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## Emergence of female agri-food entrepreneurs in Facebook commerce: A choice modelling exercise to examine consumer preferences in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

Digital technology, particularly social media, has significantly altered the business opportunity landscape for female entrepreneurs in developing countries. Social media's low entry barriers and the convenience of home-based operations have made it a viable platform for entrepreneurial endeavours. Since COVID19 pandemic period, women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh have started selling various products, including agricultural products, through Facebook, which is the most popular social media platform for e-commerce in the country. Previous research highlights convenience and time savings as primary motivators for online shopping. However, there is limited understanding of consumer attitudes towards purchasing agricultural and food products via Facebook, especially from female entrepreneurs. This study aims to explore the attributes consumers consider while buying aromatic rice from Facebook commerce and whether gender of the seller exerts any influence on their decisions. In March 2024, we conducted a standardised online survey including a choice experiment for aromatic rice sold in the Facebook commerce platform. It includes attributes such as gender of the entrepreneur, product review, rice's origin, the seller's trade license, and product price. The survey was conducted with 980 consumers from 4 cities in Bangladesh, including Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna. The data will be analysed using a mixed logit model and will help to identify the drivers of food choice. The analysis is still ongoing and expected to be completed by July 2024. Preliminary results show that product reviews, production location of the rice, trade license of the seller and price drives purchase decisions on Facebook commerce. However, results also suggest that preferences vary, with female consumers possibly favouring female entrepreneurs more than male consumers. Other factors, like general trustworthiness, might also influence purchasing decisions. The study is expected to provide valuable insights to female entrepreneurs and policy makers.

**Keywords:** Female entrepreneurs, Facebook commerce, consumer attitude, choice experiment