

# The curious case of Facebook commerce: an analysis of the digital commerce management guide 2021

Facebook  
commerce

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The very criticism of public policy being rigid and generalized on one hand, and insouciant and noncustomizable on the other has to be addressed to cope up with the comingled economic, social and environmental challenges. Policies that fail the litmus test of changing and challenging conditions will run the risk of not achieving their purpose and obstructing the ability of citizens, communities and businesses. This paper draws the case of Bangladesh to explore the principles of adaptive policies in the surfacing of the recently adopted Digital Commerce Management Guide 2021 under the National Digital Commerce Policy, 2020.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This is a qualitative paper that is based on both primary and secondary data. While secondary data on the policy crafted a strong call for increased adaptiveness, primary data extracted from the interviews presented several lacking and loopholes from respondents' firsthand experiences. Based on secondary content and primary data from consumers and business owners of the most-used social commerce platform (a form of digital commerce), Facebook commerce, hereto referred to as F-commerce, this paper discusses the possible characteristics of adaptive policy-making for more innovative, contextual, gender-inclusive, efficient and environmentally sustainable policies.

**Findings** – The paper points out some reform and adjustment scope for the recently introduced digital commerce policy to make it more adaptive to the present and upcoming policy context.

**Research limitations/implications** – It must be mentioned that there is a dearth of research on digital commerce policy and the platform as a whole.

**Originality/value** – Hence, this paper offers a fresh perspective toward time befitting policy formulation in the digital commerce sector and set in motion the policy attention that this platform requires.

**Keywords** Adaptive policy, Digital commerce policy, Innovation, Facebook commerce, Social media commerce

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

In the Southeast Asian countries, with the gradual development of digital platforms and advanced technology, the volume of digital transactions has also increased significantly (Ha & Peter Chuah, 2023). The pandemic has given a tremendous boost to the growing number of businesses that operate online through social media platforms in addition to physical stores (Zabeen, 2013). Electronic commerce or e-commerce is a business strategy that allows companies and individuals to buy and sell goods and services over the internet (Taher & Alnoor, 2021). One of the most flourishing forms of e-commerce today is social media



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commerce, which uses social media and online media to buy and sell goods and services online. Since e-commerce encompasses a wide range of digital commerce platforms and operations, we have limited our study to Facebook commerce, which is one form of e-commerce. Moreover, the significant presence of F-commerce within the boundaries of e-commerce and its obvious proliferation among both buyers and sellers in the coming years makes it an interesting case and policy content that needs to be wisely monitored and regulated. Therefore, this paper uses the case of F-commerce in Bangladesh to explore the principles of adaptive policy in the formulation of the recently adopted [Digital Commerce Management Guide \(2021\)](#) under the National Digital Commerce Policy, 2020. As the prospects for F-commerce in Bangladesh are very promising, the government needs to adopt a practical and unwavering policy for entrepreneurship growth that emphasizes decentralization, rural development and protection of indigenous entrepreneurs. Our attempt in this paper is to use the research findings to design a suitable adaptive model for the policy and examine the digital commerce policy and its various strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of F-commerce as a growing e-commerce platform.

### **Digital commerce or e-commerce**

Digital commerce or e-commerce is a millennial child. E-commerce is primarily preferred by the younger generation especially those who are aged between 18 and 24 years old. Although the implementation and expansion of digital commerce as a business practice therefore is still at a very tender stage, it is spreading fast. However, there is an inadequacy of research on this. More importantly, there is a major scarcity of research and studies on F-commerce, which is yet another new phenomenon for people of a post-COVID world.

There are different types of e-commerce, such as business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C), consumer-to-consumer (C2C), consumer-to-business (C2B), business-to-administration (B2A) and consumer-to-administration (C2A) ([Ashraf, 2019](#)). All of these types of e-commerce have different drivers underlying their activity. For example, [Gibbs, Kraemer, and Dedrick \(2003\)](#) conducted a systematic comparison using case studies from 10 countries (Brazil, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Mexico, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan and the United States) and found that the driving force in B2B commerce is global, while B2C commerce is a very local phenomenon. Local markets influence B2C e-commerce and therefore consumer desires, convenience, low prices, values, national culture and distribution system are prioritized in such B2C e-commerce businesses ([Gibbs et al., 2003](#)). These differ from country to country for different markets ([Gibbs et al., 2003](#)). Thus, when it comes to policy integration, national policies must also focus on the uniqueness and applicability of the e-commerce sector. In the OECD Economics Department Working Papers, [Coppel \(2000\)](#) provided a comprehensive analysis of the likely economic impact of e-commerce in the B2B and B2C sectors.

### **The digital commerce policy 2021 in Asia**

Although the concept of e-commerce and its business activities are very old, related guidelines or acts or policy measures are very new in Southern Asia as well as around the world. Studies showed that in Bangladesh, both customers and businesses have a lack of proper understanding of the entire e-commerce system ([Sameh, 2021](#)). Therefore, a policy environment centering the e-commerce platform is quite rare. Countries that have altered their national legislation to accommodate e-commerce have frequently chosen divergent courses. In an era of global and regional economic blocs, these distinctions can lead to inefficiencies or trade obstacles. Bangladesh has recently taken its e-commerce guideline. Before that India, one of the biggest e-commerce users in the world, has to revisit the draft

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amendments to the consumer protection (e-commerce) rules, made public in June this year.

The digital commerce policy 2021 was enacted by the government of Bangladesh to protect the interests of both buyers and sellers and meet the demands of the nation's burgeoning e-commerce industry. On July 4, 2021, the Ministry of Commerce updated the previously existing digital commerce policy 2018 and introduced this new policy of 2021. The three major objectives of this policy according to the government is to ensure the rights of the consumers, increase trust and reliance on the e-commerce platform through a regulatory framework and promote innovation in employment and entrepreneurship through establishing a competitive yet safe business environment in the country.

### Facebook commerce

Facebook commerce is classified as a “social commerce” platform. The most widely used social media platform for business purposes is the Facebook, allowing its 1.7 billion users to conduct businesses utilizing social networks and online media (Tanni, 2021; Zabeen, 2013). According to one estimate, Facebook has over 2,000 e-commerce sites and over 50,000 e-commerce pages, making it a popular platform for advertising and selling goods and services (Mishuk, 2021). In Bangladesh, there are about 5000 Facebook-based stores that deliver almost 30,000 goods each day (Sameh, 2021). A vast range of small and medium businesses such as clothing, beauty, accessories, makeover shops, photography, event managements, travel agencies, paintings, electronics, gardening, DIY stories, cakes, etc. are expanding through the F-commerce (Zabeen, 2013). The sector has seen strong growth in previous years, but after the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, this growth has increased as more consumers are inclined to shop online (Bangladesh - eCommerce, 2021). According to the monthly annual report (2019) of Industrial Development Leasing Company of Bangladesh Limited, more than 300,000 businesses in Bangladesh run on Facebook. Most of these brands in Bangladesh work with young consumers aged 18–34 (Zabeen, 2013). The market is worth about Tk312 crore (IDLC business review 2019). According to E-Cab, Tk7,000 crore worth of business was transacted through traditional e-commerce media in 2020, and a staggering Tk1,000 crore was accounted for by F-commerce, which is also more beneficial for young investors because it requires less investment than traditional marketing strategy (Hossain, 2021). On the other hand, most of the F-commerce businesses in Bangladesh sell nonessential items such as clothing, lifestyle items, food, handicrafts, jewelry and so on (Datta, 2020). It provides them a hassle-free approach to start and run their business, interact with a large number of customers, showcase their products and conduct all their promotional activities (Parvin, Jinrong, & Rahman, 2012).

Furthermore, there is no regulatory body in that business. Lots of inconsistency exists in that process, which is causing harm in running the business. There are no adequate data that can outline the negative or bad side of this online-based business, but it can be understood that consumers and entrepreneurs based on that platform and other platforms are now facing various obstacles (Hossain, 2021). In F-commerce platforms, there is no consistency or coherence in pricing of goods, and therefore, the same products are priced differently by different Facebook business pages. An extensive quantitative study based in Bangladesh shows that the perceived fairness of price of products is connected to the loyalty, satisfaction and trust of customers in F-commerce platforms (Hride, Ferdousi, & Jasimuddin, 2021). Hence, price regulation is dependent significantly on the Facebook user customer's trust and satisfaction level. The payment methods are also inconsistent; especially, the provision of payment by Facebook has not yet been accommodated in Bangladesh F-commerce (Zabeen, 2013).

### Methodological framework

This work is a qualitative study that used both primary and secondary data. The data used for this study came from qualitative, in-depth interviews and content analysis. For the primary data, we conducted a survey of 50 small business owners who operate exclusively through the social medium of Facebook. This survey was conducted to determine the extent of Facebook business owners' knowledge and awareness of the new policy. In selecting respondents, we drew a purposive sample and looked for individuals who do not have physical stores and operate only through F-commerce. Of the 50 respondents, 30 were female and 20 were male business owners. In addition, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with F-commerce owners, and we used the snowball method to reach respondents. Thirty interviews were conducted with buyers to understand the buyers' perspective, and for this, we used the snowball method. All interviews were conducted using random sampling and snowballing. The age range of all interviewees was 19–45 years old. Interviews were conducted in person and online (via Facebook Messenger, Zoom and WhatsApp Messenger), and appropriate consent was obtained before conducting interviews. Interviews lasted 30–60 minutes and included open-ended questions. We then clustered and coded the data to identify comparable response patterns. This analysis was conducted through an iterative process of scanning the texts multiple times to discover certain keywords and grouping them according to the purpose of the study.

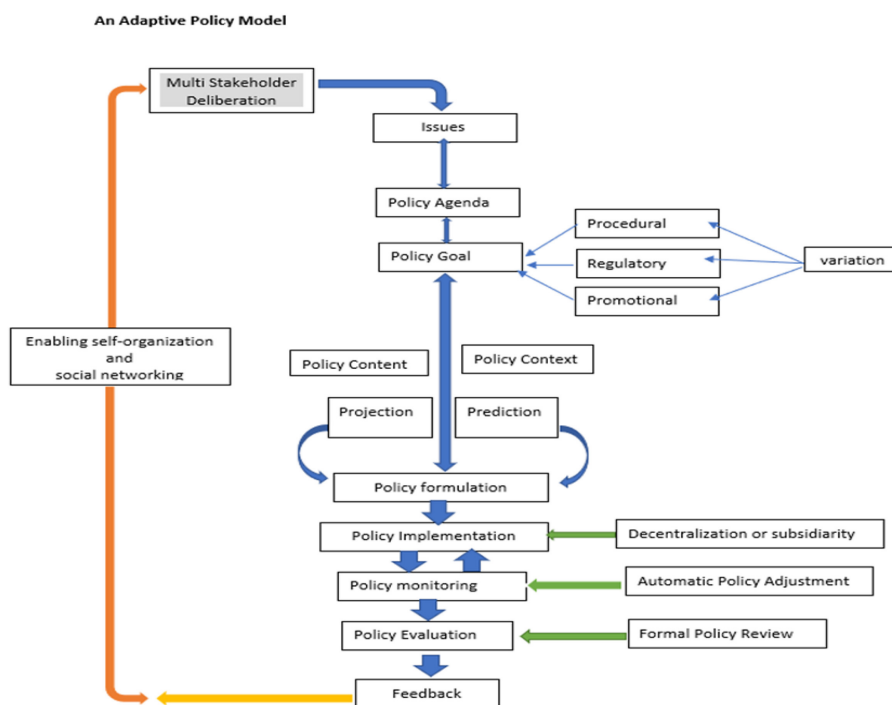
### Theoretical framework

Formulating sound and rigorous public policy has always been a difficult undertaking for policymakers around the world. Bizikova's (2018) paper therefore compares formulating policies and programs that properly address each problem at the present time to a moving target that is constantly changing (Bizikova, Swanson, Tyler, Roy, & Venema, 2018). This is becoming truer with the pandemic that will hit the world in March 2020. This strange bolt from the blue has left policy makers confused and in chaos. The awareness of sustainability in today's world has shown the importance of formulating "adaptive policies" that are not only adaptable but also implementable.

Adaptive policymaking actually came early in the 1900s, but the theoretical and conceptual foundations for creating adaptive policies were published previously in 2009 (Swanson & Bhadwal, 2009) and 2010 and was based on a comprehensive review of academic and professional insights on how to intervene effectively in the policy. For this research purpose, we have selected adaptive policymaking as the best way to formulate and implement policy for the well-being of the people. Adaptive policies have multistakeholder deliberation and enable self-organization and self-networking, which also helps the policy to become successful.

The above model (Figure 1) was constructed by integrating the iterative model of policymaking (Driessen, Glasbergen, & Verdaas, 2001) and the interactive model of Grindle and Thomas (Chakrabarti & Sanyal, 2017) into the system model framework. However, this model as shown in Figure 1 is an integration of the elements of policy through caution, microscopic, incremental, contextual, provisional, experimental, flexible, accountable and sustainable, and the principles of policy through automatic policy adaptation, formal review and continuous learning, variations, multistakeholder consultation, integrated, anticipatory, decentralization of decision-making/subsidiarity and enabling self-organization and social networking.

The entire model is a cycle that is nonexhaustive, spontaneous and continuous so that it is self-sustaining. It starts with the input of multistakeholder consultations, which is one of the principles of adaptive policymaking. The right issue for policymaking is identified by the various stakeholders in the form of a policy agenda. Once the agenda is set, it is important to



**Figure 1.** Merge of iterative model of policymaking (Driessen *et al.*, 2001) and the interactive model of Grindle and Thomas (Chakrabarti and Sanyal, 2017) by authors

formulate holistic policy goals. In a post-19th century world, it is not enough to look at the goals from only a narrow perspective. It is therefore advisable to consider variation when setting goals. A combination of procedural, regulatory and promotional goals to solve problems gives a policy guideline the advantage of being comprehensive yet diverse.

Once the objectives are established, it is essential to examine the policy context and policy content. The context or environment in which the policy is to be implemented must be thoroughly researched in order for it to achieve a positive and acceptable outcome. On the other hand, the content of the policy is essentially the component and element that makes up a particular policy. The substance of the content determines whether a policy can predict future problems and thus fit into a predictable future or not. These two aspects feed into the policy formulation phase, where adaptive and sustainable policies are developed and then implemented. An important aspect of adaptive policy formulation is insuring decentralization in the policy adaptation phase. The implementation process should not be rigidly top-down but decentralized to ensure that policies are implemented with efficiency and effectiveness at the grassroots level. However, in an adaptive policymaking process, the policy cycle does not stop with implementation. Policy monitoring is important to measure the extent of implementation and effectiveness. Therefore, the following applies to adaptive policymaking. Both policy implementation and policy monitoring should occur simultaneously, with incremental adjustments made as needed. Finally, comes the policy evaluation phase, in which a formal review of the entire policy must be conducted, from which insightful feedback is gleaned and disseminated through social networks in such a way that various groups of stakeholders take note of the information. This generates further stakeholder input, which then feeds into reform of the same policy in a circular motion to arrive at an updated and adjusted policy reform.

## Findings

### *Redefining the defined and determining the scope*

To begin with, the definition of digital commerce in the digital commerce guideline is not only a generic blanket definition, but by doing so, it has sidelined and overlooked the different platforms of e-commerce. The definition of digital commerce given in the policy is

Marketplace means a type of digital commerce site or portal on the Internet where one or more third parties enter information about goods or services and conduct transactions ([Digital Commerce Management Guideline, 2021](#)).

Because digital commerce is a massive sector, there are different platforms through which digital commerce can be operated, and each of those platforms has a set of unique and exclusive issues and challenges. One of such platforms is social media commerce or more precisely F-commerce. While formulating a policy which will be implementable for a wider scope, it is crucial to define the core issue and the target beneficiaries of the policy.

As in the case of this study, we found that Facebook commerce gained much of its popularity from the year 2020. From the survey statistics, it was found that most of the social commerce or precisely F-commerce initiatives started in the year 2020. F-commerce came to be known as the spillover effect of the pandemic. 2020 has the lion's share in the year of starting a business. 2019 and 2021 have 23% and 13%. From 2012 to 2018, there was an upward trend of increasingly growing businesses on this platform. Therefore, for a national policy, it was imperative to encompass this massive business platform. The very objective of making a comprehensive policy is that it encompasses all the related issues originating from and associated with a particular sector and considers all prevalent and prospective stakeholders simultaneously and precisely.

### *Exploring the variety and variability of product license*

Pandemic-triggered F-commerce has outpaced e-commerce overnight, dominating markets for clothing, food, accessories, gadgets, novelty items and more. Due to the preponderance of female entrepreneurs in these sectors, the majority of sales are generated by apparel (32%) and accessories (25%), the survey found. The remaining share is distributed among food, cosmetics, toiletries and electronics. Certain products of a pharmaceutical or therapeutic nature require a license to be legally sold. However, as far as herbal products, cosmetics and lotions are concerned, digital commerce standards are unable to recognize and handle the widespread sale of these items through F-commerce platforms. Most respondents said they bought their supplies in bulk from local markets and sold them online without knowing they needed a license to do so. These products included herbal remedies, cosmetics and lotions imported from Thailand, China, Burma and other neighboring countries. But not every product out there is completely risk-free. One example is the store Sabu, which became famous for selling skin-lightening cosmetics to women and young girls. Sabrina Khatun, who appeared on Facebook under the name "Sabu Shop," was selling fake cosmetics and falsely claiming that her goods came from faraway countries such as Thailand, China, Malaysia, etc. However, after a BSTI raid, everything Sabrina Khatun sold was found to be fake ([Mohsin, 2021](#)). In addition to the seller and the buyer, the government should be concerned about the type and content of products being imported into or sold in the country, as well as the suitability of the product and its impact on consumers. This is why it is so important that products are properly licensed. F-commerce, however, does not fall under this jurisdiction.

### *Infeasible regulations*

Some guidelines of this policy are commendable because they provide clear regulations. However, there are some rules that are simply not feasible, especially across various platforms. For instance, the guideline provides no guidance on where or how to retain data

relating to financial transactions and makes no provisions for small businesses that choose to conduct their operations through social media like Facebook. Owners of Facebook-based small businesses typically make modest investments and modest profits, making it a herculean challenge for them to keep track of such transactions.

It is questionable whether it is necessary and useful to store information on 100/200 taka (\$0.10/0.20) transactions for 6 years (3.1.14) ([Digital Commerce Management Guide, 2021](#)). Respondents in the survey were representative of a young demographic of online retailers who operate Facebook accounts. Most of the respondents who identified themselves as business owners were between 18 and 24 years old (82%). Policies like the above are challenging, especially for new and inexperienced merchants. In contrast, it is commendable that regulations have been enacted to ensure that consumers receive adequate and comprehensive information about the components of the product. Although this provision applies to all e-commerce platforms, many Facebook sites ignore it because F-commerce is not regulated. Consumers, both men and women, suffer from the lack of knowledge about product ingredients. However, since they buy from retailers that import products from all over the world, small F-commerce owners are not always able to gather all the information about the things they sell.

Another example of the lack of applicability of general regulations is the maintenance of inventory information and the provision of printed invoices. Since most F-commerce sellers handle customer orders one at a time rather than stocking goods for later sale, maintaining a storefront on social media is a challenge. Small business owners, who are disproportionately women, face the challenge of keeping track of inventory (3.2.9) ([Digital Commerce Management Guideline, 2021](#)). In addition, it is not feasible for economic reasons to send a printed invoice summary to all customers. Some small business owners are not familiar with all of these processes, which can drive up a small business's operating costs and lead to failure (3.3.7) ([Digital Commerce Management Guideline, 2021](#)). In addition, small business owners cannot afford to hire a compliance officer and the position is not adequately described (3.4.1) ([Digital Commerce Management Guide, 2021](#)).

### *The policy context*

Products are to be delivered as soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours after ordering. However, given the inefficient logistics of our distribution systems, this is not always the case in a country like ours. Delivery timeframes can be delayed due to factors beyond the control of the company (3.3.1/3.3.2) ([Digital Commerce Management Guideline, 2021](#)). The guideline should have made it clear that there would be an exception in the event of extraordinary circumstances, such as strikes, political instability, natural disasters, national holidays and the frequent occurrence of transportation strikes.

According to the respondents, the COVID-19 pandemic fueled the inconsistent delivery of the products, as well as inconsistent demand and supply of products with the high price. Respondents of the survey have cited that they had experienced some degree of impact of the pandemic. The majority of the respondents (80%) have shared the same response. Only 7% of respondents said they didn't face any impacts of the pandemic in their business.

One of our respondents expressed that

During the covid-19 pandemic time when the government imposed strict lockdown, I could not deliver the products for 1 month and after some time the customer cancelled 2000 BDT (\$20) entirely, which put me in loss as I had prepared my product for sale.

## **The challenges**

### *Product quality and content*

Online shoppers frequently have negative experiences due to low-quality goods. F-commerce customers have also voiced concerns about the genuineness and authenticity of the goods

they've purchased. Buyers are often left guessing about the true hue of things because the vast majority of vendors, if not all, employ artificial lighting and extensive editing to present their products online. Extensive editing can also mask issues and flaws with products, which are sometimes not noticeable until after purchase.

Interestingly, F-commerce owners and sellers deal with customers who are fickle and unsure of what they want at all times. Since the seller is bearing all of the risks, no safeguards are in place to protect them. Many sales fall through because customers who placed an order initially declined the item after receiving it. Sometimes customers change their minds about making a purchase after the product has already been delivered, requiring the delivery person to make a second trip with the item, or the customer just doesn't answer the phone when the delivery guy calls. As a result, business owners lose money and start to distrust potential customers.

#### *The delivery system*

Another issue with online shopping is getting your items delivered on time. Products are impeded or shattered due to the delivery team's rough handling, improper delivery procedures and irresponsibility. Many products are damaged during transport, leaving them unmarketable. A seller loses money when its customers reject its goods, and the delivery service refuses to take responsibility for the damage. For this reason, it is crucial to establish guidelines for the delivery businesses, as well as laws and control of remuneration from their end, in order to make digital commerce seamless and comfortable for the entrepreneurs.

#### *Price regulation and consistency*

There is no mention in the guideline regarding the fixation of price of different categories of products. Hence, it is often found that the price of the same product varies from one page to another. Therefore, for the buyer, it becomes difficult to understand the actual price of products since there are so many options. It also makes it hard to find real products with a proper price tag.

#### *The urgency for interpolicy integration*

Harassment is one of the notable challenges of F-commerce. Sellers have experienced harassment from both male and female buyers when they are not satisfied with the service. Fake profiles are often created just to harass product owners and make insulting comments. In the survey, all respondents cited various problems and obstacles in conducting business through the digital platform. Among all other obstacles, most respondents, especially women, have pointed out harassment in online business, which accounts for 17% of the share, along with problems in delivery and payment. It is worth noting that women face more problems in business than men due to the socioeconomic environment. Recently, there is a new trend of presenting products live on Facebook. Such visual presentation or exhibition of products is helpful for customers and that is why many pages are put live online. In most cases, it is women who present their products live. These women then suddenly experience insulting comments and remarks from those who are watching their lives. Sometimes they are even sexually harassed online by various fake Facebook identities. This not only demotivates the women shoppers but also has long-term effects on their self-confidence, daily lives, and of course, their mental health. In the absence of a mechanism to address these issues, female shoppers often overlook these challenges and unexpected unpleasant incidents. The digital commerce policy currently lacks such a clause, but adding or incorporating it into the country's anti-cyber bullying policy is undoubtedly a necessity of the time.

### *Payment methods and systems*

Sometimes, due to various unavoidable circumstances customers ask to get a refund or cashback of certain products but without any mechanism, it is not possible to get the paid money back. Lots of seller's cheat people with problematic products, but there are no ways to ask for a refund. There again, the preorder system does not ensure accountability. Cases of preordering products with half the payment and being cheated by not delivering the same quality product as ordered has happened repeatedly. In many cases, lots of business owners take the money as a preorder of products but don't send the products on time. Although there are some payment gateways exist but their service charge is huge and, in many cases, buyers do not want to pay that. That reduces a lot of profits of business owners.

### **Monitoring and evaluation through policy**

No monitoring and evaluation system exists in this F-commerce business. Lots of fraudulent activities were being done in this sector and that is harming the actual business owners, for example, Eva fashion shop where the location of the business is wrong, and the seller took the money but didn't deliver the products. There is no supportive mechanism for F-commerce business, especially for women. Since a significant portion of this F-commerce business is run by females. There are no initiatives to accelerate the growth in the F-commerce business for men or women.

### **The exigency for a reformed guideline with subclauses**

E-commerce platforms are different; therefore, a single policy cannot address all challenges. F-commerce businesses do not require state or Facebook registration. Simply create a Facebook account. The simplicity of F-commerce is a huge advantage. An entrepreneur does not have to go through the tedious, complicated and often corrupt registration process. Most F-commerce entrepreneurs are motivated by this simplicity, but it also encourages unethical business practices. After taking online payments from many consumers, several business owners closed their sites and disappeared. Not registering means that businesses can avoid sales tax even if they make large profits. This eliminates the security of commerce. F-commerce business owners are not accountable to anyone or the government for trade security and business safety. Even the government's SME loans do not cover these businesses.

### **Awareness about "digital commerce guideline"**

According to the survey, most respondents were unaware of this new regulation. Over 50% of respondents were unaware of the guideline. Only 30% of respondents knew about the rule, although many of them heard about it through digital or print media where the information was not adequately communicated. Sellers desire a seller-friendly approach and financial protection, which digital commerce standards didn't address; 62% want the guideline to be seller-friendly, while 38% want financial stability. Sellers prefer seller-friendly guidelines (44%), while buyers want proper monitoring and evaluation and greater debate and discussion in guideline development. Both received 17%; 22% of responders prefer reasonable guidelines versus random and unworkable ones.

### **Discussions and implications for Southeast Asia**

This study has attempted to capture the myriad areas of reform in the newly adopted Digital Commerce Directive. Addressing these shortcomings will, on the one hand, make the Digital Commerce Directive an adaptable and innovative policy and, on the other hand, identify

common features that should be emphasized when drafting a digital commerce policy in the near future and in the context of a developing country. Consequently, these common factors will also help in responding to the impending and inevitable problems faced by the recently trending platform of F-commerce in developing countries like Bangladesh. In a study conducted by Zabeen (2013), it was found that most of the customers in Bangladesh are not familiar with the practices of F-commerce and there is a lack of policies and facilities that are essential for such mass use of the F-commerce platform (Zabeen, 2013).

There is a crucial difference between e-commerce and F-commerce. All F-commerce ventures are e-commerce, but not all e-commerce ventures are F-commerce. F-commerce can be categorically distinguished as a business platform that uses Facebook as a central point of interaction for buyers and sellers, a business method in which there are no specific rules or guidelines binding sellers, no official complaint system, no accountability and no legal binding or registration. On the one hand, this gives F-commerce entrepreneurs an advantage over sellers, and on the other hand, leaves them exempt from various government support measures, systematic market guidelines and government protection. For example, there are strict and clear guidelines for digital commerce that require companies to obtain approval from the Drug Administration before selling drugs or medical products. Since F-commerce does not fall within the scope of these guidelines, many sites sell imported cosmetics, slimming products, etc., which go unnoticed by the authorities. Due to these aspects, there is an urgent need to bring F-commerce under a policy directive.

In fact, there are both advantages and disadvantages to not falling under the scope of the currently promulgated Digital Commerce Directive. Not being subject to policy guidelines is a motivating factor for many entrepreneurs as it seems easy and quick to start and stop a business as needed. With policy guidelines comes complicated paperwork and with complicated paperwork comes unwanted bureaucratic harassment, harassment and bribery in Bangladesh. This is a barrier for young and female entrepreneurs who see Facebook as a friendly atmosphere and an easy way to start their business without any hassles. However, given the growing popularity of F-commerce on both the buy and sell side, it is essential to include it in the digital commerce policy. This is because if it is subject to a policy guideline, the rights of customers will also be upheld and protected.

The Digital Commerce Policy 2021 probably did not consider the full policy context of e-commerce because it did not include F-commerce. Studies have shown that online shopping is associated with more uncertainties than traditional offline shopping (Akhlaq & Ahmed, 2015). Digital commerce policies are inadequate in this regard because they have not captured the impact of expanding social media business on the e-commerce sector. By excluding F-commerce from its scope, digital commerce policy automatically overlooks the vagaries of the platform. As illustrated in our framework, policy should be both projection and prediction. The content of the policy provides a projection of what a policy should include, and the context of the policy helps predict what a policy needs to address. Thus, a macroscopic policy provides integration and a predictive approach. In this case, we find that digital commerce policy may not have fully explored the policy context and therefore could not anticipate the existing and upcoming challenges in the e-commerce sector related to F-commerce. Most importantly, the principles of adaptive policy require multi-stakeholder engagement through accountability and sustainability. To ensure the interests of multiple stakeholders, a policy must have the ability to be easily adapted to other conditions, needs, or uses. A study by Gibbs *et al.* (2003) found that inadequate protection of buyers' and sellers' rights can have an impact on e-commerce activities. Therefore, it is important to establish mechanisms that enhance trust in online commerce (Gibbs *et al.*, 2003). In F-commerce, there are numerous cases of fraud, both on the buyer and seller side, and yet there is no protection of the rights of buyers and sellers. An adaptive policy is advised by multiple stakeholders and

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allows self-organization and self-networking, which also contributes to the success of the policy.

The framework that we proposed attempts to make a continuous non exhaustive policy process, where the process starts with rigorous stakeholder deliberation. In the stage of policy implementation, it is imperative that a policy must be appropriately decentralized in order to be an adaptive policy. A Pakistan-based study by [Akhlaq and Ahmed \(2015\)](#) used the Technology Acceptance Model to explore the usefulness, trust, risk and satisfaction and ease of use of consumers of digital commerce of a metropolitan university to explore the familiarity of F-commerce amongst customers. The digital commerce policy greatly failed in this regard as most of the respondents who are Facebook commerce business and active stakeholders of the policy were unaware of this policy. The digital commerce policy 2021 is a much recent policy, and there is still scope of its reform and readjustment if the government and its policy makers conduct formal policy reviewing and explore areas of adjustments so as to make this policy an adaptive one.

The fascinating phenomenon of Facebook commerce has profound implications for Southeast Asia, where the dynamic interplay of digital technology, social interactions and economic activity is shaping the region's socioeconomic landscape. As the region experiences a rapid rise in internet penetration and social media use, understanding the nuances of Facebook commerce can provide invaluable insights into evolving consumer behavior, market dynamics and potential opportunities for small- and medium-sized businesses to engage in e-commerce. The example of Facebook commerce in Southeast Asia can be used to examine the complex merging of traditional commerce practices with modern digital platforms. In doing so, it becomes clear that tailored regulatory frameworks, technological infrastructures and digital literacy initiatives are needed to harness the transformative potential while addressing the associated challenges.

## Conclusion

This study has limitations due to the fact that the general public is not yet familiar with the rules of the recently enacted e-commerce policy. In the case of e-commerce, and more precisely F-commerce, neither buyers nor sellers are aware of any such regulation. The field of F-commerce has not been thoroughly studied. It's quickly becoming one of the most popular channels for online purchases, especially among the younger demographic. Women and men alike in Bangladesh are putting their time, money and talents into the emerging field of F-commerce. Therefore, the government should consider ways to strengthen the market so that it can support productive commerce. Initiatives should be conducted to collect data on the opening and shutting of such enterprises in light of the rise in the number of such small firms. In the realm of F-commerce, a revolutionary move may be taking these little firms and bringing them under government supervision through set laws. The [Digital Commerce Policy \(2021\)](#) is an admirable goal, but a comprehensive examination of the document reveals the need for a more integrated strategy. The success and growth of F-commerce have thus far been attributable only to the ease of use of the platform. A Facebook business can be established with little in the way of red tape, government approval, or bribery. You can sell your product to millions of people with just a Facebook page and a group. Because of the low barriers to entry and lack of accountability, dishonest businesses and people may be tempted to take advantage of their clients. In addition, there is no mechanism for reporting customer abuse or IP infringement due to the absence of a policy structure. Therefore, it may be beneficial to both buyers and sellers for digital commerce policies to incorporate a subclause incorporating particular regulations that are unique to F-commerce enterprises. Finding issues like cyberbullying, harassment and fraud (committed by both buyers and sellers) is an important societal aspect of this study. Adaptive policymaking is another area where this

study has policy implications. The need for flexible policymaking is urgent. This study highlights various areas of ambiguity and potential for reevaluating the policies at hand. A stronger digital commerce sector may start with a more in-depth description of the interaction between buyers and sellers, an emphasis on corporate ethics and good practices and the preservation of regulatory checks and balances.

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### Further reading

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