):

One of the cruellest parts of the system is their rigorous confinement to the house, and total want of exercise in the open air. Not one breath of fresh air is allowed to these poor prisoners; not one half hour is granted them in which to look on the blue sky and the sunshine, and to meet the cool breeze with its invigorating power. (p. 10)

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<sup>4</sup> Goodman entered Ascot Priory, Davenport as a novice and her bitter experience there was reflected in her anti-sisterhood writings for which she was roundly criticized by Florence Nightingale in a letter (dated 18 January 1863) to Hilary Bonham Carter. Skene was a Scottish philanthropist and prison reformer. She published in a wide variety of genre, including memoirs, novels and poetry. Her most significant work is *Hidden Depths* (1866), a realist novel about prostitution. There is a blue plaque for Skene, installed on 2 July 2002 by the Oxford Blue Plaques Board, located at 34 St. Michael Street, Oxford. Nothing substantial is known about Holland's life except the fact that she wrote extensively on woman-related subjects for *Macmillan's Magazine*.

Adding impetus to such existing anti-penitentiary sentiments was what Pauline Nester (1985) has recently termed as the "thriving anti-conventual fiction" (p. 4), which either demonised sisters or associated conventual life with a kind of kidnapping. Indeed, the foreword to one such novel, *Sister Agnes; or the Captive Nun: A Picture of Conventual Life* (1854), alludes to the widespread profusion of sensational "narratives of escaped nuns, converted priests, and ex-confessors," purporting to unmask the dark underbelly of religious sisterhoods (cited in Nester, 1985, p. 4). While many of these charges might seem to have been fabricated, the tantalising scandals surrounding penitentiaries galvanised the widespread belief concerning the dystopian ambience of the sisterhoods and aggravated an already polarised debate about women's competency for communal activity in England. One such scandal was the case of *Saurin vs. Starr and Kennedy*, known as "The Great Convent Case", tried before Lord Chief Justice Cockburn in the Court of Queen's Bench in February, 1869. The plaintiff Miss Mary Saurin sued her former convent, and the overwhelming media attention attracted by the case threatened to make public the inner workings of the penitentiary system (Rogers, 2003, p. 874).

In light of the arguments made so far, it would be fairly justifiable to claim that two major demands overlapped in the nineteenth century: the number of deviant fallen women desiring institutional welfare in order to lead a future life of unblemished decency was accelerating, and the newly-mushroomed sisterhoods, seeking a means to justify their charitable enterprises, deemed the provision of remedial penitentiaries for fallen women as an incontrovertible vindication of their own existence. However, these penitentiaries, with their pervasive inclination to control, contain and change nonconformist and problematic behaviour of the fallen inmates, appeared to operate under the principle of what Michel Foucault (1979) has famously called Panopticism. Invoking Jeremy Bentham's conceptualisation of the Panopticon as an exemplary prison, Foucault points out that "whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panopticon schema may be used" (205). The Panopticon and a Victorian female penitentiary were conceived of in such a way that their architectural and administrative setups turned out to be strikingly alike: both were designed as enclosed segmented spaces observable at every point by an ever-present power – watchmen in case of the Panopticon and sisters in case of a penitentiary – and the regulation and regimen enforced in these institutions aided in the training of the problematic inmates, inducing in them an awareness of their own constant visibility. Bentham regarded the Panopticon as one which combined safe custody, confinement, labour and

instruction, a process which with the use of timetables, tutoring, exercises and surveillance would successfully tame the deviant into docile, and more importantly, also deter the potentially deviant (Mukherji, 1996, p. 60). Similar rules and objectives prevailed in every Victorian penitentiary working for the rehabilitation of fallen women. A sisterhood penitentiary was therefore the archetypal symbol of modern disciplinary power much like the Panopticon.

However, by the twentieth century many of these sisterhood penitentiaries quickly started to lose their importance in Britain. Fewer women enrolled owing to a number of factors: the duration of the coursework, the inflexible disciplinary policies, the droning lifestyle and the inward-looking stagnation of the Anglican sisterhoods themselves. In addition, the founding fathers of the penitentiaries were aging and thus lacking enthusiasm for the reclamation of fallen women. In the Liverpool Penitentiary, for instance, subscribers were dying off just as the premises needed drastic renovation; in particular, a new roof, exterior paint, an extended doorway and drainage. By 1921 there were only two penitents left in the institution and not surprisingly it closed in 1922 (Bartley, 2000, p. 64). After the First World War, penitentiaries were replaced by new institutions such as homes for unwed pregnant women known as "mother and baby homes" which operated under the same rhetoric of amelioration and maternalistic supervision. Most of these revamped institutions subsisted until the counter-cultural revolutions of the 1960s, but they could never manage to match the social omnipotence of their Victorian precursors.

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# The Romance and Reconstruction of National Identity in *The Shadow Lines*

*Nazia Manzoor*  
East West University

## Abstract

What are some of the consequences of imagined nationalism in a post-colonial world, particularly at the sub-national level? In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues nationality is "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 6). Edward Said, too, writes about imagined geography in *Orientalism* where the Orient is a mere concoction, an imaginary space. While Anderson discusses nationalism, nationhood and nation-space (all the while blurring the line between the terms) in a broader sense, Said limits his discussion to the Orient. Inarguably, the people of a nation do share a bond, a closeness that they cannot deny. However, the question Anderson and Said prompt us to ask is how authentic is that imagined quality of an imagined geography/community?

In Amitabh Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, a non-linear narration highlights how time and place are not permanent. The lines that divide places and even times are, mere shadows, and hence forever trespassed. Ghosh's novel delineates the intricacies of man-made nation space in the Indian subcontinent in a fluid yet pithy way. Further complicating the already tricky issue of nationalism in India is the cross-national relationship between a man with no countries and a woman across the seas. What, thus, are the consequences of imagined nationalism and/or imagined nation-space? Can there be a situation where nationalism is not a unified, political ideology? Can nationalism be stratified, even reconstructed? The project, thus attempts to understand what really happens when the author tries to construct an understanding of nationalism from a post-ideological perspective.

## The Romance and Reconstruction of National Identity in *The Shadow Lines*

What makes a nation? What is nationality? What is it about borders – some few thousand or more square – inches-that make the people within a nation feel connected to each other? Borders are political and often politicized. They can be illusory too; sociologically speaking, nationality and nation space have more to do with social agents like economic, legal, cultural and spatial structures than with discernible differences among people. In his book *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues nationality is "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 6). People belonging to a nation-state do often share a bond, a kind of uniformity that is unique to them. For Edward Said, nationalism is a perception of space imagined by the Occident based on myths and images. The manifestation of this imagined geography is essential for the existence of the Occident. There is an obvious power battle here – those with the power to 'imagine' possess the strength to 'create' a space that befits their agenda, whatever it may be. To complicate matters even further, there is no 'real' geography that the imagined ones can be compared to. Questions thus remain: how authentic is that imagined quality of imagined geography/community? How can an individual negotiate with the imagined aspect of nationality, community and identity?

Nationality and its many weighty facets can be hard to define. In fact, there is little evidence to claim the existence of a universal definition and execution of nationalism. Anderson by way of explanation suggests, "unlike most other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers" (5). The reality is, he argues "the end of the era of nationalism,' so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" (3). Nationalism, thus is nowhere near to being illegitimate in today's political and social life. Nonetheless, how crucial is it in the lives of individuals?

For the characters in Amitabh Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* the very borders the masterminds and policymakers behind Indian 'independence' had fought brutally over signify very little. The non-linear narration of the text also highlights how time and place are not permanent. The character Tridib lives his life vicariously through the narrator. When his story is combined with those of his lover May and his brother Robi, together they outline the places from Ballygunge to Brick Lane as dramatically to the reader as to those who lived in them. The

lines that divide places and even times are, thus, mere shadows, and hence forever trespassed. Even the contrasts against which Tridib's character stands, Ila and the narrator's grandmother, show that the characters all work for and in opposition with Tridib because of their shared missing link – that of a place to call home. Ghosh's novel delineates the intricacies of man-made nation space with sensitivity and empathy.

Thus, some of the key questions for this essay include: What are the consequences of imagined nationalism and/or imagined nation-space? Can there be a situation where nationalism is not a unified, political sentiment? Can nationalism be stratified, even reconstructed? In *The Shadow Lines*, nationalism is a familial, cultural and geographical concept that runs parallel to, if not above, religious and/or communal complexities. Ghosh's handling of the issue is nuanced and thought-provoking, and does not undermine that seriousness of the matter in the subcontinent. For the major part of the plot, it shows that borders and national identity can and should be traversed. Yet it is the ending of the narrative that throws the question of individual or national identity slightly off when two people belonging to entirely different continents, race and age group become one. Does the novel supersede the thorny issues related to national identity and nationalism for a too-easy mishmash of romantic love? Not quite – rather Ghosh constructs the ending in a way so that his characters articulate a vision to reside in or rather choose a world where people can come together because of those very differences.

## I

The misery of the general population prior to and post-independence in 1947 is well documented in history, fiction and archives. Amitabh Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* exemplifies the repercussions of a very complex and difficult independence process and shows how the residues of violence still haunt and affect human lives across the superficially imposed borders nearly half a century after its occurrence. As Ghosh shows in his novel, August 1947 did not bring to an end the terrifying results of religious and political violence; the lackluster attempt by the British and Indian authorities to produce a resolution by drawing the maps of the newfound nations did not make things any less complicated in either India or Pakistan.

Ghosh's novel takes place in Bengal, among many other locations. Bengal is a historically significant and conflicted part of Indian subcontinent. "The territories of British India were partitioned between the two new countries on a principle of religious majorities. Thus provinces with Muslim majorities



constituted the territories of Pakistan, divided into two wings, one in the west and the other in the east. Two provinces – Punjab and Bengal – were themselves partitioned according to the religious composition of the district populations in those provinces", notes Partha Chatterjee (1). Home to both Hindu and Muslim population, Bengal suffered heavily during Partition. Urbashi Barat stresses, "for Bengalis, Independence was also Partition, the invention of borders which permanently and irrevocably exiled entire communities. Even today, more than half a century after the event, the victims of Partition continue to explore the dimensions of their loss of home, to attempt to understand what it has done to their sense of identity and their social relationships"(214). Ghosh introduces individual characters in the novel who represent the horrors and confusions brought about by Partition. Through them, he tries to examine identity from both a national and post-national perspective. His characters are global citizens who are often baffled and intrigued by such concepts like nationalism and national identity.

*The Shadow Lines* introduces the reader to two families and a series of events that transcends generations, time and space. The novel centralizes on the life and story of Tridib, the unnamed narrator's uncle he lives vicariously through. Tridib – a character that is luscious with depth – acts in the novel as a sort of liaison between two continents, three countries and two Partitions. Through the narrator's back and forth storytelling about his uncle's life, the story travels from Kolkata to Dhaka to London – all the while blurring the boundaries and borders that, ideally, should separate the characters. Through Tridib, Ghosh attempts to disintegrate the idea of a nation state, which manifests in the portrayal of three cities that are emblematic of three countries. The story also travels through time – this is a story of India and Pakistan during the 1960s, India and England during the 1980s and the beginning of the twentieth century. Sujala Singh argues that "the first movement 'going away' looks out in the world, collecting and classifying, mapping, conceiving of geographies, which the unnamed narrator records an obsessive will to remember. This is an individuated spatiality, organized by the structure of a private re-collection" (162). The boundaries between private and public are somewhat fluid in the novel. Tridib, over the course of the novel, becomes a link that connects the various characters of the novel, including the narrator, his lover May, and his brother Robi. Eventually, through Tridib's life, the narrator re-examines his lifelong notion of a nation state. The love affair between Tridib and May bear direct consequences of a Partition narrative that is fraught with disbelief and uncertainty. So does the character of the narrator's grandmother – a formidable female figure who questions the ludicrousness of

Partition itself with an exasperation many victims (perhaps all fifteen million who had to find a new home) could identify with.

On the other end of the spectrum is the narrator's cousin Ila, the quintessentially cosmopolitan Indian who refuses to be one or bear any resemblance to what she thinks it means. The irreverently rash character picks such heavy-handed battles with her national identity that they border on stereotypes. Not allowed to dance at a nightclub of Grand Hotel in Calcutta, Ila exclaims, "Do you see now why I've chosen to live in London? It is only because I want to be free. Free of your bloody culture and free of all of you" (Ghosh 87). As Tridib observes, "Although she had lived in many places, she had never traveled at all" (21).

The lives the characters of the novel live are not defined by geography or location as we know it. From Thamma's (the grandmother) migration to India to Tridib and May's love affair to the narrator's almost voyeuristic pleasure in already knowing the alleys and corners of London and Dhaka without ever setting foot there, a wide range of plot points shows how *The Shadow Lines* constantly tries to re-define space.<sup>1</sup> What makes Ghosh's foray into the discourse of imagined space particularly engaging is the way in which he strangles the banality of borders and maps (through Thamma) while simultaneously remaining fascinated by places both imaginary and real (through the narrator). The narrative arc-defining scene where the grandmother faces the idea of revising her birthplace Dhaka after many years of exile is ripe with caution, frustration and reproach. She wonders if there is an actual border with "trenches perhaps, or soldiers or guns pointing at each other, or even just barren strips of land" between India and East Pakistan (148). The answering "no" is met with sheer indignation and bafflement as she loudly proclaims, "what's the difference then? And if there's no difference, both sides will be the same; it'll be just like it used to be before[...]What was it all for then-Partition and all the killing and everything – if there isn't something in between?" (149). Indeed, these are some of the key queries Ghosh himself sets out to answer in this novel. What is this nation-space then? What defines it? What makes it a strong imperative that people will wage war in its name?

Why does nation-space matter? More importantly, why does it matter in the context of *The Shadow Lines*? Before one can venture out to solve that problem, one must wonder, what is home? Urbashi Barat suggests, "Home is the sight of nostalgia as well as of a terror of the unknown, the borders between the

<sup>1</sup>Thamma took part in India's nationalist movement, reestablished herself into a new homeland and refuse to let go of her former homeland or the idea of it even if it was not anything like it used to be. When she visits Dhaka years later, she keeps asking "but where is Dhaka?" (201)

spaces are 'shadow' ones, achieving presence only when they are crossed" (219). *Desb* in Bengali has two meanings, one's "nation" and one's native village. Home, too has dual meanings: *basha* means a house, a dwelling while *bari* is where one's ancestors have lived, where one at once forms the history and is part of it. Do Ghosh's characters yearn for that *bari*? A nation-space that is also part of their history and where they are also part of? Perhaps that explains the fierce protectiveness Thamma has for her home. Barat agrees, saying, "the ferocity with which the grandmother defends her home and its values is clearly a part of the alienation and the disorientation that are themselves the product of exile; the fluidity of borders that Tridib and the narrator experience are also born of their dislocation from home" (226). Is dislocation the root of all uncertainty then? The incapacity to fit in? Many of Ghosh's characters refuse to be defined by a uniform definition of national identity for the most part. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Franz Fanon argues "a national culture is sought in systematic fashion. It becomes a set of automatic habits, some traditions of dress and a few broken-down institutions" (Fanon, 1588). In a criss-crossing storyline of love and space between a man with no countries (Tridib) and a woman across the sea (May) Ghosh's text builds an intricate and complex web of back and forth. It shows a kind of geographical displacement through personal and emotional experiences and thoroughly questions concepts such as "home" and "homeland".

The central characters of the novel have multiple belongings and plural identities – all the while breaking the regular or appropriate standard of time and space. Thanks largely to the truly global citizenry of almost all of them – with the head of the family in the Foreign Services, Ila's father in the United Nations and Tridib, Robi and Ila all repeatedly traveling back and forth between Europe and India. The tattered old atlas Tridib gave the narrator and the way in which he knew the nooks and crannies of London without ever setting foot there once for all complicate their identity. For Ghosh, the dilemma between "coming" home and "going" home is ripe with innuendoes. "How could you have 'come' home to Dhaka? You don't know the difference between coming and going"--asks the young narrator to his grandmother (Ghosh 150). *Ashi*, the Bengali replacement for both coming and going is a wonderful paradox Ghosh uses to its full potential. For Tha'mma – someone who is caught literally between memory and belonging and between reality and a strict belief in nationality – it is no wonder that she is lost. It is also no wonder the young narrator, the voice of sanity in the novel, is also out of his depth trying to understand the coming and going of it all. As he later tries to explain: "Every language assumes a centrality, a fixed and settled point to go away from and come back to, and what my grandmother was

looking for was a word for a journey which was not a coming or a going at all; a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movement" (150). Home, homeland, *desh*, *bari*, coming, going, nationalism, map and borders are all concepts that are problematic in the novel.

That particular quest of looking for a home is eventually what propels the redoubtable grandmother to embark upon a rescuing mission of their uncle across the border in Dhaka. As the narrator explains, "For people like my grandmother, who have no home but in memory, learn to be very skilled in the art of recollection" (Ghosh 194). Among all the characters of this book, hers perhaps is the most strident form of nationalism. It does not come as a surprise to the reader though, simply because while Ghosh's characters all share a palpably comparable longing for a "home" it is Thamma who believes in giving blood for it. At one point in the novel Thamma declares that Ila has no right to a home in Britain as her ancestors had not given their blood for it, so it could never be her nation, her *desh*.

Incidentally, her Jethamoshai an uncle is another shining example of a character whose caustic remarks prove the entire Partition exercise pointless – "I don't believe in this India Shindia. Once you start moving, you never stop, he said. It's all very well, you're going away now, but suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere?" (Ghosh, 215) The takeaway from this rant is not that he is above and beyond the rescue his nieces think he so desperately needs but that once a line is drawn to alter the ones that never were, there is no turning back, no stopping. In the case of India, therefore, what the Radcliffe Commission did can never be undone – only aggravated.

The novel culminates in the death of Tridib in a religious riot in the other half of Bengal in Pakistan. With that the narrator asks the reader to share in his own experience and unlearn everything he had learned about borders and religion and identity. His death in a religious riot that rocked both sides of Bengal is a testament to the religious and cultural reality of the subcontinent. A seemingly innocent loss of the Prophet's hair from Kashmir perpetuates repercussions that prove reality is strangely similar across the borders in the subcontinent. Also crucial is May's involvement in that pivotal moment that forever changed the lives of the characters. In the end when the narrator lay in the arms of May, his uncle's lover, he not only questions his nationhood, but also begins to dismiss the necessity of it. By the denouement of the novel, he not only questions the relevance and validity of political and religiously constituted nation space but re-learns the meaning of being a child of "a free state" (Ghosh 242).

In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson argues that "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, [...] for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson 7). In the context of India and Pakistan that comradeship includes religion. The way that religious conflict plays out in *The Shadow Lines* is problematic. In *State and Politics in India*, Partha Chatterjee argues that the concept of nation state is largely formed in western social scientific thoughts. Thus when the idea is applied to the subcontinent, its effectiveness is negligible (Chatterjee 24). The practical problem, according to Chatterjee, is that in adopting the paradigm of nation-state post-colonial administrators blinded themselves to new possibilities of thinking outside Western categories.

Not only does Tridib's death help negotiate the legacies of artificial boundaries erected through Partition, Ghosh is also interested in challenging the very question of national identity. The tendency emerges through the character of May in *The Shadow Lines*. The events leading to Tridib's death and the narrator's own personal encounter with violence are in fact ripple effects of one particular event – the disappearance of a sacred relic, the hair of the Prophet Mohammad from Hazratbal Mosque of Kashmir. During the first days of riot, Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus did not fight each other; their common enemy was the establishment. Still, as with any war that is waged between "oneself and one's mirror image," tension mounted to a fever pitch in East Pakistan and India as Hindu refugees began pouring over to India and mobs went ruthless on the Muslims in Kolkata (200). The way Ghosh ties together the two events of Tridib's death in Dhaka and the schoolboy narrator's encounter with the riot in Kolkata is symbolic. It goes on to show that reality is the same across the border in the subcontinent. While discussing Hindu Kolkata and Muslim Pakistan, Singh argues that "the signs and effects of religious and national identity are shown to spill over the constraints imposed by the agencies of power that endeavor to cordon off a space as its own" (170).<sup>2</sup> The allegorical tattered old atlas Tridib uses to teach his nephew about the fluidity of borders also confirm that geography has little significance in terms of people's perception of religion and national identity. Singh stresses, "The compression into a narrow time-slot of systematic events, mirroring each other across the border, is a ploy utilized in the narrative to

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<sup>2</sup> Sujala Singh notes: "It is in dreams and memory, and in the particular arrangement of their narratives, that the silences in the discourses of the public spheres are prized upon by the juxtaposing of spaces and the freezing of time, in parody of the ways in which the newspapers do the same" (169). She also suggests that Tridib's death "invites us to read off an allegory of sectarian nationalist identity in post-Partition India" (170).

indicate how any carved-out notion of a communal or national identity is haunted by the spectre, the reflection, of the constitutive Other"(169). At the heart of Ghosh's novel, thus, is a quest to find meaning in this meaningless of borders, partitions and separations.

While the concept of entangled identity is quite appropriate in the context of the subcontinent, how effective is it in terms of England and India, as those two imagined geographies are represented through Tridib and May? May's is a complex characterization by Ghosh: she falls in love with the good-humored, wise-beyond-his-years Tridib almost as quickly as she judges the ways in which a post-Partition India functions. From her altruistic rescuing of a dying dog in the streets of Kolkata to her sheer repulsion in discovering a giant, imported oak dining table at the Chowdhury household – May's response to India is complex. However, what most complicates May's position in the novel is her involvement in Tridib's death at Dhaka. When the little rescue force comprised by the Bose sisters, Tridib and May try to take the senile Jethamoshai back with them to Kolkata, her actions cause irrevocable damage in the lives of the central characters. When an angry mob assaults the driver and the uncle, May's superior 'Memshahib' attitude makes her jump out of the car to help (218). Her action prompts Tridib to jump right into the frenzy and leads him to his eventual death within minutes (alongside the old uncle and the driver). Was she acting out of superiority? Her feeling of guilt is clear affirms that when she confesses that she was not "going to listen to a stupid, cowardly old woman" and she that she did try to be a "heroine" (245). How responsible does that make her though? Should she have had a better grasp of the unique situation of mirrored reality across the border in Dhaka? This stray, singular moment of violence caused by individuals who want to fuel the differences between communities and the individual actions of May and Tridib accentuate the necessity for individual action to confront such communal agitation.

Yet, question remains: is individual action enough? Tridib's death was a sacrifice; Ghosh insists, "Tridib gave himself up. It was a sacrifice" (246). He had died in Dhaka, a city he had little intimate history with, and in the hands of a stray group of rioters for a cause he cared nothing about. It was love that propelled Tridib to meet his doom, not religion and definitely not nationalism. The deaths of Khalil (the driver), the old uncle and Tridib stand independently, away from the actual riot that broke apart the Hindu and Muslim population in India and East Pakistan. Somehow, it provides a romantic ending for Tridib and May where two different people from two different continents, cultures and races

finally come together. It gives Tridib and May a chance to finally consummate their mostly chaste relationship. Through their union in death, Ghosh asks his characters to forget their differences and the nations they represent. The lines that separate the central characters, thus, are not only of borders and frontiers, but also of present and past, self and image, colonizer and colonized. In a way, Ghosh thus offers an opportunity to his readers (and characters) to evade the enmeshed complexities of differences borders enact on humans.

## II

In light of the multiple kinds of boundaries that divide characters from one another and in the context of the example of May and her character's representation of a romantic and private transcendence, what really are the consequences of imagined nation space in Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*? The only time the expanded Dutta-Chowdhury family members deal with a persisting Hindu-Muslim conflict in a post-Partition era is during Tridib's death. The terrible ending haunts the lives of Robi, May and the narrator for the rest of their lives and it leaves some form of conflicted feelings in the other characters. Ghosh insists that the Muslims and Hindus of India and East Pakistan were almost helpless in their participation in the 1964 riot. On the one hand, the narrator remembers the fear that crippled him during the nightmarish bus-ride in 1964, "it is a fear that comes of the knowledge that normalcy is utterly contingent" (200); on the other, Ghosh asserts "there were innumerable cases of Muslims in East Pakistan giving shelter to Hindus, often at the cost of their own lives, and equally, in India, of Hindus sheltering Muslims" (225). When the college-age narrator realizes that Tridib was killed by a mob in Dhaka in the same riot that engulfed Kolkata, he realizes "there will always be something that will connect Calcutta to Dhaka, Bengali to Bengali. Even in their self-destructive violence the people of East and West Bengal exhibit their common inheritance and kinship" (225). One of the major consequences that arises from the depiction of the riot is the narrator's realization of the similarities between these two seemingly unrelated events. The reasons for Tridib's death in Dhaka are discovered (by the narrator) in deep layers of private as well as public history.<sup>3</sup> Thus when the narrator tries to excavate his memories of that event he is

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<sup>3</sup>Sujala Singh stresses the following, "In the second movement, 'coming home', this conceptualization of his private memory is contextualized within public histories, and punctuated by the calendar dates of singular events. The sweep of his early vision gets marked up for divisions of war, religion and gender, and he has to grow up to face the responsibilities imposed by stories that refuse to let his outlook transcend them" (162). She goes on to argue that "Tridib himself appears from a fragment of newspaper article from a long time ago, cut down by the horrors of the religious lines drawn across maps and between people" (162).

incapable of separating the two. Years later, as a PhD student the narrator's memory is jogged by an Australian expert in Asian Studies and he begins to see through the texture of the events. Once the narrator researches the archives and gets all the data in his hands, he begins his "strangest journey: a voyage into a land outside space, an expanse without distances; a land of looking-glass events" (Ghosh, 219). This act of going to the library to support his claims of a terrible riot in 1964 in which the number of deaths was not a lot less than the war of 1962 shows that India's political history is anything but objective. As Ghosh rightly notes, this is how the subcontinent functions – for just shy of two weeks after the riot ended the newspapers stopped writing about it. Ghosh brings to light an amnesiac tendency to gloss over painful details, an eerie capacity to move on even after something so avoidably tragic happens. "I believed in the reality of space; I believed that distance separates; I believed that across the border there existed another reality" says the narrator and slowly, with time, he begins to unlearn everything he had known (214).

In the end, when in honor of Tridib's memory, the narrator chooses to unlearn the national divide resulting from Partition and instead embraces homogeneity, Ghosh offers his readers some kind of a solace. The Bartholomew Atlas, Tridib's dreams for his nephew to "worlds to travel in and...eyes to see them with," all conspire to challenge the very concept of imagined boundaries in the subcontinent (20). As the narrator recalls his memory of the riot, he realizes: "It is this that sets apart the thousand million people who inhabit the subcontinent from the rest of the world – not language, not food, not music – it is the special quality of loneliness that grows out of the fear of the war between oneself and one's image in the mirror" (200). Ultimately, the novel offers just that – to brave that war and reconcile.

Ghosh's novels, almost all of them steeped in history have a tendency to accommodate views that can only be suited to someone like him – a true global writer who is comfortably rooted in his own identity. *The Circle of Reason* (1986) too, begins in Bengal, criss-crosses across India, moves on to the Middle East, and ends somewhere in Africa. The same holds true for *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995) – travelling back and forth between colonial India and twentieth-century New York and Kolkata and *In an Antique Land* (1993) which moves backward and forward in history and traverses a track as widespread as the Middle East, India, Africa, Europe and North America. In short, his novels, although mostly situated in India, are never shy of being global and never afraid of redefining concepts such as time, spatiality and temporality.



All his life, the young narrator of *The Shadow Lines* aspires to rise above his Kolkata-based existence. His fascination with the cafes in Madrid, the corner store in Brick Lane and that old atlas show a kind of strange obsession with a world that has no boundaries; yet he is forever impatient to intrude in it. Tridib and his nephew's shared desire to bring together an already fractured world comes from their own personal incapability to belong. In *The Location of Culture* Homi Bhaba argues, "Our nation-centered view of sovereign citizenship can only comprehend the predicament of minoritarian 'belonging' as a problem of ontology – a question of belonging to a race, a gender, a class, a generation become a kind of 'second nature', a primordial identification, an inheritance of tradition, a naturalization of the problems of citizenship" (xvii). Through Tridib and his nephew's relationship with May, Ghosh tries to connect the imperial center and the former colony. His cosmopolitan characters make colonial and postcolonial history come together and Ghosh eventually captures the perspectival view of time, space and events in this book that attach people together. Finally, *The Shadow Lines* offers us hope. While admitting the many complexities of cultural and national identification in the subcontinent Ghosh nonetheless opts to offer a narrative conclusion where divisive lines which threaten our common humanity cease to exist and where individual resistance comes out triumphant.

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# History as Aesthetics in the African Novel: a Reading of Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*

*Sola Afolayan*

University of Ado Ekiti

## Introduction

African literature is as unique as the African people themselves. This is because, among other reasons, there is no way it can be interpreted outside the people and their past experiences. This is why it seems as if every African novel is a piece of history. Hyppolyte Taine, the father of historical determinism in literary criticism, has postulated that the best critical outfit which can evaluate the works of literature will first consider the history that is behind the author of the work, stressing that:

It was perceived that a work of literature is not a mere play of imagination, a solitary caprice of a heated brain, but a transcript of contemporary manners, a type of a certain kind of mind. It was concluded that one might retrace from the moment of literature the style of man's feelings and thought for centuries back (1971:602)

Although we have some pieces of literature that are cut out of historical facts, Taine wants us to accept any literature as an evolution of the "embalmed" facts of the writer's past. He, therefore, recommends that history forms the most crucial index for the understanding of any piece of literature. Hence, he further asserts:

- a poem, a code of laws, a declaration of faith? This you say was not created alone. It is but a mould, like a fossil shell, an imprint, like one of those shapes embossed in stone by an animal which lived and perished. Under the shell there was an animal and behind the document [literature] there was a man. Why do you study the shell, except to represent to yourself the animal? So do you study the document only in order to know the man? The shell and the document are lifeless wrecks, valuable only as a clue to the entire and living existence... It is a mistake to study the document as it were isolated (1971:602).

This, no doubt, re-echoes my intention expressed elsewhere in a paper titled "Psychoanalytical Criticism: Evincing the Dynamics of the Mind in the African Novel", to view most African literary works as products of writers whose minds have already been fossilized by historical experiences.

Taine tells us to study the historical background of the author and place of the text in focus because he believes that as a dead animal lies behind a fossil, there is a history behind the work and its author. To him, therefore, an author's historical experiences are germane in the metamorphosis of his creativity. The historical critic believes that it is logical for any reader to assume that an author's experience always shapes his writings. To limit the scope of analysis to Africa, we discover that African novelists, at certain points of their artistic endeavours, concentrated on the colonial experiences of the people. Then, the emphasis was on an Africa under the colonial grip. The focus later shifted to the post-independence mess that characterizes post-independence sovereign Africa countries. Both of these commitments of the African novelists have their sources in Africa's history.

According to Oyegoke, general literary theories often reveal setting, plot, character and dialogue as "some essential elements" that are the discoverable "general aesthetic rules and canons" of the novel (265). If this is universally true, then it is true of the African novel only that the proper application of these rules lies in the operation from a historico-literary standpoint when the text in focus is the African novel (1996:268). This observation is credible because, "nothing exists through some individual man: it is this individual with whom we must become acquainted" (Taine, 1971:602). The understanding of the "individual man" and, to a large extent, his works is contained in the understanding of his history. This had led us to my acceptance of the historical approach to criticism

i.e Historical Determinism, which I believe has a lot to offer in the evaluation and interpretation of the African novel.

### **Historical Determinism: Theory and Principle**

Historicist critics often analyse literature from two angles:

- (i) they provide necessary contextual information necessary for the understanding of the background of the literature
- (ii) they show how literary texts reflect the ideas and attitudes of the time in which they have been written.

According to Di Yanni (2002:2082), "these two general approaches to historical criticism represent methods and approaches that might be termed "old historicism" and "new historicism". Old historicism insists that a literary text must be read with reference to the time and place of its creation. This, the historicist believes, is necessary because "every literary work is a product of its time and its world" (Di Yanni, 2002:2082). It is thus assumed that the understanding of the socio-economic and political background and, perhaps, the "intellectual currents" of the time of the preparation of a work, will go a long way in the illumination of the work for generations of readers.

An insight into some historical facts about the pre-colonial Igbo society, and those of the ensuing colonial presence, for example, will shed light on Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and this will enable readers to properly appreciate the novel. Similarly, the understanding of most of the Francophone African novels, more often than not, necessitates constant reference to the Assimilation Policy and the Negritudist historical antecedents.

### **Historicism and the African Novel**

Like the old historicist, the new historicist critic also "considers historical contexts of literary works essential for understanding them" (Di Yanni 2002:2082). However, a significant difference between both varieties of historicism is that new historicism emphasizes the analysis of historical paraphernalia with the same intensity and scrutiny given the literary artefacts that abound in the text. Hence, the new historicist analyzes and evaluates the historical materials that explain the literature along with the literature, and will not merely consider it as a form-giving tendency. Part of the important features of the new historicism is its concern for the examination of "power relations of rulers and subjects". This is an

attribute it shares with the Marxist "node" of historical trajectory which entrenches all socio-political happenings into the frame of history. The assumption here, therefore, is that

texts, not only literary works, but also documents, diaries, records and even institutions such as hospitals and prisons, are ideological products culturally constructed from the prevailing power structures that dominate particular societies (Di Yanni"2002:2083).

It thus appears that new historicism, in valuing historical materials in the analysis of any literary text, still appropriates some of the methods of the Marxist. This is what further reveals to us that history not only constitute mere background for the new historicist critic but rather an equally important text which is

inseparable from the literary work, which inevitably reveals the conflicting power relations that underlie all human interactions, from the small-scale interactions of social institutions (Di Yanni 2002:2083).

Both variants of historical criticism contradict the stiff tenets of the formalists or the structuralists who often limit their analysis of a literary work to its language and semiotic structure. The historicist critic spends his time and interest on non-literary materials – history – from the same time in which the work in focus was produced with a view to getting a vital clue that will facilitate its evaluation and judgement.

When we narrow all these down to the African literary tradition, we may be forced to agree with Irele who posits:

To be meaningful, any kind of discussion of literature implies a responsiveness not only to the text, in its inherent capacity for suggestiveness through a unique structure of signs and meanings, but also to those areas of experience – of feelings, attitudes and insight – which that structure evokes to take on significance (1981:24)

Irele's historical posture here is undoubtedly influenced by the fact that any examination of the African literature must place it in the context in which it can be meaningful. Irele's position also has its foundation in Howe's assumption that

criticism is not a child's play "secondary though it always is to the work itself, criticism offers seemingly endless possibilities for the discrimination of values, the sharing of insights, the defence of a living culture" (1958:37). Invariably, all African novels seem to provide "insights" into the culture, ideology, and politics of the African people as these societal indices are the denominators of history. A historical critic has the right to view literature as that which exists "to bring us a sense and a perception of life to widen and sharpen our contact with existence... And to know the experiences of others and to understand our own experience better" (Perrine 1987:04).

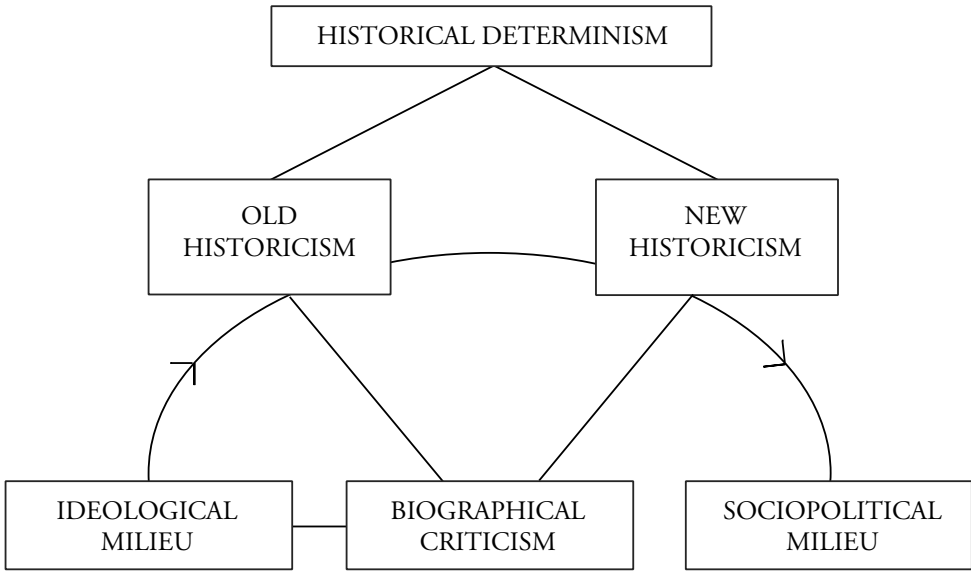
A typical historicist critic of African literature will accordingly, not isolate some novels as "historical" but will perceive all novels as portraying the history behind their authors. Little wonder Gordimer in *Black Interpreter* observes that "... if you want to know what war is like, and how people of a certain time and background dealt with it as their personal situation, you must read *War and Peace*" (8). Gordimer's submission here is clearly supported by Clingman when he asserts lucidly that her opinion is that "fiction can present history as historians cannot" (165). Like Gordimer, Clingman believes that novelists are historians who are "themselves limited historically by being caught up in the process which they attempt to describe". Far from being neutral or innocent assessment of reality, "novels effectively take up ideological positions according to which that reality is learned" (165).

It is clear, then, that history is the primary material which a novel offers. This perspective is given adequate exposition by Mensah in his article, "The Use of History: Three Historical Novels from West Africa" in which he posits that the purpose of the novel is "to make the reader experience the psychology and ethics of the past, not as a curiosity, but as a phase in mankind's development which is of concern to the reader" (1996:69). Though Mensah, like Lukacs, has identified what he calls "a tiny sample of the large corpus of 'historical fiction'" in the canon of the novel, historical criticism is of the belief that all literatures are historical since the purpose of every literary text is the "creation of the individual" whose history is most likely that of the author (Goodwin René "Literary Criticism" [http:// literary explorer. Blondelibrarian .net/crit.literal](http://literaryexplorer.blondelibrarian.net/crit.literal)).

Any novel is constituted of a "textual world" of conceptual relation where text agents relate syntagmatically and paradigmatically. But there is always an "outside world", which determines the novel's form though which is external to it. One of the materials of this outside world is history, which the historicist believes is the most credible aesthetic material. Quite often, in applying the tenets



of historical determinism to literature, we are bound to explore the possibility of the author's own history in his work. The result of this is biographical criticism which brings to bear the author's life in the interpretation of a work. The following scheme represents the point being made:



In the scheme, the nodes from both variants of historicism touch biographical criticism to give the explanation that all variants of historical criticism may see the author in his work and the result is biographical criticism. The curve that cuts through the two variants extends clock-wise from the ideological milieu to the socio-political to reflect how the historical approach to criticism entails recourse to the ideological and socio-political milieu. The straight horizontal line that connects the ideological milieu to biographical criticism is a reflection of the fact that both are intertwined because a discussion of a work as the author's biography is an indication of the author's ideology.

***Ambiguous Adventure* and the History of Cultural Genocide**

The radical approach to the search for self-identify and self-determination has a place in the literary formation of Francophone novelists. Omolafe explains the situation thus:

In the search for cultural identify, various attempts have been made by the African intellectual elite to reflect on the topic of what has come to be known as

the "African personality". This preoccupation arose as a result of a number of factors.

On the one hand, it was a reaction to the biased view of the western world which, until recent times, has been one of contempt or denigration of the African person (17).

This insight explains the temper of Francophone African novels. Abiola Irele further elucidates this phenomenon in his book, *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology* when he opines that

creative writing has been so consistently employed by French-speaking black intellectuals to express persuasive form and force to their ideological position that it is justifiable to see their literature, especially when viewed through its themes and its attitudes (both explicit and implicit), as very largely a component to their ideological writings. (1981:146)

One of the ideological movements that offers a better picture of Francophone literary topography is the Negritude Movement. Negritude has been a part of these writers' reasoning from the primordial stage of their literary development. What may explain, for instance, why most Francophone novelists are bound together by the spirit of Negritude is the fact that René Maran, the West Indian who set the ball of the Francophone narrative in motion with the publication of *Batouala* in 1921, was particularly identified, according to Irele, as "an important forerunner of Negritude" (1981:146). Negritude is of course the ideological movement championed by Sartre and Senghor. As Irele explains it, Negritude

can be taken here to describe the writing of the French-speaking black intellectuals in their affirmation of a black personality, and to designate the complex ideas associated with their effort to define a new set of references for the collective experience and awareness of black people. (1981:68)

Apart from *Batoulala*, narratives like Bakary Diallo's *Force bouté*, Ousmane socé Diop's *Karim* (1935), Birago Diop's *Les Contes d'Amodou Koumba* (1942), Bernard Dadie's *Legendes africaines* (1950), Djibril Tamir Niame's *Soundiata* (1960), Nazi Boni's *Crepuscule des Temps anciens* (1902), Abdoulaye Sadjji's *Nini*

(1954), Camara Laye's *L'Enfant Noir* (1953), Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961) et cetera, are included in the corpus of Francophone narratives. One important thing about all these narratives is that they have traits of history in them. Among these authors, Camara Laye, Hamidou Kane Ferdinand Oyono, Mongo Beti and Ousmane Sembene, are the most influential. These novelists have authored narratives that promote African integrity, which is all what Negritude is all about. Later, female writers like the Senegalese Aminata Sow Fall and Mariama Ba, as well as radical writers like Alioum Fautoure, joined the brigade of the Francophone nationalist writers. In any brief mention of the classics of the Francophone novels one must also mention Kane's *L'Aventure Ambiguë*, translated into English by Katherine Woods as *Ambiguous Adventure*.

*Ambiguous Adventure* is according to Irele, "palpably an allegory derived from a meditation upon the contemplative function of imaginative fiction" (1981:167). As Irele further informs us, Kane himself accepts that his story is nothing but "a narrative that is barely removed from a direct reporting from fact" (1981:167). According to M'Baye, *Ambiguous Adventure* is

a historical and autobiographical novel written by a Senegalese author who lived on different side of the Atlantic ocean and who examined the change and dilemma that the contact between France and Africa brought into the cultures of Africans home and abroad. The book is an essential work of African history. (2006:194).

The ambiguity in *Ambiguous Adventure* begins to register when the most Royal Lady conveys a town's forum where she states "I come here to say to you: I the Most Royal Lady do not like the foreign school. I detest it. My opinion nevertheless is that we should send our children there" (45). As the Most Royal Lady delivers her speech we are made to understand the imminence of the psycho-philosophical complication of Samba Diallo, Kane's protagonist.

The school in which I would place our children will kill in them what today we love and rightly conserve with care. Perhaps the very memory of us will die in them. When they return from the school, there may be those who will not recognize us. What I am proposing is that we should agree to die in our children's hearts and that the foreigners who have

defeated us should fill the place, wholly, which we shall have left free (46).

The historical outlook of *Ambiguous Adventure* is further captured by Irele in one of his latest books - *African Imagination* (2001) in which he points out that the novel looks

back to the early years of French occupations in Sahelian West Africa to the period of transaction between the dissolution of the precolonial Islamic States in the region and the full establishment of the French colonial administration as the point of departure of the narrative (2001:87).

M'Baye also tells us that Kane's novel is historical as the author captures the transformations, anxieties and ambivalences that colonization created in the lives of modern African people as they attempted to define their identities and understand the nature of their relationship to the west (2006). Hence, drawing from the socio-political and cultural contexts of the time of his upbringing and development in Senegal; as well as from the period of his experience as an expatriate in France, Kane "fictionalized the consequence that geographical displacement and fragmentation of Black identity created in the lives of modern African (M'Baye, 2006:194).

Kane is, as such, not alien to the kind of disintegration of black identity that Samba experiences and which consequently decimate his psycho-philosophical status. This is because, like Samba, Kane was sent to a French school when he was about ten years old. He also studied philosophy at a university in Paris only to return home in disillusionment that emanated from colonization. Therefore, through Samba we are acquainted with the mind of the educated African whose culture and tradition the westerners have adjudged inferior. Kane himself admitted the historicity, or historicalness, of his novel when he agreed:

I was pushed by the desire to say that our societies had in themselves a profound reality. That any desire to assimilate them was an error since they have their own basic civilization [and it] was to justify colonization that the Europeans pretended that we were not human beings. (cited in Irele 2001:04)

It was, most likely, in his attempt to explain African history that Kane inverts a plausible character and gives him the name "Samba", which, we are told, is actually Kane's house-name. Kane sets Samba to France where the latter discovers that he cannot identify with western values because of his Afrikoranic background. In France, "Samba also realizes that he cannot easily return to the stable [of] African Islamic and cultural traditions that had produced him" and his case becomes quite tragic (M'Baye, 2006:195). When Samba returns to his Diallobe environment, the devastating complexity that the ambiguity of his "self" has created finally results in his death. He returns to the country of the Diallobé after Thieno, his former Koranic teacher, dies. As M'Baye observes

[s]ummoned by his father, Samba arrives the country of the Diallobe late and, on account of being acculturated and lost in philosophical meditation, refuses to kneel and pray in front of this teacher's grave. It is at the unexpected moment that the character of Le Fou [the Fool], who had been Thieno's assistant during Samba's absence stabs Samba to death (195).

The drama that results in Samba's death is best presented through a long quote from the text:

Samba Diallo felt that someone was shaking him. He raised his head.

"The shadows are falling. See, it is sunlight. Let us pray" said the fool, gravely.

Samba Diallo made no response.

"Let us pray, oh, let us pray," the fool implored. If we do not pray immediately, the hour will pass, and neither of the two will be content"

"Who?"

"The teacher and his friend. Let us pray, oh, let us pray!"

He had seized Samba Diallo at the neck of his boubon, and was shaking him.

"Let us pray, speak, let us pray."... Samba Diallo pushed him from himself and got up to go away.

"You cannot go away like that, without praying!" the fool cried. Stop, oh stop! You cannot!"...

"You cannot go away. Stop, oh stop! Master -" ... As he spoke, the fool had begun to walk along behind Samba Diallo, burrowing feverishly into the depths of his frock-coat.

"Thou wouldst not know how to forget me like that. I will not agree, alone for us too, to suffer from thy withdrawal. I will not agree. No..."

The fool was in front of him.

"Promise me that you will pray tomorrow"

"No. I do not agree..."

Without noticing, he had spoken these words aloud.

It was then that the fool drew his weapon, and suddenly everything went black around Samba Diallo.  
(173 - 174)

Readers feel a great deal of pathos at the death of the protagonist. A myriad of philosophical questions could, therefore, be raised around the death of Samba Diallo. However, Samba's antecedents suggests the hard task of knowing how to find a balance between African and western values. This reminds one of Du Bois's idea of "double consciousness" with which he explains the attempt to work out the line between African and western culture for the average modern African. In Du Bois's words the situation is

... a peculiar sensation, the double consciousness, the size of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness... two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled things: two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (1965:2)

The thesis of this paper aligns with that of Du Bois's since the motivation here lies in the attempt at fathoming a solution to the problem of the absence of a real African Identity. Before his final assassination by the fool, Samba has been culturally assassinated because he has been recreated culturally to look through the European's eyes. Bisi Ogunsina, a professor of Linguistics and Yoruba studies, discerns the Eurocentric sentiment that Kane and his contemporaries repudiate in their works when he asserts,

Fun òpòlopò odún seyìn ni awon oyinbo amúnisìn ti gba pe awon ni akódá, adédàá ati awise lori ìmò-ìjìnlè-èrò (philosophy) ati orisiirisii imo-eko. Ninu ironu tiwon, eniyan dudu ko ni imo-itan, litireso, imo-ede, sayensi, imo-ero, imo-ijinle ero abbl. L'aju tiwon oyinbo nikan ni orisun imo. Won si ri i gege bi ojuse won lati maa fi imo won ko iran eniyan dudu. Iru ero yii lo mu ki Rev. Leo Taylor so ninu idanilekoo kan ni Eko ni odun 1942 pe: "since you have no literature of your own, you must study the English literature". Iru ironu yii lo mu ko je pe fun odun gbooro, litireso ile Geesi lo gbile gboko, jakejado ile eniyan dudu (105).

(For many years past, the colonial masters have always seen themselves as the superior in all forms of knowledge – philosophy and all forms of education. Simply because of this mindset, it is assumed that the blacks do not have their own history, literature, linguistic, science, technology, engineering et cetera. In fact to the colonialists, the whites are the only origin of knowledge. As such, they saw it as incumbent on them to impose their own type of knowledge on generations of black Africans. Because of such prejudice Rev. Leo Taylor could once say in a lecture delivered in Lagos in 1924 "since you have no literature of your own, you must study the English literature". This kind of mindset is responsible for why the English literature was popular within the African setting for a very long time (my translation.)

This quote gives the contextual background upon which the interactions between the black man and his white master is premised. In fact, for the Francophone African the case is even more pathetic.

## Conclusion

For the historical critic to ask what a piece of work means is to ask what the author meant when he created it. Historical critics are more often concerned with the causal links which indicate that the text is the product of the author's milieu, which is in turn the product of his own age. As *The Golden Papers of Criticism 2 (2010)* tells us, "the poem's real meaning is always in the past, even if sometimes in the very near past, and the search for that meaning is the search for the author's original intention" (2). From the analysis of Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*, it becomes obvious that the author and his age coalesce into meaning and as argued in the body of the paper, there is very little a critic can do in the analysis of the text if he fails to place its content upon the pedestal of what the author and his environment experienced.

In *Ambiguous Adventure*, Kane evinces the impact of colonisation and with the eventual death of his protagonist he seems to advocate the need for decolonization of Africa from the grip of newer forms of slavery. The history that supplied inspiration for Kane and his contemporaries both in the Francophone and the Anglophone literary enterprises is still evergreen. As M'Baye notes.

From the 1880's to the 1960's France, Britain, and Portugal took the land of African and forced the people to work for the posterity of their social lives as Europeans took their freedom and compelled them to work for the benefit of a foreign hegemonic power that had no other goal but to exploit African labour and raw material. (196)

While Francophone writers such as Mariama Ba and Sow Fall, perhaps because of their gender, were motivated to re-present the post-independence political/Feminist struggle of the African women, Kane was more pre-occupied with reflection of the flagrant bastardization of the African selfhood. Certainly in *Ambiguous Adventure*, we have the subtle presentation of this bastardization. This presentation characterizes most Francophone novelists leading Palmer to conclude that such is the "reaction to the consequence of western infiltration of traditional African society" (124).

Kane thus set out on an agenda to represent the history of his people. This statement may, however, not go down well with the New Critic who queries the significance of the critic's knowledge of the author's intention. To such a person, a critic has committed a crime that he tags as *intentional fallacy* if he attempts to



retrieve a text's meaning from anywhere else except from the text itself. The New Critic advises that a critic must react to a piece of literature by staying within the intrinsic attributes of the text. One then wonders how apt it would be to adhere to this advice in the evaluation of Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* which the author himself confirms is composed with materials that are drawn from historical material of Francophone Africa.

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# Residual Cultural Imperialism in Primary Textbooks in Bangladesh: A Critique of the *English for Today* Textbooks

*Ms. Akhter Jahan*  
East West University

## Abstract

It has been assumed that with the rising importance of English as a global language (Crystal, 1997) that 'the centre' (native English speaking countries) produced ELT materials have become tools, using which linguistic as well as cultural imperialism may take place in 'the periphery' (non-native English speaking countries) contexts marginalizing local needs and cultures (Phillipson 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006). Therefore, the authorial ownership of materials can be given to local experts who know about the culture, needs and realities of local communities (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Taking these issues into account, this paper aims to examine how far the locally produced textbooks, *English for Today* (Class 1-5), have been able to resist cultural imperialism at the primary level in Bangladesh. The analysis of the cultural contents of these textbooks reveals that though these locally produced materials have been able to resist cultural imperialism to some extent, they still have some limitations regarding the way exposure has been provided to the local as well as the target cultures.

## 1. Introduction

It is argued in certain parts of applied linguistics literature that this is an age of empire and globalization, (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) and English is the dominant language of this globalized world (Crystal, 1997). With the rising importance of English, it has been assumed that the centre (native-English speaking countries) have been producing English language textbooks that are becoming tools using which neo-imperialism is taking place in English as a foreign language (EFL) or in English as a second language (ESL) contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006).

From this viewpoint, the use of these textbooks in the EFL or ESL classrooms has been considered as one of the mediums through which the centre is engineering cultural imperialism in the periphery (non-native English speaking) countries; in the process marginalizing local cultures and languages (Phillipson, 1992). To face this assumed threat of cultural hegemony and to decentralize textbooks, the authorial ownership of materials can be given to local experts who know about the cultural variations, needs and situations of local communities (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

As Bangladesh is a developing country, its government has also become interested in getting more access to this global language which may be considered as the gatekeeper to the global economy and the key to higher education, science and technological advancement (Seargeant & Erling, 2011). The government of Bangladesh believes that the large population of the country can be turned into human capital by acquiring communicative competence in English (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

Therefore, the Bangladesh government has introduced a competency-based curriculum at the primary level (Classes 1-5) in 1992. That curriculum was revised adopting "communicative language teaching" (CLT) as the official methodology, replacing the traditional "grammar translation method" in 2002 so that learners' basic communication skills in English could be developed (Hamid, 2010). This curricular innovation led to the redesigning and restructuring of primary textbooks by local-experts. The publication of these textbooks was also carried out by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) of the country. As a result, it can be hypothesized that these locally produced ELT materials will be able to reflect the cultural variations, needs, beliefs and situations of local communities successfully.

This paper aims to examine how far the locally designed and produced textbooks have been able to resist cultural imperialism at primary level classrooms in Bangladesh in view of these developments. The first section of this paper focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of restructuring textbooks. The second part highlights the primary ELT scenario of Bangladesh. The third section discusses the cultural content of the textbooks, and the last part includes some recommendations and the conclusion.

## 2. Theoretical Underpinnings of Restructuring Textbooks

### 2.1 ELT and Cultural Imperialism

According to Richards (2008, p. 2), critical theorists have taken 'the status of English, the drain on education resources it demands in many countries, and its role in facilitating domination by multinational companies' into account in 'this age of change', and found that ELT may have underlying political attachments. ELT activities have been viewed as the reincarnation of colonialism of the centre from this strand, and this hegemony has been seen to be promoted by the marketing of the British and American textbooks in periphery countries (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999). In this way, countries of the centre are perhaps trying to impose their own culture disregarding local cultures which are related to the values, beliefs, purposes and activities of local communities. Therefore, Phillipson (1992) has argued that ELT can be seen as the facilitator of linguistic imperialism and mentions that "the tenets of ELT have ideological and structural consequences. They serve to strengthen the hold of the centre over the periphery" (p. 192).

Pennycook (1995, p. 43) has also declared that English can be seen as 'the language of international capitalism' and due to that factor it may promote the supremacy of English discourse (written or spoken) over all other languages of the world. Thus the superior image of the native speakers can be established in the periphery countries. This kind of imperialism may result in inequalities in all fields including economics, politics, education, culture and communication. He, therefore, has argued that "the expansion of English language education is ... both a continuation of the racist hierarchies of colonial rule and of the colonial construction of the inherent superiority of the native speaker" (Pennycook, 1998, p. 194).

Similarly, Fairclough (1989, p.43) has pointed out that English discourse may have 'power in and behind' it and inferred that this type of discourse in the social milieu may lead to further imperialism. From this perspective, when learners start acquiring English, they may also start accepting the cultural, political and economic values of the dominant group to gain mastery over the target language (TL). This kind of acceptance can occur because teaching and learning always involves the 'transfer and negotiation' of some kind of values and interests (Canagarajah, 1999, p.17). This transmission in different ELT contexts may lead to cultural homogenization and pave the way for cultural imperialism (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Therefore, cultural imperialism (cf. MacDonalization cited by Ritzer, 1993) has been viewed as a process whereby the centre may try to win over second language (L2) learners by gaining their 'empathy towards and appreciation for' TL communities (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 268). SL learners may give into this homogenization and integration process by adopting the norms of the target culture by assuming that detailed knowledge about the target culture and its communities will help them to gain mastery over English, the 'linguistic power' (Kachru, 1986, p.1). Thus, cultural imperialism may take place in ESL or EFL contexts.

However, Phillipson's (1992) views on linguistic imperialism has been criticized by Bisong (1995) who has argued that users of English in periphery countries may have the ability to choose languages independently considering various sociolinguistic realities of local communities (e.g. Nigeria). Therefore, the promotion of ELT in these countries may not be a practice of linguistic hegemony; rather, it may have been facilitating the communication process in multilingual contexts. Similarly, Conrad (1996, p. 20) has also considered that Phillipson's (1992) framework of linguistic imperialism is built on an assumption of power asymmetry, and it presumes that 'to learn a language is to become dominated by it'. Therefore, following this kind of framework can lead to committing 'empirical errors' in any studies.

In spite of these criticisms, Phillipson's (1992) arguments about linguistic imperialism have raised questions which can clarify the ethical dimensions of ELT. And it can make the ELT practitioners more sensitive to their own cultural and national priorities.

## 2.2 Risks of Using Global Textbooks

With the rise of worldwide interest in English, the textbook publishing industries of the centre have concentrated on marketing global textbooks which have been 'designed' to serve ELT all over the world (Block & Cameron, 2002, p.10). Thus they are probably meeting the demands of thousands of copies of textbooks produced in English and generating a great deal of wealth (Gray, 2002). *Headway* (Soars & Soars, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2003) and *Cutting Edge Intermediate* (Cunningham & Moor, 2005) are good examples of these textbooks. The publishers of the books have often gained an easy access to local markets because though ELT is now being practiced widely all over the world, the approaches, methods, materials and techniques of ELT and its supporting teacher-training programs are still generally directed by the center to periphery countries

(Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). In this way, the centre's 'firm grip over textbook authorship and production' may have been tightening in periphery ELT communities (Kumaravadivelu, *ibid*, p.15).

Moreover, the use of global textbooks can have many other adverse effects. Since these textbooks can be "used by students at a particular level and age group anywhere in the world regardless of culture" (Ranalli, 2003, pp. 3-4), they usually portray native speaker-oriented standard English disregarding local as well as other varieties of English (Pennycook, 1994; Gray, 2002). The underlying intention of these textbooks may even be to connect people by promoting target culture-oriented homogeneity around the world (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

The connectedness of these textbooks, therefore, can be seen as one of the manifestations of the globalization process as it has been argued that "globalization merely implies greater interconnectedness and deterritorialisation" (Waters cited in Edwards & Usher, 2008, p. 23). Moreover, nowadays content of these textbooks may have been 'deterritorialized' by including not only native speakers' settings but also international contexts to show 'English as an increasingly global language' (Gray, 2002, p. 157). Still, these textbooks may discriminate between the centre and the periphery countries because these books can convey 'ideologies' from the 'culturally dominant' countries to the 'less dominant' countries through the medium of 'English in any of its countless world varieties' (Derbel & Richards, 2007, par. 3).

Moreover, according to Gray (2002) global textbooks mainly focus on 'aspirational' content by including topics such as traveling, holidays and shopping which may encourage learners' to 'aspire to' such activities (p. 161). Though this type of content may have drawn lots of learners' attention, they can breach the learners' bonding with their local cultures. Thus, they may raise learners' integrative interest in knowing the 'cosmopolitan cultures' of 'materialistic' lifestyles portrayed in these books through English (Brown cited in Gray, *ibid*, p.160). Therefore, these books may not only carry cultural trappings with them but also have an 'one size fits all' approach in terms of their topic choices (Gray, *ibid*, p.159).

Tomlinson (2008, p. 3) has also criticized these global textbooks. He argues that these textbooks may not be able to provide L2 learners with 'the provision of opportunities for acquisition and development' because these books have not been designed according to learner's individualistic needs and learning styles which are conditioned by their local environments and learning culture.

Consequently, many EFL and ESL learners may fail to achieve a satisfactory level of competence in English. Therefore, Tomlinson (ibid) has pointed out that local and well-designed non-commercial materials will be better in comparison to global textbooks for teaching English in EFL or ESL contexts.

Additionally, teaching materials should reflect 'the reality of language use' (Tomlinson, 2003, p.22) and try to raise learners' critical awareness and sensitivity (Byram & Flemming, 1998). However, the producers of global textbooks may have not taken all these issues into account since these books may not emphasize the local realities (Gray, 2002). Therefore, ELT textbooks produced locally can be considered as a better option for teaching the TL rather than global textbooks.

### 2.3 Textbook Content and Raising Cultural Awareness

Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 17) suggests using English only as a tool for communication in periphery ESL or EFL communities in the face of these assumed hegemonic threats from global textbooks. This can be followed by the 'transformative restructuring' of teaching English as a second language (TESOL) activities from philosophical, pedagogical and attitudinal perspectives. From a pedagogical viewpoint, he advises these communities to design their own ELT materials by portraying mainly local cultures. Similarly, Markee (1997) and McKay (2003) mention that the local culture can play a crucial role in the choice of the appropriate methodology and teaching materials for a particular community, thereby producing great support for carrying out curricular innovation.

Therefore, a question could be raised: what type of critical awareness should be nurtured through locally produced materials? Fairclough (1992) suggests raising learners' critical language awareness (CLA) by making "language itself the object of critical scrutiny – both language as social practice and language as social process, evidenced in reading and writing texts" (Wallace, 2002, p.112). Thus, L2 learners will become conscious of the idea that TL can be modified and used only as a tool for communication to meet their diversified communicative needs in both local and international contexts. This critical awareness will help the learners in 'sensitizing' themselves to the 'social inequalities that confront' them and develop their 'necessary capabilities for assessing those inequalities' regarding language use (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 164).

Kramsch and Sullivan (1996, p. 210) also proposes promoting an 'appropriate pedagogy which would, at the same time be a pedagogy of



appropriation'. This pedagogy will take into account both global and local needs of L2 learners according to learning contexts. It will disregard the native speaker-oriented authentic pedagogy that mainly aims to foster the use of a particular variety of English across diversified socio-cultural contexts by ignoring learner's needs. Therefore, though Byram (1997) suggests nurturing learners' critical cultural awareness by making them aware of the importance of negotiating meaning, social roles and relationships according to their L1 and L2 cultures, Baker (2012) argues that only L1 and L2 oriented cultural awareness will not be helpful for functioning in a globalizing world. To survive in such a world, learners will need to acquire intercultural awareness which will prepare them for taking part in intercultural communication in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Therefore, local experts should take all such cultural-awareness related issues into account while designing teaching materials.

#### **2.4 Raising Cultural Awareness among Young Learners (YLS)**

Fairclough (1992), Vickov (2007) and Nieto (2010) particularly recommends raising the CLA of children because cultural ideologies can play an important role in conditioning children's cognitive and social development. According to Vickov (2007, p. 108) 'developing the awareness of learners' own cultural identity and nationhood should be given more importance in case of YLS because this would help them to form ideas about their own cultural identity and serve as 'a basis for understanding' other cultures in the long run. Therefore, in EFL classes, YLS' familiar concepts based on their local culture and environment can be introduced earlier than the target culture which will help them to understand new concepts in relation to their L1 (Vilke cited in Vickov, 2007, p. 108).

Additionally, Tomlinson (2003) and Hill (2003) point out that selection of culturally appropriate visuals is very important in designing materials for YLS. Since these learners may have very limited experience about the outside world, unknown words or concepts can become meaningful to them mainly through such visuals.

Therefore, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) emphasizes including three types of cultural information in English language textbooks for raising learners' cultural awareness. According to them, textbooks can portray the source culture i.e. learners' own local culture; the target culture, i.e. the culture of native-English speaking countries; and the international target culture which will be the combination of cultural elements drawn from both English and non-English speaking countries around the world. Even then, the portrayal of local culture

may create some new problems. As Holborow (quoted in Bisong 1995, p. 126) points out, firstly, it might be difficult to decide which one would be the real native language of a country due to a process of continuing linguistic assimilation; secondly, the promotion of native language may introduce its own 'oppressive strategies' to dominate over other varieties of languages used in a local community. Thus in attempting to remove one kind of perceived hegemony, there is the risk of putting another one, which will also be harder to resist. Therefore, material designers will have to be very conscious in selecting the content of textbooks used for teaching YLs.

In the light of the above discussion, the next three sections focus on the primary level ELT context of Bangladesh and tries to find out whether locally produced textbooks have been able to restrict the intrusion of cultural imperialism at the primary level in Bangladesh.

### 3. Primary ELT Scenario of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a decolonized country. However, when the sun of the British Empire set in Bangladesh in 1947, it was still a part of Pakistan. English was taught as a compulsory subject at the primary level here till Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971. Subsequently, Bengali (L1) was emphasized, suppressing English in the educational and administrative domain to further on the decolonizing and nation-building processes (Ahmed, 2005).

However, this situation started to change in 1990s when the Bangladesh government decided to initiate a curricular change. In 2002, a revised curriculum included four English language competences which were not taken into account before 1990s. Those are:

- (i) Listening to and understanding simple commands/instructions/requests in English and carrying them out.
- (ii) Speaking and understanding simple English according to students' age.
- (iii) Reading and comprehending textbooks according to students' age group and level.
- (iv) Writing alphabets, words, numbers, simple sentences, passages, paragraphs, informal letters and numbers according to students' age groups and levels.

(Ahmed, *ibid*, pp. 21-22)

In spite of this newly alleged interest to developing English language competences, Bengali continued to be emphasized in the nation's political and cultural identity formation and English was generally viewed 'as a language of international and to some extent national currency in business, education and culture' (Banu & Sussex, 2001, p.137).

According to the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE, 2008), around 3,66,000 teachers are working at the primary level in Bangladesh. Since almost 75% of the primary level students (1,63,12,907) go to schools in rural areas, the teacher-student ratio in these schools (1:52) are higher than that in urban schools (1: 48). Though there are a large number of primary students, there are not enough trained teachers in these schools due to 'inadequate infrastructure and limited institutional capacity' for teacher training (Hamid, 2010, p. 289). 80% of these teachers received one year long general certificate-in-education training and only 28.5 % of them received 5 days long subject based training (DPE, 2008). Even this training experience can be considered as 'wastage' because this limited exposure may not be able to achieve the desired result due to these teachers' poor English skills (Hoque cited in Hamid, 2010, p. 296).

#### 4. Discussion on *English for Today*

*English for Today* (EFT), Class 1- 5 (NCTB, 2010, 2011) constitute a series of textbooks which are used in Bangladesh at the primary level. These books were designed with the help of the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) of Bangladesh (1997-2005) which was initially funded by the UK government's Department for International Development (DfID) and Ministry of Education, Bangladesh, and was later funded by NCTB and the seven education boards of the country. The lessons in these books tend to provide learners with opportunities for practicing different skills through individual, pair and group work. Thus these textbooks have focused on promoting active learning in a learner-centered way, following the CLT approach.

However, most primary teachers still follow the traditional teacher-centered approach in teaching large classes. Even though some of them show interest in applying CLT techniques, they usually do not have easy access to the teachers' guides designed in accordance with the EFTs. In addition, their limited training experience is not often enough to provide them with knowledge required to initiate learner-centered activities (Ara, 2009). As a result, they depend heavily on the textbooks than on any other materials for teaching YLs. Therefore, designing local context appropriate textbooks has become a crucial factor in the primary

sector of Bangladesh in making up for the deficiencies of teachers and in producing more socio-culturally appropriate content than imported ones.

#### 4. 1. The Cultural Content of *English for Today*

EFT books have promoted not only national identities but also tried to emphasize the religious and political priorities of Bangladesh. The visuals of these textbooks introduce figures (flower, poet, bird and animal) related to Bangladesh's national identity and the map of the country in Class 1 (Lesson 30, p. 48), 2 (Lesson 11, p. 21) and 5 (Lesson 11, p. 35; Lesson 13, p. 41- 43). Furthermore, since most Bangladeshis are Muslims, many visuals of bearded male characters representing the Muslim communities have been included in these books. In addition, the whole country has been described in detail in the EFT book of Class 5 (Lesson 20, pp. 61-62) with a visual of rural Bangladesh where a mosque, a church and a temple can be seen in the same frame, depicting the political view that people of all religions are treated equally in Bangladesh. All these elements can raise YLs' knowledge about the national identity of Bangladesh. Dat (2008) has also found this type of cultural representation in locally produced materials of Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand.

Additionally, EFT books have tried to raise YLs' awareness of the target language as well as global communities by introducing characters from neighboring countries (Nepal, India, Japan) as well as native English speaking countries (UK, Australia) in Class 3 (Lesson 12, p. 31) and 4 (Lesson 17, p. 42). Some of these characters are at times similar to them in respect of age or sex but also differ from them in terms of costumes and hobbies. Furthermore, the EFT book of Class 5 (Lesson 26, p. 83) presents an adult English speaking character from Australia who has been learning Bengali, and has Chinese, Italian and French speaking friends. In these ways, these textbooks have attempted to raise YLs' sensitivity regarding the existence of different nationalities and languages in the world. According to Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, pp. 7-8), this kind of exposure helps YLs to realize that people can act differently depending on social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence.

Other characters introduced in the EFTs are familiar to YLs due to their activities. This kind of content has no doubt been included to acquaint YLs with their society (Tomlinson, 2003). Therefore, the EFT of Class 3 (Lesson 30, p. 80) includes a poem about three characters (a cobbler, a tailor and a policeman) from different occupations. In addition, the visuals of farmers have been incorporated in the entire series clearly to emphasize the fact that farming is the main occupation in Bangladesh.

The topics of these books can also be related to YLs' personal lives. For instance, the EFT of Class 4 (Lesson 10, pp. 22-23) describes the daily routine of a urban boy whereas the EFT of Class 5 (Lesson 8, p. 25) depicts the daily activities of a rural boy so that YLs can personalize their learning while communicating in the TL (Pinter, 2006). Moreover, these textbooks have reading passages on describing families which can enable YLs to talk about their own family lives as well.

Additionally, EFT books emphasize YLs' socio-cultural values, beliefs and behaviors. These books present joint (Class 3, Lesson 9, p. 24) as well as nuclear families (Class 1, Lesson 5, p. 5) with no more than three children probably to show that having fewer number of children is one of the keys to having happy families. Moreover, the necessity of raising students' sense of respect for women is stressed by EFT. Therefore, the EFT of Class 3 (Lesson 23, p. 62) focuses on the demanding daily life of a mother who is a home maker, and the EFT of Class 5 includes a reading passage on a woman who works as a shop assistant (Lesson 7, pp. 20-21). In addition, the EFT of Class 4 (Lesson 21, p. 56) describes the hardship of a farmer so that YLs can become more considerate about people who serve the country selflessly by growing crops for all.

Moreover, different issues, such as, how to maintain a healthy life and the meaning of traffic signals have been taken into account in the EFTs of Class 3 (Lesson 10, p. 27 & Lesson 11, p. 30) and 4 (Lesson 5, p.12) so that YLs' general knowledge and sense of responsibility towards the community can be awakened.

The linguistic contrasts between the YLs' L1 and TL have been addressed in these books mainly by including lessons on pronunciation practice from Class 1 to 5. Some of the English consonant, vowel and diphthong phonemes (/p/, /f/, /s/, /l/, /i/, /æ/, /e/, /l/, /i/) which pose difficulty to EFL learners have been presented in these lessons with their phonetic symbols, and the different contexts in which these phonemes can occur (Class 1, Lesson 17-22, pp. 35-40; Class 3, Lesson 4, p. 6 & Lesson 17, p. 50; Class 4, Lesson 6, p.13, Lesson 11, p. 27, Lesson 28, p. 73; Class 5, Lesson 11, p. 33). Additionally, the EFT of Class 4 presents the phonemes (/i/, /æ/, /e/, /s/, /l/) and their equivalent Bengali sounds.

The dissimilarities between the YLs' source culture, the international cultures and the target culture are illustrated through the mention of the names of different meals (Class 4, Lesson 3, p. 7) and religious festivals (Class 5, Lesson 25, p. 79-80 & Lesson 26, p. 83) in these textbooks. Revealing these contrasts are

very important for EFL textbooks as Savignon (2002, p. 10) observes 'just knowing something about the target culture will not suffice'. She argues that textbooks should expose students to different linguistic and cultural contrasts. This experience could raise their consciousness about their own culture and help them develop a flexible attitude towards other cultures.

Additionally, all EFT books provide YLs with exposure to different communicative functions of English such as greetings, describing and introducing people, asking and answering questions, giving commands and instructions, making requests, talking about times and days, and buying things from a shop through different conversational cues. All these transactional and interactional functions of English (Brown & Yule, 1983) have been exemplified to show English as a communicational tool important for textbooks promoting the CLT approach (Richards, 2008).

#### 4.2 Limitations of *English for Today*

In spite of connecting the content to the local contexts, EFT books have some limitations. For example, these textbooks have overemphasized the maintenance of the politeness principles of the centre. Thus, the EFT books of Class 3 (Lesson 19, p. 54), 4 (Lesson 12, p. 30; Lesson 16, p. 39; Lesson 24, p. 63) and 5 (Lesson 2, p. 4; Lesson 10, p. 30) have included five lessons on making requests. These lessons have presented various adjacency pairs and asked students to use these models while playing roles and writing dialogue. For example, the EFT of Class 4 uses the following examples:

- i) W   ould you lend me your English book, please?  
O   f course. Here it is.
- ii) W   ould you open the window, please?  
S   ure. I'll be happy to.
- iii) C   ould y   ou pass the sugar, please?  
S   ure. Here you are.

(*English for Today*, Class 4, Lesson 24, p. 63)

Since children at this stage may learn everything by relating it to their L1, this kind of exposure may appear strange to Bangladeshi learners. Confusion could occur because Bangladeshi YLs do not make requests in such a structured way (e.g. would you....please, could you...please) in their L1. Therefore, this kind of structured representation of any speech act may indicate the inherent supremacy

of English discourse to students (Pennycook, 1995). Maintenance of these principles can therefore be seen as a kind of imposition on YLs.

Moreover from the pragmatic viewpoint, EFT books may not have been able to provide YLs with sufficient exposure to different conversational strategies (e.g. repair, negotiation of meaning, comprehension check) needed for managing successful oral conversations (Richards, 2008). The conversational cues, group works and pair works included in these textbooks may not provide learners with challenging contexts where they will need to take communicative risks and get feedback on their performance (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Most lessons have introduced the form of embedded teacher initiated cues at first and only ask students to practice applying these cues. Therefore, these textbooks may not be able to fulfill YLs' individualistic needs and may not reflect the realities of language use of local communities (Tomlinson, 2003).

If the interaction patterns presented in EFT books are considered, it can be argued that the conversational cues included in these textbooks may show an unequal distribution of power between a teacher and his or her students. The teacher can be seen as an authoritarian figure possessing the sole power and knowledge of English, and the students may be viewed only as eager submissive learners. For example, there is a lesson on 'Commands, Requests and Instructions' in the EFT of Class 5 (Lesson 2, p. 4-7), where a female teacher brings in a packed box full of utensils, a stove and some necessary ingredients for making a cake in a class and asks students to help her out in preparing it. The model for using English for giving commands and instructions and making requests have been applied through their dialogue in this lesson. However, what the pedagogical purpose behind creating this scenario in the class has not been clarified to the students by the teacher, and very little negotiation of meaning takes place during this example of teacher talk (Cullen 1998). This kind of exposure may shape an uncritical attitude in learners towards the centre because this can make them assume that English language proficiency may have connection with power and control for which the teacher is playing an authoritative role and they may give in passively (Kachru, 1986; Van Dijk, 2001). Therefore, these stereotypical cues may represent the power play of English in the EFL classroom influencing YLs' perception of the TL. YLs may also speculate that the TL is more powerful than their L1 since their Bengali textbooks do not have such representations.

These textbooks also depict the inter-relationship between the target culture and the source culture in a way that may not be comprehensible to YLs who have very limited knowledge about the outside world (Pinter, 2006). For example, the EFT of Class 1 (Lesson 23, p. 41) has a rhyme that talks about a pussy cat which has visited London, and has met the queen. Since the very little YLs of Class 1 may not have any idea about the underlying relation between London and the queen, this kind of inter-cultural connection may seem quite vague to them. Besides, the images of the queen (symbolizing power) and London (the centre) can be taken as a representation of the resistance of imperialistic element as well. In addition, the rhymes on a teddy bear who goes to a government primary school in a rural setting wearing polished shoes (Class 1, Lesson 8, p. 8), and the visuals used in the rhyme 'Humpty Dumpty' (Class 2, Lesson 31, p. 57) to show the king's men and horses may also have cultural implications pertaining to the centre which will be difficult for YLs to understand.

In addition, the local community's life style may have not been presented in a satisfactory way in these textbooks (Banu, 2009). For instance, if YLs compare the simple items of a poor ill-clad village farmer's daily meals with that of a urban middle class family's lavish daily meals, snacks and dessert depicted in the EFT of Class 4 (Lesson 3, p. 7 & Lesson 21, pp. 56-57), they will get the impression that there is extreme economic stratification in society which impacts on people's daily life styles. Similarly, there is another lesson in the EFT book of Class 4 describing a picnic where an urban family is 'having fun' amidst nature by having different kinds of local dishes (Lesson 7. P. 16) whereas there is another lesson in the same book where a poor farmer says that he does not have enough food at home but consoles himself by saying that 'May be I will have better luck next year' (Lesson 21, p. 56). On the one hand, this type of representation of people's daily life may enrich YLs' knowledge about different communities. On the other hand, this type of exposure may seem quite insensitive to YLs who belong to low income families. In addition, some of the visuals which have been used for describing a urban boy's bedroom (Class 3, Lesson 28, p. 73) and daily routine (Class 4, Lesson 10, pp. 22-23) showing different aspects of his well-furnished house may induce rural students' towards materialistic gains in life.

Moreover, the EFT books presents Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, as a place where children have easy access to the zoo (Class 5, Lesson 36, p. 118), flyovers (Class 5, Lesson 27, p. 85), multi-storied buildings (Class 5, Lesson 15, p. 47), and children's park and museum (Class 4, Lesson 27, p. 70). These places



can draw YLs' attention quite easily. In contrast, village life is shown as a place where no such modern facilities are available though the children can enjoy the company of nature there by flying kites (Class 3, Lesson 24, p. 65), chasing frogs (Class 1, Lesson 32, p. 50), and playing on the swing (Class 4, Lesson 31, p.77). This comparative representation may provide an image of Bangladesh where villagers are deprived of the modern amenities of life. This exposure can raise YLs appreciation for cosmopolitan culture and make them detest their local identities. Such attraction may gradually turn into an obsession with global communities when they grow up. Consequently, such lessons may lead to an inferiority complex as well as identity crisis among YLs who live in rural areas (Banu, 2009).

Though these textbooks were based on the CLT approach which is supposed to give utmost importance to the negotiation and communication of meaning (Richards, 2008), they tend to focus more on the forms than on the content. As the education system of Bangladesh is examination-oriented and students' reading and writing skills are what is assessed, these books may be prioritizing preparing YLs for examinations as the target need (necessity) and performing well in the examination as the learners' learning needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) by concentrating primarily on fulfilling these needs. This viewpoint may have led these books to include explicitly stated rule-based discussion on phonological and syntactical aspects of English. Therefore, it can be said that these textbooks have given a form-focused exposure to CLT in order to accommodate the needs of local communities including teachers who also need this kind of support from teaching materials.

Additionally, these textbooks may have overemphasized centre-oriented standard pronunciation. Though maintaining the conventions of the centre is not important any more in order to use English as a communicative tool in this global era (Alptekin, 2002), these books include eight lessons on the rules and practice of using stress (Class 4, Lesson 14, p. 36; Class 5, Lesson 32, p. 108), intonation (Class 4, Lesson 22, p. 59), and punctuation marks (Lesson 18, p. 44; Lesson 25, p. 65; Lesson 26, p. 67 in Class 4 & Lesson 17, p. 53; Lesson 22, p. 72 in Class 5). Inclusion of these topics may indicate to YLs that they may need to conform to foreign norms while using English. Therefore, this overemphasis on maintaining these norms can be seen as the target culture's intrusion at the primary level. Thus, YLs may become intimidated as they may think that the use of the TL will not allow any kind of modifications according to contextual variations and needs of local communities. This may lead to learners' forming negative attitude towards TL, and they may find it difficult to use the TL outside

the classroom. In addition, the topics related to practicing stress and intonation could even prove to be difficult to teachers who have poor English language skills.

Finally, though 1.5 percent of the total population of Bangladesh belong to indigenous communities (UNHCR, 2008) these textbooks have not represented their lives at all. As a result, many YLs will not be able to attain any insight into these communities from these books.

## 5. Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the discussion in the previous section it can be concluded that though the EFT books might have been successful to some extent in representing the local culture, values and beliefs, these books still have some limitations regarding the manner in which exposure has been provided to the TL and to local culture. Firstly, the norm-oriented exposure to the TL in these books may make YLs think that the TL cannot be used fully to accommodate to local contexts, and whoever will have the knowledge of how to communicate in English fluently, will possess the power to dominate over the less knowledgeable others. Secondly, the social discriminations which have been portrayed in these books about local communities may raise YLs' aspiration for power and materialistic gains. Thus YLs' social and cognitive development might be affected, and they might find it difficult to understand that the TL could be used only as a tool for communication. Therefore, the following initiatives can be taken for making these textbooks more culturally appropriate to the primary level context of Bangladesh.

Firstly, the content of these textbooks can be simplified by reducing explicitly stated rule and by including conversational cues and activities which will present YLs with situations, posing the challenge of negotiation of meaning and taking risks. Thus, YLs will be able to learn from what they experience in class and how they construct meaning by noticing salient features of the TL input (Cameron, 2001; Tomlinson, 2008). This exposure will help YLs' to accept English mainly as a tool for communication. Thus, they will realize that FL learning is not all about learning rules and conforming to standards, and there may be no hidden agenda in acquiring the TL.

Secondly, these textbooks can try to exemplify the inter-cultural relationship between Bengali and English in a more culture-sensitive and age-sensitive way so that it may appear meaningful to YLs who may have just started forming attitudes towards the target as well as other cultures (Ellis, 1985).

Thirdly, since the teaching materials may play an important role in cultural transmission between the education system and the rest of society (Cunningsworth, 1995) the content of the textbooks can focus on maintaining an appropriate balance among local rural, urban and indigenous communities' life styles and cultural variations.

Fourthly, primary teachers can concentrate on developing their language skills so that they can become more confident in teaching English and make better use of these textbooks. The government and donor-funded projects can help them in this respect by providing them with practical guidelines and local context and culture-oriented effective training.

Finally, it can be said that though the locally produced primary textbooks of Bangladesh may have been able to restrict cultural imperialism to some extent, the NCTB still needs to focus more intensely on how the local culture as well as the target culture can be represented in a more sensitive and balanced way.

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# Investing in the Culture Industry to Enhance Economic Growth in West Africa

*Henry Kam Kab*

University of Buea

## Abstract

This essay examines the role culture can play in effectively advancing economic growth in West Africa through the agency of the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) and the different national governments. Although a much contested terminology, culture remains an untapped area for economic growth partly due to the absence of commitment on the part of the leadership of West African countries and partly to their ignorance of the central role culture plays in innovation, technology, development and growth of regional and national economies. However if well harnessed, the rich cultural repertoire of this region of Africa can provide an impetus for economic expansion, employment and stability more than ever before in a region known more for its numerous conflicts in the past twenty years or so than for its economic growth.

## 1. Introduction

Available records and recent developments in the economic sector across the world practically attest to the fact that some countries such as China and Japan in Asia have attained economic and technological development by going back to the roots of their indigenous knowledge systems (Nigeria, [www.nigeriannews24.com/.../use-culture-to-create-economic-development](http://www.nigeriannews24.com/.../use-culture-to-create-economic-development)). Such indigenous knowledge systems are rooted in the culture of the Japanese and Chinese and not foreign cultures. In spite of this revelation, modern neoclassical economics tends to downplay the importance of culture in the development of different countries and regions of the world. Some economists assume that human beings are rational utility-maximising individuals, and such maximising behaviour is largely invariant across different human societies but where the rational ability is higher, development follows. Besides, the standard economic growth model pioneered by

Robert Solow examines the inputs of capital and labour and the more recent so-called 'endogenous' growth models and shows how they lay emphasis on the role of technology in economic growth. From this perspective, culture constitutes a kind of residual factor that is important and that people can appeal to when every other explanations which are rooted essentially in economic terms fail (Culture and Economic Development: 3130-3131).

The way a people behave or react to work can be understood from their culture of work. For instance, in some parts of Latin America, there is a feeling of disdain for labour and commerce, sumptuous patterns of consumption, individualistic behaviour and anti-progress attitudes (Leon, <http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/Ias/studies/pdfs/leon.pdf>). Such a culture of hatred for work in favour of sumptuous consumption produces an economy that is not only weak but also is anti-progressive. Investors in such economies need to understand the people's culture of work so that they can either refuse to invest there or take measures that can motivate them towards liking work. If they are not able to change this retrogressive culture, they will quit rather than invest in a non- progressive society. Any investor who has an inadequate knowledge of a people's attitude towards work which is often rooted in their culture of upbringing will compromise growth and expansion in business.

The Liberian National Campaign for Cultural Identity (NACCI) was quick to observe that the absence of cultural ties in Liberia resulted in the division of the people as they were not able to agree on issues of national interest. This had hindered national growth and development in Liberia before the NACCI recognised this weakness and took steps to address it so that Liberians could come together to reconstruct their society (Liberia 2010). Similarly, the National Commission on Culture (NCC) of Ghana in 2008 used different channels to emphasise the need for corporate organisations in Ghana and Africa to incorporate cultural values into corporate management activities for better results. According to the NCC this would assess the degree to which cultural values impinge on corporate performance for the development of Ghana in particular and Africa in general (Osabutey 2008). In effect, the NCC recognised the importance of culture in increasing the productivity of corporate organisations not only in Ghana but also other parts of the African continent.

During a World Conference on Cultural Policies held in Mexico in 1982 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) upheld the importance of culture in economic growth. The organisation also discussed the importance of human resources development, and

the spiritual and cultural needs of people as far as material needs are concerned. The UN specialised organ particularly observed that a stimulation of creativity in the arts was a way towards the attainment of the material needs of a people who have a collective destiny (Karanko 1992: 58-9). The Japanese had many decades earlier observed that human and material development was very useful in the harmonious coexistence of man and nature or his environment. This shows that the material development of society is possible through the establishment of an effective mechanism that brings together a person and his/her environment which can be better appreciated through a sound knowledge of a people's culture. It is on this philosophy that the Japanese rely to initiate and sustain economic growth which has made the country to be noted for its economic growth and expansion.

Culture is an important component of different peoples of the world and shapes their outlook on life. Although the term culture itself is problematic, we shall in this essay discuss culture as the totality of the lived experiences of a people which include their philosophy or rationale of the organisation of society, production and outlook on life. In fact, culture should be considered as the sum total of all the experiences of the life of different people and ethnic groups. Different people and scholars of culture have discussed the challenges of culture and the richness in values associated with culture and their relationship with development and growth for some countries when appropriately used. In some cases, culture has been used to create serious conflict between people and groups and for this reason the growth of some societies has been compromised and not promoted.

West Africa is one of those regions of Africa with diverse cultures between and within countries. The different people of this region speak hundreds of different languages, practice various religions, and have many histories and traditions but there is a history of interrelationships between these people, their religions and cultures from one place to another. (<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m17/activity3.php>). The more different human beings of different cultures and religions come into contact with one another, the more the possibility of an exchange of values of some kind. All these put together may always serve the needs of the people of West Africa better. The long term result of such contact may eventually stimulate economic growth in the region.

Nigeria, for example, is socially and culturally one of the most diversified African countries. Its cultural policy aims at understanding the life of the people, their cultural values, needs and expectations. It also focuses on building up a national cultural identity and parallel affirmation of cultural identities of different

ethnic groups. In addition, Nigeria's cultural policy is intended to develop the cultural infrastructure and to introduce new technologies in cultural activities as well as establish links between culture and education and between education and the different cultural industries, particularly the mass media (Cultural Policy in Nigeria).

This cultural diversity notwithstanding, since 1975, the countries of West Africa came together to found the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with the aim of promoting economic integration and political cooperation. Since then the fifteen member states have tried to make integration a reality through greater mobility, communication, trade and growth for all member states. In spite of this laudable effort, the region has been known and projected to be politically and militarily unstable in the African continent. Such political and military instability have been frustrating to the mission of ECOWAS in mobilising human and natural resources to ensure stability and growth for all member countries of this organisation. These challenges notwithstanding, ECOWAS has since its establishment in 1975 made more positive strides in some areas of economic and cultural integration than many other regional organisations in Africa such as the Central African Customs and Economic Union (CEMAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

## 2. Defining Culture

The definition of culture has remained problematic in modern scholarship because of the scope of the issues involved (Gilbert and Reynolds 2004: 306). This problem notwithstanding we intend to define culture in this study to include almost everything about human existence and experience over time. Within the behavioural sciences, culture is defined in terms of a full range of learned human behaviour patterns ([http://anthro.palomar.edu/culture/culture\\_1.htm](http://anthro.palomar.edu/culture/culture_1.htm)). The English scholar Edward B. Taylor in the 19th century defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man [woman] as a member of society" ([http://anthro.palomar.edu/culture/culture\\_1.htm](http://anthro.palomar.edu/culture/culture_1.htm)). Taylor's definition of culture takes into consideration the experiences and things humankind has produced over time in the process of growing up. Again, the definition emphasises key characteristics of culture such as a people's customs, their works of art, system of organising society that is rational and functional, the values they uphold in life and the reasons for this but above all the way of one's behaviour in society. One common thing to note about the two definitions is that they are clear on the nature of organising society as a key

element of cultural identity and development of any given group of people. The way societies are organised and function is very likely to influence their activities. Such activities include but are not limited to the attitude to work, leisure and the resulting consequences.

Culture is also defined as the collective manifestations of who and what people are, including religious beliefs, political systems, customs, values, intellectual acumen and creative endeavours ([http://anthro.palomar.edu/culture/culture\\_1.htm](http://anthro.palomar.edu/culture/culture_1.htm)). In this definition of culture, the intellectual acumen and creative endeavours of people are considered crucial to an understanding of their culture and associated values. Any culture that lacks ingredients such as creativity and innovation tapped from the intellectual acumen of the people concerned is a culture that is most likely to be vulnerable to decline and eventual extinction. The creative ingenuity of a people has the potential to enrich their culture and by extension its ability to enhance individual growth as well as that of the economy and other associated economies. In fact, experience has shown that a people's culture builds up an individual's creative potentials. Such potentials are crucial to stimulate the production of goods and services. Production can either be sustained or increased depending on a number of factors which include the ability of the people to be innovative and skilful in managing people and resources efficiently. Such values are found in cultures which should be identified and utilised in West Africa to enhance growth and integration.

There are other definitions of culture which take into consideration "every aspect of life: know-how, technical knowledge, customs of food and dress, religion, mentality, values, language, symbols, socio-political and economic behaviour, indigenous methods of taking decisions and exercising power, methods of production and economic relations and so on" (Karanko, 59). Such a comprehensive definition of culture points to one main conclusion: every human endeavour be it economic, social or political is influenced by culture in one way or the other. This is because culture has a visible and invisible influence in almost every human endeavour. It is dynamic and incorporates positive aspects of life because culture in itself is dynamic and contributes to progress of individuals or communities.

The word "culture" has also been defined to include political systems, religious beliefs, history, customs, arts, sciences and education. In this sense, culture defines the collective manifestations of who really people are, what they want to be and also include issues like intellectual acumen and creative endeavours ([http://cultural\\_economics.blogspot.com/2009/09/what-is-cultural-](http://cultural_economics.blogspot.com/2009/09/what-is-cultural-)

economics.html,) which have been discussed earlier. Frey (2009: 20) defines culture simply as an attitude or way of behaving. Meanwhile in cultural anthropology, culture is associated with a common or shared values and practice by any group. It has also been somewhat narrowly defined as "certain activities ... and the products ... which have to do with the intellectual moral and artistic aspects of human life such as works of the visual, performing and literary arts (Throsby 2001:4)."

In spite of the diversity and multiple meanings of culture, there are certain common features which can be identified with what culture is either within ethnic groups or a combination of ethnic groups usually within a country like those of West Africa. These varied definitions either explicitly or implicitly recognise that while no single thing explains the full meaning of culture, a combination of them can do so. These definitions recognise that culture is about the learned behaviour of a people. This is usually based on the knowledge system of the people, their creative abilities, customs and political and economic relations. From this premise, one can argue and not wrongly that economic growth goes hand in glove with the culture of the environment in which this growth takes place. There is need to understand the enabling cultural environment and the appropriate responses of a people of a given environment to probably succeed in a business venture which has the intention of growing and expanding in an economy or different economies. Failure to understand or negligence to exploit the creative ability of a people for the good of the larger society can only lead to more failures.

One must therefore not ignore the cultural environment that will enable him/her to carry out the right prospection and investment which will lead to growth, expansion and integration. Economic growth and creativity are 'birds of the same feathers.' The absence of creativity and innovation and opportunities may work against the determination of a people to make progress a motto. Besides, the knowledge system of a people is the very basis on which society need to lean to develop an autonomous economic system relevant to the immediate socio-cultural and economic needs of that people. Many a times, the value-based system of a people is completely shelved aside for foreign values that help to confuse, contradict and negatively affect economic growth. The multiplier effect leads to insufficiency, and instability affecting people across different socio-political and natural boundaries. The long term ripple effects are telling on families and countries. Karanko (1992: 58) observes that culture is an inescapable reliable determinant of a people's spiritual, material, intellectual, civil and

emotional features and can impact on their very direction of development and civilisation. He also adds that a society without cultural coherence is easily penetrated and disrupted. Such penetration and disruption could be of economic value but detrimental to real growth and integration. Many West African countries are suffocating economically because their economies were easily penetrated, disrupted and destroyed. Culture adverse economic policies have the potential to destroy or frustrate the economic advancement of a people and region.

### 3. ECOWAS and the Promotion of Culture

ECOWAS recognises the importance of culture for the unity of West African peoples and countries. In Articles 29 and 31 paragraphs 1 and 2 of Protocol A/SPI/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, it is stated that this regional organisation recognises that culture is essential for peace, stability and development of each member state. The Protocol recognises that each of the culture of every group of the Member State shall be respected and developed and that the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS shall take necessary measures to organise periodic inter-state cultural events such as festivals of arts and culture, symposia and various cultural events on literature, music, arts and sports.

Through events such as the ECOWAS cup in football, and Miss ECOWAS beauty pageant, ECOWAS countries organise a broad array of cultural and sports activities ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic\\_Community\\_of\\_West\\_African](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_Community_of_West_African)). Besides, within the Department of Education, Culture, Science and Technology of ECOWAS culture is valorised by this regional body. The cultural programme of this department of education, culture, science and technology which was approved by the Council of Ministers of ECOWAS is designed to strengthen and develop exchanges, to promote creativity, cultural tourism development, and free movement of cultural products as well as to enable African artists to have greater access to the international art market. It is also designed to ensure that culture is taken into account in the regional integration process for development and to foster a sense of belonging. The broader aim of the cultural programme is to support and encourage creativity within the ECOWAS space, promote cultural exchange and strengthen cooperation with film makers ([www.comm.ecowas.int/dept/stand.php?id=e\\_e1\\_brief&lang=en](http://www.comm.ecowas.int/dept/stand.php?id=e_e1_brief&lang=en); A/DEC. 4/11/96 ECOWAS Cultural Programme). Still within the context of promoting culture, the Social and Cultural Affairs Commission of ECOWAS was established

as one of the six specialised commissions. The other specialised commissions include Trade, Customs, Immigration, Monetary and Payments, Industry, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Transport, Communications and Energy, Administration and Finance and Information (Economic Community of West African States, [www.referenceforbusiness.com](http://www.referenceforbusiness.com)).

#### **4. Discussion: Shortcomings of ECOWAS Culture Policy**

A close look at the culture policy of ECOWAS and its implementation shows that it is peripheral to the core mission of this regional body. From birth ECOWAS focused on the promotion of trade, cooperation and self-reliance in West Africa. Even after the revision of the ECOWAS Treaty in 1993, this regional body for West Africa re-emphasised the need to spur economic integration and political cooperation and culture was simply shelved from the core concern of ECOWAS ([www.referenceforbusiness.com/encyclopedia/Dev-Eco/Economic-Community-of-West-African-States-ECOWAS.html](http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/encyclopedia/Dev-Eco/Economic-Community-of-West-African-States-ECOWAS.html)). The recognition but near neglect of culture as an important element in the cultural integration of a multicultural ECOWAS has contributed to an unstable economic environment for all ECOWAS member countries, although some of them are more stable than others.

Besides, it is not enough for participants to recognise and respect the culture of every group of the member states of ECOWAS if they fail to tap from these cultural specificities to engineer growth in cultural and related industries in West Africa. Some of the greatest cultural challenges are from within different member countries of ECOWAS like Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire and not necessarily between countries and foreign-imposed linguistic differences of the English, French and Portuguese. The inability of the governments to handle this diversity in cultures for good has made it difficult for umbrella organisations like ECOWAS to use culture as a tool to promote economic growth in West Africa.

Cultural activities of ECOWAS such as the organisation of the beauty pageant and the football cup have very little potential for meaningful economic growth that can lead to the employment of thousands of people who are jobless. These two activities indeed are not good indicators of growth for the region. The one thing that these might have done is foster the ability of the people to integrate easily but such integration is not synonymous with growth which has the potential to keep citizens of the region from moving because they will have the opportunity right at home or within the region to nurture their creative potentials. Even cultural exchanges between member states which have been



encouraged by ECOWAS seem not to have produced the desired results several decades after the formation of the organisation. These have not been targeted and so no huge investment has been made in this sector with the conscious aim of boosting the cultural industry so that it could promote employment and growth in industry in West Africa.

Although cultural tourism, free movement of cultural products and creativity have been recognised and encouraged by ECOWAS in the cultural programmes of the Department of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, except in a few countries, much of this has remained wishful thinking. Cultural economics remains an untapped reservoir for economic growth in West Africa. This was publicly noted by experts in Dakar Senegal in 2006. During the Dakar conference these experts brainstormed on the challenges of cultural industries. While they recognised that music, cinema, audiovisual and book sectors were experiencing a certain dynamism, they were confronted with obstacles and difficulties such as piracy, customs and fiscal system problems and the legal environment which was not too favourable for the development of cultural industries as well as high production costs ([www.diversite-culturelle.aq.ca/index.php?id=112&L=1&tx](http://www.diversite-culturelle.aq.ca/index.php?id=112&L=1&tx)).

## **5. Towards a Culture that Enhances Economic Growth**

Culture has been recognised as an important vector of development by ECOWAS and some West African countries but has not been exploited sufficiently for the benefit of member states to make this a reality. While a few countries like Nigeria and Ghana have recognised its importance and tapped from it to develop a cultural industry that has promoted economic growth through various forms of investment and advertisement, most of them have not done so because so many politicians generally regard culture only in the divisive and negative sense. Cultural values and the cultural industry must indeed be consciously pursued by West African countries because culture plays a role in how the production of goods and services are organised, how value is placed on labour and opportunity, how purchase and investment decisions are made and how the resources of the earth are utilised. This is because attitudes about education, individual rights, accumulation of wealth and the importance of private property drive the adoption of economic systems and political institutions (Cultural Economics. <http://culturaleconomics.blogspot.com/2009/09/what-is-cultural-economics.html>).

Since culture shapes the body and influences the skills people acquire (Vander Niet 2010: xi), there is need to recognise its importance vis-à-vis the productive industry if growth is to be maximised in West Africa. Besides, arts and culture-related industries also known as the creative industries provide direct economic benefits to states and communities. They create jobs, attract investments, generate tax revenues and stimulate local economies through tourism and consumer purchases (<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0901ARTSANDECONOMY.PDF>). While a few countries such as Ghana, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Nigeria have exploited this possibility to some extent, most of them have not realised that the creative or cultural industries are a dependable source of economic growth through culture tourism and other forms of wealth creation and employment. Through arts and culture there is a lot that can be done to complement community development and enrich local amenities that will attract young professionals to an area that will provide them with the opportunity to contribute to growth in a visible and practical way. The cultivator of the arts and culture can create new jobs and also foster an environment and develop amenities that could attract talented young workers. It has been proven in countries like Kenya that tourism built around the arts and culture can contribute to state and local economic growth by providing a diversified and sustainable means for creating jobs and attracting revenue thereby and urging investors to come in and invest their money.

While an effort is being made to promote music, visual arts, literature and film through theoretical and practical ways in some countries of the West African sub-region, a lot still has to be done to popularise these activities in such a way that people will see in them a way of propelling ECOWAS member countries positively forward. These activities play a crucial role in the state's economy and the tourist industry as has been highlighted in the preceding paragraphs. These creative activities which are culture bound have been increasingly contributing to the contemporary workforce, making substantial contributions to industries' products and services, and infusing culture into community development (<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0901ARTSANDECONOMY.PDF>). The craft industry in particular encourages individual creativity, skill, and talent and has the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. Any attempts made to bring about economic growth without reflection on how the communities can be brought into the mainstream ends up not achieving the required results. The cultural sector has shown clearly that through it a holistic type of development from the base to the top can be guaranteed for many more years to come.

Since it is culture that determines people's material features and the very direction and type of development and civilisation (Karanko 1992: 58) it will be important to recognise this and invest in and understand the cultural values of the people in order to engage in those economic activities that can be supported by the people. In this way there will be a certainty of economic growth because this economic activity has been established on the basis of cultural values that are development-oriented. Besides, if West African countries want to make long range economic forecasts, they must understand how culture and cultural change will shape future economic choice (Cultural Economics, <http://culturaleconomics.blogspot.com/2009/09/what-is-cultural-economics.html>). This is necessary because cultural conflict is a barrier to exploration and production.

Other West African countries may borrow from the experience of Nigeria because her advertising strategies both use western and traditional African cultural values in their pursuit of wealth and economic growth. This, however, has its own problems in the sense that the western values are not fully appreciated by everyone although some people have no problem with it. It would perhaps be more meaningful and more productive if traditional values are put in place in the advertising industry as many different people will be attracted by it and such a policy can therefore ultimately lead to greater growth and diversification of the economy.

The way to economic growth in West Africa is to avoid the adoption of technology without a profound understanding of its cultural implications. Where it is possible, technology should be indigenous and consistent with cultural norms. Scientists and innovators must fully understand culture, society, politics and history, and develop a holistic way of looking at, assessing, evaluating and implementing new technology (Culture, Technology Adoption, and Economic Development [husky1.stmarys.ca/~hmillar/techcul.htm](http://husky1.stmarys.ca/~hmillar/techcul.htm)). Linked to the need to understand the cultural environment, western-oriented medical practitioners in West Africa need to learn and know the taste of their clients' community, borrow certain aspects of such culture (Ogungbile 1997: 109) if they must work well and succeed in initiating economic growth through a dependable social policy.

There is also the problem of the culture of impunity and non-preservation of the historic sites among the people of West Africa like their counterparts elsewhere in the continent. This is one of the areas of culture that if fully tackled can lead to growth in output and employment for the citizens of West African countries. Experience has shown that the preservation of the historic built

environment can be a critical vehicle to promote rather than hamper economic growth (Rypkema 1999). West African culture ministries and related services should pursue a policy of preserving this historic built environment vigorously as an important source of economic growth and take advantage of the employment opportunities this will provide. Agbontaen-Eghafona and Okpoko (2004) have intimated that using traditional preservative methods in museums are good because of their availability, effectiveness and reliability. Considering the importance of museums in the history of each community and the lessons that can be learnt for future development, there is need to invest in this sector more meaningfully to encourage the development of the raw material sector and the employment opportunities this would engender.

Culture has been identified as an important sector for economic growth and the cultural sector is an important employment generator. Some countries like Brazil and Argentina in South America have used this sector to provide employment and generate growth. In Brazil, the cultural sector contributes 6.7 % and in Argentina 4.1 % to Gross National Product. For the United States of America the percentage is 7.75 % (Culture as an Engine for Economic Growth, Employment and Development, <http://www.oas.org/udse/english/documentos/infl1.doc>). These are great percentages that have led to economic growth. The simple fact is that the culture industry has specifically contributed to the economy, employment and material welfare of a people. One of the few problems that need to be addressed is piracy of cultural products which have not benefitted the producers of this product as much. This is the case with the Nigerian film and book industries where books and films have been pirated with impunity by people who are always ready to reap where they did not plant.

Countries of West Africa should also take advantage of the developing "evening economy" where shops remain opened for long hours and other forms of mixes of economic activities such as cafes, restaurants, arts venues and gyms. These evening activities are part of the culture of many people of West African countries and they help to diversify the town centre economy and provide many other opportunities for their people. Evidence shows that the evening economy is particularly attractive to new economy workers and accommodates the daily lives of busy adults and families (Cultural Economic Development: A Strategy to Leverage Michigan's Creative Talent and Cultural Assets to Spur Economic Growth and Build Community Prosperity, 2005: 10-11).

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has tried to show how as complex and problematic as the definition of culture might be, it is an important source of economic growth in West Africa which unfortunately has not been fully exploited in spite of the enormous human resources available. While a few developing countries have tried to make capital out of culture like Brazil, Argentina, the US and Japan knew and made use of cultural activities to enhance the culture industry for greater output. Unfortunately, many countries fear even the mention of the word "culture" and are especially wary of kleptocratic leaders who are always pretending to give the impression that they have created a sense of national unity which remains largely theoretical than practical.

The essay recognised the institutionalisation of culture-related activities by ECOWAS but argued that together with national governments, ECOWAS needs to be more vigorous and proactive in its culture and culture-related activities so that these might boost economic growth. This is because at present, these have not succeeded to move the economies of West African countries towards growth and integration. It is only by tapping from culture and fostering those intrinsic values of creativity, innovation, sense of duty and organisation that West African countries will be able to see that investment in culture after all is an important thing to do and assure a steady economic growth. Culture has been so relegated to the background of national planning that foreign intrusion has only helped to disrupt and destroy West African economies. Let West Africa and other regions of Africa learn from Asian countries, notably China, India, South Korea and Indonesia, most of whom by 1961 were either below or at the same level of development and growth with African countries but have today taken a lead as emerging nations with potentials for expansion and security. Their culture has had an important role in this significant breakthrough in the economy and culture which are now being exported to other parts of the world, especially West Africa and other regions of Africa.

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## Notes on Contributors

**Sola Afolayan** is a lecturer in the Department of English, University of Ado Ekiti, Nigeria. He is a specialist in Literary Theory and Applied Criticism. He has published in reputable journals like *Journal of Pan African Studies*, *Critique*, *African Perspectives* etc.

**Md. Manzur Alam** is Senior Lecturer in English at East West University, Bangladesh. His areas of interest include Post-Colonial Theory and Literature, Cultural Studies, Bangla, American and, 20th Century British Literature and Indian writing in English. He has published articles on V.S. Naipaul, Politics and Literature and ELT.

**Akhter Jahan** is a Senior Lecturer at East West University. She has just completed MA TESOL from University of Lancaster, UK. She has presented papers at several international conferences. She has also published papers at both home and abroad.

**Dr Henry Kam Kah** holds a PhD in History at the University of Buea, Cameroon. He specializes in culture, gender, globalization, conflict and security. Dr Kah has published several papers in peer reviewed journals in Cameroon and abroad. He is Associate Fellow of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria and belongs to scholarly associations like Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), American Political Science Association (APSA), West African Research Association (WARA) and Association of Friends of Archives and Antiquities, Cameroon (AFAAC).

**Syed Manzoorul Islam** is Professor of English at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and did his Ph.D. from Queen's University in Kingston, Canada in 1981. He specializes in modern poetry and fiction, but has substantial publication on literary theory, Cultural Studies, Translatology and Postmodernism. He is also a noted fiction writer. Dr Islam is a leading art critic and a member of the editorial board of *Jamini*, an international art magazine. He has published two books on the contemporary art of Bangladesh and curated a number of art exhibitions at home and abroad. He has also translated many of Bangladesh's contemporary poets into English. Dr. Islam received the Bangla Academy award for literature, one of the top literary prizes of the country, in 1996. In 2005 he received the *Prothom Alo* best book award and Kagaj literary award for his short story collection *Prem O Prarthoner Golpo* (Stories of love and

prayer).

**Nazia Manzoor** is Lecturer, Department of English, East West University. She has a Masters in English Literature with a major in Culture, Transculture and Global Studies from State University of New York at Albany. Her interests include Popular Culture, Mass Media and Postcolonialism.

**Ramit Samaddar** is Assistant Professor of English at Jadavpur University, India. He is presently working on the novels of Anthony Trollope for his doctoral thesis. His areas of interest include nineteenth-century literature, travel writing and postcolonial studies. He has recently published articles on Victorian women travellers and *fin-de-siècle* women poets.

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East West University Center for Research and Training

**EAST WEST UNIVERSITY**

Plot No-A/2, Main Road, Jahurul Islam City  
Aftabnagar, Dhaka-1212

Phone : 9858261, 09666775577

Emails : [editor\\_ewjbss@ewubd.edu](mailto:editor_ewjbss@ewubd.edu), [ewucrt@ewubd.edu](mailto:ewucrt@ewubd.edu)

Website : [www.ewubd.edu](http://www.ewubd.edu)